

Program Planning Summary
Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies

To be offered by
Francis Marion University



Luther F. Carter, President
Francis Marion University

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2. Classification

- a. Name of Proposed Program:** Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies
- b. Concentrations, Options and Tracks:** One Physician Assistant track
- c. Designation, Type, and Level of Degree:** New Program Planning Summary, Graduate Program, Master of Science
- d. Proposed Date of Implementation:** August 2016
- e. Supplemental Scholarship Eligibility:** Graduate program not eligible
- f. Delivery Mode:** Traditional

3. Justification

a. Need of the program in the state

The Association of American Medical Colleges predicts a growing shortage of physicians in the current decade with 45,000 too few primary care physicians by 2020. This shortage will greatly affect the Pee Dee and other rural areas of the state. These areas are already identified as medically underserved by the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, which considers the "continuing physician shortage, especially in rural areas," to be a major problem. Physician Assistants (PAs) are needed to address the growing shortage of primary care and family medicine providers.

According to the SC Health Professions Data Book (2012), there are currently 847 PAs practicing in the State of SC. Within the 12 county Pee Dee region, there are 138 PAs practicing, with 108 in Florence, Horry, and Sumter counties. Other counties are lacking PA practitioners and Marlboro and Lee counties do not have any.

As documented by the 2009 I-95 Corridor Study, poverty and high unemployment rates contribute to serious health problems in the northeastern section of South Carolina. Diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and stroke occur at rates higher than national averages. As already noted, much of northeastern South Carolina is rural, a circumstance that tends to limit access to health care services. The Pee Dee region includes large numbers of low-income families and minorities who constitute a medically underserved population. The PA Program at Francis Marion University (FMU) will help alleviate the health care needs of this population.

b. Relationship of the proposed program to the existing programs at FMU

Francis Marion University already offers a MSN/Family Nurse Practitioner degree and the students in the PA program will share selected classes and resources with the MSN/FNP program. The interaction between PA students and faculty and Family Nurse Practitioner students and faculty is a positive feature of the PA program as it emulates working conditions in the health care profession, which increasingly emphasizes health care teams. Interprofessional education has been supported by the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC), comprised of 6 professional associations of health education, in a report from an expert panel in 2011. In March 2013 the Institute of Medicine released a report supporting the role of interprofessional education in improving delivery of healthcare.

c. Assessment of extent to which the proposed program duplicates existing programs in the state

There is one other PA program in the state of South Carolina, which is offered by Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). In contrast, the State of North Carolina is

home to seven PA programs with additional programs being planned. Furthermore, the FMU PA program, among other objectives, will prepare PAs for rural practice in order to improve health care delivery in the Pee Dee region, which was one of the critical needs cited by the 2009 I-95 Corridor Study.

4. Program Demand and Productivity

a. Anticipated enrollment in fourth year

The program will commence with 25 students and will grow to an intake of 30 by year 3. By the fourth year of existence, the program should have 87 students during the fall semester and 60 in spring after December graduation.

b. Anticipated number of annual completions after the fourth year

After the fourth year there will be 30 completions each year.

5. Employment Opportunities for Graduates

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012-2013) Occupational Outlook Handbook states the job prospects are good for physician assistants, particularly for those working in rural and medically underserved areas and in primary care. Employment growth nationally is expected to be 30% between 2010 and 2020, well above the average overall employment growth rate.

The Office for Healthcare Workforce Analysis and Planning in SC (2011) estimates a 40% growth in employment of PAs from 2008 to 2018. “Growth for physician assistant positions is expected to be even stronger (than physicians), reflecting new models of care delivery that recognize the value of interdisciplinary teams. Overall, the majority of the annual openings for physicians and physician assistants are expected to come from new job growth rather than from replacement needs.”

A recent survey of Pee Dee physicians ($N = 90$) found that 42% of respondents would be hiring a PA and 28% may hire a PA in the near future. Thirty three percent of respondents were willing to be a preceptor for PA students and a further 42% may act as a preceptors.

6. Full time PA Curriculum

Semester	Course	Credits
Fall	PA – Anatomy and Physical Assessment Basics (4) PA - Physiology and Pharmacology Basics (4) PA – Fundamentals of Medicine and Role of the PA (3) PA – Interpersonal Communication and History Taking (2) PA/APRN 505 Population Health and Epidemiology(3)	16
Spring Content areas: Cardiology, Pulmonary, Gastrointestinal, and Genitourinary		
Spring	PA - Integrative Pathophysiology and Pharmacotherapeutics I (4) PA – Clinical Assessment, Diagnosis and Application I (5) PA – Clinical Interventions and Diagnostics I (3) PA/APRN 506 Health Systems and Risk Management (3)	15
Summer Content areas: Hematology, Endocrinology, Infectious Diseases, Neurology and Psychiatry		
Summer	PA - Integrative Pathophysiology and Pharmacotherapeutics II (4) PA - Clinical Assessment, Diagnosis and Application II (5) PA – Clinical Interventions and Diagnostics II (3)	15

	PA/APRN 503 Advanced Research and Evidence-based Practice (3)	
Fall Content areas: Musculoskeletal, Dermatology, EENT and OG/GYN		
Fall	PA - Integrative Pathophysiology and Pharmacotherapeutics III (4) PA - Clinical Assessment, Diagnosis and Application III (5) PA – Clinical Interventions and Diagnostics III (3) PA/APRN 707 Clinical Decision-making and Ethics (3)	15
Clinical Year		
Spring	PA – Clinical Rotations* PA – Professional Practice Seminar I (2)	14
Summer	PA – Clinical Rotations*	12
Fall	PA – Clinical Rotations* PA – Capstone (3)	15
Total		102 SH

*Rotations will cover family medicine, OB/GYN, pediatrics, geriatrics, psychiatry, emergency medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, and 1 elective.

7. Articulation and Inter-institutional Cooperation

In 2008, Francis Marion University took the lead in organizing the Pee Dee Health Education Partnership, a consortium composed of FMU, the University of South Carolina, McLeod Health, and Carolinas Hospital System. Approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education in October 2008, the Pee Dee Health Education Partnership provides a framework for new health care degree programs to be offered by FMU and its partners. The PA program, which is a priority identified in the strategic plan of the Pee Dee Health Education Partnership, is being developed in cooperation with the USC School of Medicine.

Support for clinical education for the PA program will come from the two regional medical centers and multiple primary care organizations in the region. The Pee Dee Area Health Education Center (AHEC) is located in Florence and will assist in coordinating placement of students in clinical sites.

8. Estimate of Costs

Personnel Budget: 1. PA program director (PA or MD) at a cost of \$160,800 including fringes. Medical Director (part time) \$50,000 2. Four additional faculty members (3 PAs) with terminal degrees at a cost \$469,000. 3. One administrative assistant, \$40,200. 4. The program will be administered under the organizational structure of the FMU Department of Health Sciences. Estimated personnel total = \$720,000.

Equipment and Materials: The annual operating budget to cover other costs is projected at \$50,000 per year due to collaborative use of the nursing skills and simulation lab.

Facilities: FMU has attained funding to build a new Health Sciences Building in downtown Florence close to 2 major hospitals. This building will be completed in Summer 2016 and will also house the FMU Family Nurse Practitioner program and 3rd and 4th year medical students from USC School of Medicine.