The primary mission of the University of North Dakota Physician Assistant Program is to prepare selected health care professionals to become competent physicians assistants working collaboratively with physician supervision emphasizing primary care in rural and/or underserved areas of North Dakota, the United States and the world. With this mission, the goal is to improve access to healthcare, help alleviate shortages of primary care providers and deliver comprehensive, affordable health care services to the people of rural and/or underserved populations.

The Program’s approach to education is based on the philosophy that adult students are mature, highly motivated, and have a rich resource of past personal and professional experiences for present learning. While the faculty and preceptor serve as catalysts, learning is the responsibility of the student. The interdisciplinary teaching approach integrates previous clinical skill and knowledge utilizing multiple techniques to facilitate learning. The goal is preparation of the student as a primary care provider in a variety of settings, utilizing a problem-oriented approach to logical thinking and sound judgment. Furthermore, the Program faculty believes that physician assistants are accountable and responsible for the quality of their practice and for life-long learning to assure their ability to continually improve the care they deliver.

Also central to the Program’s mission is the Physician/PA Student Team development. A unique characteristic of the UND PA Program is the partnering of the student with a primary care preceptor throughout the entire clinical portion of the program. No candidate is admitted into the program without the agreement of a practicing physician and/or physician assistant in primary care who is committed to serve as a preceptor for the length of the program. This team approach forms the foundation and models the physician and physician assistant relationship inherent in a primary care PA’s clinical practice. By completing the majority of clinical experiences in the office of a practicing primary care preceptor, students are assured of exposure to the common primary care problems in a practice setting. It is under the aegis and supervision of the preceptor in a one-to-one teaching relationship that the student gains clinical competencies and accomplishes role integration. This is closely monitored and augmented by the program faculty.

Program Goals
The goals of the UND Physician Assistant Program are for the students, under the supervision of a physician, use a multi-dimensional approach to:

1. Integrate critical thinking skills with respect to medical knowledge and patient care to provide entry-level primary health care services for a diverse population in a variety of settings.
2. Develop skills in interpersonal communication and professional responsibilities associated with a physician assistant as a primary care provider and serve as a role model in health care practice.
3. Evaluate clinical data and research literature to make evidence based decisions in providing health care to patients and improving practice outcomes.
   - Develop an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger system of health care to provide optimal care for their patients.

Admission Requirements
Applicants who are seeking admission to School of Graduate Studies must meet all of the minimum general School of Graduate Studies admission requirements identified in the graduate catalog. In addition, the prospective student must fulfill the requirements for admission to the graduate program in the Master of Physician Assistant Studies.

Admission to the Physician Assistant Program within the School of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of North Dakota is a competitive selection process. Each applicant is reviewed individually and evaluated on his/her own merits.

Clinical Preparation:
4. Current professional licensure, registration, or certification in a clinical healthcare field with evidence of continued medical education throughout professional employment A minimum of three years recent full-time clinical healthcare experience in one’s field of professional certification/licensure within the United States. Health care experience must include direct patient contact and high levels of responsibility involving complex critical thinking and decision-making skills. Hours accrued in a training program are not eligible. This ensures foundational knowledge and skills needed for successful completion of this program. Not all health care positions will provide the appropriate required experience.

Academic Preparation:
1. Baccalaureate degree (equivalent to 125 semester credits) from a regionally accredited institution in the United States and preferably in a health related area. The institution must be accredited by one of the following six regional accrediting associations: MSA; NASC; NCA; NEASC-CIHE; SACS-CC; or WASC-Sr. Applicants with a three-year bachelor's degree must complete the equivalent of one year of post-baccalaureate work.
2. GPA of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale) in undergraduate work, or more recent transcripts showing improvement.
3. Prerequisite coursework each at a minimum of 3 credits, 200 level (sophomore) or higher with achievement of a “B” as the minimum acceptable grade and completed in the United States:
   a. Human Anatomy

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b. Human Physiology within ten years of the application deadline  
   Note: If a combined course such as Human Anatomy and Physiology, 2 full semesters are required (preferably with lab)

c. Comprehensive Pharmacology (must cover all body systems) within five years of the application deadline

4. Prerequisite coursework in Medical Terminology
5. CLEP (College Level Examination Programs) or “test out” courses are not accepted

Note: Additional coursework beyond the minimum academic preparation requirements will strengthen an application, especially if the additional courses are highly correlated with medicine. Assistive supplementary coursework would also include basic statistics and technical writing.

Additional Requirements:

1. Completion of a successful interview.
2. Written personal statement addressing the applicant’s aptitude, ability, dedication and commitment to meeting the program’s mission to “prepare selected health care professionals to become competent physician assistants working collaboratively with physician supervision, emphasizing primary care in rural and/or underserved areas.”
3. Three strong professional letters of reference from health care professionals such as physicians and/or other clinical supervisors. Applicant may not use relatives or their proposed preceptor as references.
4. An arrangement with a licensed physician (MD or DO) and/or physician assistant who is willing to serve as the primary clinical preceptor to the student during the clinical portion of the program. Medical practice must be in primary care/family medicine in a clinical setting. Preference is given to clinical sites in rural (less than 25,000 population) and/or underserved populations. More information regarding preceptor requirement noted below.
5. All applicants must provide a current passport photograph and proof of certification/licensure in one’s chosen field.
6. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score submission required of all non-native speakers of English. Only the Internet Based Test (IBT) form of the TOEFL will be accepted. A total score of 93 and a speaking score of 26 will be a pre-requisite for entry into the program.
7. The Physician Assistant Program of the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences (UNDSMHS) has a responsibility to society to graduate the best possible future Physician Assistants. All graduates of the Program must have knowledge, skills, and capacities to function in a wide variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. All applicants must be able to meet the program’s academic and technical standards as indicated on the program website. Academic and technical standards for matriculation, promotion, and graduation from the UND PA Program are available at: http://www.med.und.edu/physicianassistant/standards.html.
8. Prior to matriculation, students will be required to complete a health screening and a criminal background check. The health screening process is conducted by Student Health Services. Information can be found on their website: Forms | Student Health | Health & Wellness | The University of North Dakota. Information regarding the criminal background check requirements can be found on a link on the PA Program website: Physician Assistant Program | UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences. Cost of the criminal background check and health screening are the responsibility of the student. If a student declines to undergo either of the requirements, or if findings of a grievous nature are revealed, the offer of admission may be revoked.
9. Additional personal and non-cognitive criteria include:
   a) willingness to assume responsibility for own education
   b) willingness to accomplish a successful role transition from experienced clinician to physician assistant student
   c) evidence of professional role development in clinical decision making, communication and leadership
   d) sensitivity, enthusiasm, confidence, motivation and sincerity/honesty
   e) diversity of life experience
   f) success in overcoming adversity
   g) aptitude for continued learning

Degree Requirements
Students seeking the Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree at the University of North Dakota must satisfy all general requirements set forth by the School of Graduate Studies as well as particular requirements set forth by the Physician Assistant Program.

1. Successful completion of all courses in core curriculum. Refer to the academic catalog for a list of required courses
2. Completion of a written scholarly project approved by the academic advisor.
3. Written comprehensive final examination

Contact Information
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