



RURAL HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM (RHOP) PROGRAM STANDARDS for the PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT OPTION Participants and Alternates

PHILOSOPHY

The Physician Assistant Option in the Rural Health Opportunities Program (RHOP) is a cooperative program between Chadron State College (CSC), Peru State College (PSC), or Wayne State College (WSC) and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) Physician Assistant (PA) Program. The purpose of the RHOP Program is to recruit and educate individuals from rural areas of Nebraska who will return to underserved rural areas of the state to practice as physician assistants.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE RHOP PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT OPTION

The RHOP Program has two required phases. The first phase is a specifically designed curriculum at the undergraduate level with the goal of preparing students for the UNMC Physician Assistant Program. It is a four year curriculum and requires obtaining a bachelor's degree. This phase of the RHOP Program is designated as the "Undergraduate Phase."

The second phase of the program is the completion of the professional Physician Assistant Program at UNMC. This phase of the RHOP Program is designated as the "UNMC Professional Phase." During the clinical phase of the PA Program, students should be prepared to complete most or all of their clinical medical education in rural areas of Nebraska.

An individual choosing the Physician Assistant Option is expected to be dedicated to a career in rural medicine, be fully informed as to the role of the physician assistant as a rural health care provider, be highly motivated toward academic achievement and professional competence, and be committed to returning to rural Nebraska to practice.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE RHOP PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT OPTION

COURSE WORK REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE PHASE

1. Each student is required to follow a curriculum designed for this option of RHOP. A designated program of study for this option is considered a part of these Requirements and Policies. The student following this program of study will earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology-Human Biology Option (CSC). The completion of the degree is required.
2. Students will be required to complete the designated course of study in four academic years (eight semesters of continuous study). Any exception to this time schedule must be approved by both the Undergraduate PA Option Academic Advisor and the PA RHOP Director at UNMC.

3. Each student must obtain approval from the Undergraduate PA Option Academic Advisor before registering for or dropping any class.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE PHASE

To remain in good standing and continue in the Undergraduate Phase of the RHOP Program, the following **Academic Standards** will apply:

1. The student must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher.
2. The student must attain a grade of C or higher in all coursework.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

Academic probation is recommended and communicated by the designated State College Mentor at the NSC institution responsible for monitoring student performance. The State College Mentor, in consultation with the PA RHOP Director, will determine what the student must do to improve their academic performance to be removed from RHOP academic probation. A student will automatically be placed on academic probation if they withdraw from all classes without prior approval of the PA State College Mentor and the PA RHOP director or if they drop below the required full-time academic enrollment status.

The following probationary consequences will be in effect for a student failing to achieve both of the Academic Standards in a given semester:

1. Must meet with their academic advisor.
2. Repeat any course in which a grade below C was obtained. A grade of C or higher must be obtained in the repeated course.
3. Will be placed on automatic academic probation for the following semester. Should a student be enrolled during a summer session prior to the next semester following a failure, the student will be on probation for both the summer session and the following semester.

The student must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 during the period of probation and may not receive a grade below C in any course during that period. Should the student not attain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and/or receive a grade below C in any course during the period of probation, the student will be dismissed from the RHOP Program. Students may not exceed more than two probationary periods during the NSC phase. A third failure to meet any of the standards for academic progress in any subsequent semester will result in dismissal from the RHOP Program.

DISMISSAL

Dismissal from RHOP constitutes formal action initiated by the UNMC PA Program in consultation with the NSC institution. The student will be dismissed from the RHOP program for any of the following:

1. Failure to comply with the academic requirements listed under “ACADEMIC STANDARDS.”
2. Failure to comply with imposed “ACADEMIC PROBATION” terms and failure to complete all of the recommendations for improving academic performance.
3. Failure to comply with undergraduate coursework and/or professional development requirements.

4. Failure to satisfactorily complete the NSC phase coursework as defined by the academic standards for good standing.

Immediate dismissal from RHOP may result from illegal, unprofessional behavior, or a breach of academic integrity. A copy of the dismissal notice and terms provided to the student by the NSC (undergraduate) institution will be shared with the UNMC PA Program Director.

PERSONAL BEHAVIOR REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE PHASE

Students must exhibit professional and personal behaviors that reflect positively on them, the undergraduate institution, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center. This includes summers and vacations. The students in RHOP are expected to comply with all campus standards of behavior as described in the CSC Student Handbook, **as well as RHOP standards which include attending classes as scheduled, promptness, exhibiting respect toward fellow students and faculty, and displaying initiative and leadership skills.** Failure to comply with these requirements will result in probationary and/or disciplinary action including dismissal from RHOP. All students are reminded that drug and alcohol offenses, felony convictions, and other similar violations of the law will result in absolute denial of admission to the UNMC professional phase.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DURING THE NSC PHASE

1. Students must keep an RHOP journal chronicling activities that illustrate their understanding of the art and practice of medicine, that explains the motivation for them to become physician assistants practicing in rural Nebraska, and that contribute to their professional development. Students are also expected to record their reactions to and their perceptions of the required RHOP activities. The journals must be completed on a computer so that copies can be printed upon request. A copy of the journal must be submitted to the NSC Phase RHOP Office at the end of each semester and the UNMC PA Program at the end of each academic year in May. The journal will be read by the NSC PA Option Academic Advisor and the faculty at the Physician Assistant Program at UNMC. The journal is an important personalized chronicle documenting a student's involvement and development in the NSC Phase of the RHOP program. Therefore, failure to adequately complete this requirement may be cause for dismissal from the program.
2. During the student's enrollment in the NSC Phase, every RHOP student is required to shadow (or follow) in clinical settings physician assistants for a minimum of 32 hours. Shadowing hours must be completed by September 1 of the senior year and documented on the CASPA application and must include the following: date, name of PA, location, type of practice (area of medicine, clinic vs. hospital, etc), and number of hours. The student's impressions of the experience should be recorded in their journal. Some of the shadowing must occur in rural Nebraska, enabling the student to develop a significant understanding of what it is like to practice as a PA in rural Nebraska. This requirement can be completed during the summer, school vacations, or during the school term. Students are encouraged to develop a professional association with a practicing PA in rural Nebraska in order to higher facilitate and broaden their understanding of rural practice.
3. Students must enroll or attend any required RHOP credit and non-credit classes, workshops, and videoconferences conducted by the University of Nebraska Medical

Center. Experiences with and perceptions of these activities should be recorded in the journal.

4. During his or her enrollment in the NSC Phase, every RHOP student is required to obtain direct patient care experience of at least 300 hours through volunteering, health care training (e.g. CNA, CMA, EMT, phlebotomy), or part-time employment at a health facility. This may include helping with activities such as Rural Health Screening Days for Rural Schools and Immunization Clinics for Children. Each experience must be completed by September 1 of the senior year and documented on the CASPA application and must include the following: dates, type of experience, location of experience, person supervising the experience, and number of hours included in the experience. Shadowing experiences are not considered direct patient care experience and may not be included in this activity.
5. Students must participate in on-campus activities that help develop their ability to interact with people. This would include meetings with health care providers, helping with RHOP interviews, participating in student government, or the specific activities associated with each institution below.

Chadron State College: Health Professions Club and Health Professions Day.

Peru State College: Rotaract, American Red Cross Club or Peru State

College Science Club. Serve as a Peru State TeamMate Mentor in an area school or, alternatively, a Resident Assistant.

Wayne State College: Pre-PA Club

6. Each RHOP student should return to their high school at least once during their studies at CSC to promote RHOP.

The requirements for professional development as detailed above are extremely important for admission to the UNMC Professional Phase of the RHOP Program and should not be minimized by the student. The student's CASPA application and submission of other requested materials for admission to the UNMC Professional Phase during the senior year of the NSC Phase must demonstrate adequate compliance with the Professional Development Requirements for the NSC Phase. Students failing to demonstrate adequate Personal Behaviors and Professional Development, in the judgment of the UNMC Admissions Committee, will be denied admission to the UNMC Professional Phase of the Program or be deferred for additional academic work or experiential activity for a period of time determined by the UNMC Admissions Committee.

SENIOR YEAR APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW REQUIREMENT

While successful completion of the requirements for the Undergraduate Phase Physician Assistant Option will normally guarantee admission to the UNMC Professional Phase, students must demonstrate evidence of their personal maturity, professional development and academic preparedness for the UNMC Phase of the PA Program. Students will be required to submit a final CASPA application and journal summation and complete an interview with the UNMC PA Admissions Committee during the senior year of the Undergraduate Phase of the RHOP Program. The application will contain a summation of the compliance with the requirements of the Undergraduate Phase (over the 4 years) and the interview will assess the student's readiness for professional study at UNMC. Should the Committee find that a student is not prepared for professional study at UNMC for any reason, the student's admission will be deferred for a time determined by the Committee. During that time, the student may be required to do additional course work or be assigned experiential learning activities before being admitted. However, if after a

thorough analysis of the applicant's interview, application materials, and extra work (if any), the student is found by the committee to be unsuitable for the profession, the student will be denied admission to the UNMC Professional Phase of the Program.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DURING THE NSC PHASE

SENIOR YEAR APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW REQUIREMENT

While successful completion of the requirements for the NSC Phase Physician Assistant Option will normally guarantee admission to the UNMC Professional Phase, students must demonstrate evidence of their personal maturity, professional development, and academic preparedness for the UNMC Phase of the PA Program. Students will be required to submit a CASPA application and complete an interview with the UNMC PA Admissions Committee during the senior year of the NSC Phase of the RHOP Program. The application will contain a summation of the compliance with the requirements of the NSC Phase (over the 4 years) and the interview will assess the student's readiness for professional study at UNMC. If the student has a confirmed substantial "red flag" on the interview when reviewed by the UNMC PA Admissions Committee, the student may be denied entry to the UNMC PA Program. Should the UNMC PA Admissions Committee find that a student is not prepared for professional study at UNMC for any reason, including performing below the minimum acceptable score for all applicants on the interview, the student's admission will be deferred for a time determined by the Committee. During that time, the student may be required to do additional course work or be assigned experiential learning activities before being admitted. However, if after a thorough analysis of the applicant's interview, application materials, and extra work (if any), the student is found by the committee to be unsuitable for the profession, the student will be denied admission to the UNMC Professional Phase of the Program.

CHANGING DATE OF ENTRY PROCEDURE

Any RHOP student wishing to change the date of admission into the Physician Assistant Program on the UNMC campus must petition in writing to both the NSC Phase PA Option Academic Advisor and the RHOP Director of the Physician Assistant Program at UNMC. The petition should state in detail the reasons for the requested change, the proposed new date of admissions, and what academic preparation will continue for entry into the PA Program at UNMC. A decision to allow the change or not will be made as soon as possible after the submission of the request.

ALTERNATE TRANSITION TO PARTICIPANT STATUS

In the event that any of the candidates selected as participants in this class and in this option decide not to accept a position, withdraw after entering the program, or are dismissed from the program, the PA RHOP Director and the NSC institution may select a replacement among the alternates in the same matriculating cohort. Alternates will be ranked during initial admission to RHOP and will be accepted in that order for freshman year matriculation only should full participants decline to accept a position. Academic accomplishments, progress within the curriculum, and participation in professional development activities will be considered in the selection of an alternate to fill each vacancy that occurs after initial freshman year matriculation. A second interview by the PA Program may be requested. Each alternate maintains their PA alternate status as long as they are enrolled full-time in the undergraduate program and have met all of the academic, course work and professional development requirements.

ENTRANCE OF THE PARTICIPANTS INTO THE PROFESSIONAL PHASE

In order for a participant to enter the UNMC Professional Phase at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, he/she must have:

1. Met all academic standards, enrollment requirements, and professional development requirements throughout his/her enrollment in the NSC Phase and received a bachelor's degree.
2. Met all UNMC PA Program pre-requisite coursework and requirements.
3. A complete application through the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) submitted after the CASPA application opening date in April and before September 1st in between junior and senior year.
4. Documentation of at least 300 hours of direct patient care experience. This must be included with the CASPA application.
5. Documentation of at least 32 hours of PA shadowing. This must be included with the CASPA application.
6. An interview at the UNMC PA Program during the senior year that meets minimum acceptable standards for entry, determined by the UNMC PA Admissions Committee.
7. Consistently demonstrated professional and personal behaviors and attitudes as stipulated in the Personal Behavior Requirements.

CAMPUS ASSIGNMENT

The UNMC PA Program has two campuses, Omaha and Kearney. RHOP participants, upon successful completion of the NSC Phase, are eligible to attend either campus. Campus assignments will be made by the PA Program with every attempt to honor the applicant's preference, which will be declared by the applicant on the CASPA application. Priority for campus assignment preference is based on the strength of the application and the PA program interview per the UNMC Admissions Committee procedures for all applicants. Applicants with quality direct patient care experience, shadowing and patient care hours above the minimum requirements, high grades in required pre-requisite coursework, and a strong interview are most likely to receive their preferred campus assignment.

