

PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM FACTS SHEET

The Physical Therapist Assistant program at Wallace State Community College is a two-year course of study. The first year of general education prerequisites should be complete before being eligible to apply to the Physical Therapist Assistant Program. Three semesters are necessary to complete the final year of the program, which begins in the fall semester. The second-year classes include technical and clinical experience in a variety of health-care settings where the student performs selected clinical procedures under the supervision of a Licensed Physical Therapist or Physical Therapist Assistant.

- ◆ [What do PTA's do?](#)
- ◆ [Where can I obtain information about the program?](#)
- ◆ [When can I apply for the program?](#)
- ◆ [What information is required to complete an application?](#)
- ◆ [How much volunteer/observation experience is required and where can I go to get the required hours?](#)
- ◆ [Is it necessary to get letters of recommendation in order to better my chances of being accepted into the program?](#)
- ◆ [Do you require the ACT or any other special entrance exams in order to be admitted into the program?](#)
- ◆ [What courses are required for admission into the program?](#)
- ◆ [Do I have to complete the prerequisites in one year?](#)
- ◆ [Can the prerequisite courses be taken at any other colleges?](#)
- ◆ [Am I required to retake the Placement Test if I am transferring in from another school and have had the English and Math requirements?](#)
- ◆ [Are there any other courses for the PTA program that can be taken prior to my acceptance?](#)
- ◆ [When must the prerequisite courses be completed?](#)
- ◆ [What is the minimum GPA required for program admission?](#)
- ◆ [How is the prerequisite GPA determined for program admission and what if some of those courses have been retaken?](#)
- ◆ [How many students apply to the program and how many are accepted each year?](#)
- ◆ [Are CPR certifications, physical examinations, background screening, drug testing, or any other medical testing required in order to complete an application?](#)
- ◆ [What is the timeline for the admissions process?](#)
- ◆ [If accepted to the PTA program, what is the expected financial cost of the second year?](#)
- ◆ [What is the length of the program?](#)
- ◆ [If accepted to the PTA program, what type of class schedule can I expect in a typical week?](#)
- ◆ [When does the Clinical Education Fieldwork begin and where does it take place?](#)
- ◆ [Are students able to work during the program?](#)
- ◆ [Are all of the PTA courses held on the WSCC campus in Hanceville?](#)
- ◆ [Is the PTA program fully accredited?](#)
- ◆ [Will the PTA program help me if I decide to go to PT school later?](#)
- ◆ [Will I be able to get a job after completing the PTA program?](#)
- ◆ [I have heard that there are about to be changes made to the PTA curriculum/program. What changes can I expect?](#)

What do PTA's do?

The Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) is a skilled technical health care worker who, under the supervision of a Physical Therapist, assists in patient treatment. The physical therapist assistant, following the plan of care developed by the supervising physical therapist, delivers care to the patient using established procedures. Duties of the PTA are varied but include rehabilitation of orthopedic, neurologic, pediatric, and sports-related problems. Physical Therapist Assistants are employed in general hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, home health-care agencies, private practices, and other specialized health-care settings.

[Return to top](#)

Where can I obtain information about the program?

You can make an appointment with a Health Program advisor through the ACTION (advising) Center at 256-352-8040. Students may call 256-352-8332 and speak with a PTA advisor Monday through Friday from 7:45-3:15 to set up advisory sessions, turn in applications, or register for classes. If an advisor is unavailable you may leave a message on the answering machine with a phone number where we can contact you. You may also contact the Office of Recruiting at 256-352-8031 to have a program application and program information mailed to you.

[Return to top](#)

When can I apply for the program?

Following the completion of the first year of general education / prerequisite courses, you should submit an application for the on-campus program prior to June 15 of the year in which you would like to start the PTA program classes. PTA Program on-classes begin in the fall of each year. Applications for the off-campus locations should be submitted prior to November 1 of the year in which you would like to start the PTA program classes. PTA Program off-classes begin in the spring semester of each year.

[Return to top](#)

What information is required to complete an application?

The following information is required to be submitted directly to the Admissions Office: WSCC application, official transcripts from each college attended and an ACT score of 18 or higher. The following information should be submitted directly to the PTA Program: completed PTA program application, documentation of physical therapy volunteer/observation experience, as well as student copies of your transcripts and ACT score.

[Return to top](#)

How much volunteer/observation experience is required and where can I go to get the required hours?

You must have 24 hours of observation in a minimum of 2 different facilities. The student should contact a local physical therapy department or clinic to arrange volunteer/ observation hours to be done under the supervision of a **Licensed PT or PTA only**. Hours of observation is one of three factors considered for admission, thus the more hours accumulated, the better your chances of being admitted.

[Return to top](#)

Is it necessary to get letters of recommendation in order to better my chances of being accepted into the program?

No. Letters of recommendation are not required and will not better anyone's chances of being accepted into the program.

[Return to top](#)

Do you require the ACT or any other special entrance exams in order to be admitted into the program?

Yes. A minimum score of 18 on the ACT is required in order for a student to be qualified for acceptance into the PTA Program, regardless of previous education or experiences. Individuals who have completed higher degrees are not exempt from this expectation. The ACT score is one of three factors considered for admission, thus the higher the score the better your chances of being admitted. Generally, ACT scores improve after college level work, especially Math and Science courses. If you are planning to retake the ACT, you might consider the ACT Residual Exam offered at WSCC. This exam is the same as the national exam but is offered on-campus, allowing for a quicker release of scores. However, a residual ACT score will not transfer to another institution.

[Return to top](#)

What courses are required for admission into the program?

Students are required to complete the following courses with a “C” or above in each: ORI-Orientation, ENG 101-English Composition I, Humanities Elective (the PTA Program recommends Ethics and the Health Sciences or Spanish), PSY 200-General Psychology, PSY 210-Developmental Psychology, SPH 106-Fundamentals of Oral Communication, HIT 110-Medical Terminology, MTH 100-Intermediate College Algebra, BIO 201 & 202-Human Anatomy and Physiology I & II(prerequisite is Biology 103). A full list of up-to-date courses and their credit hours can be found in the current WSCC catalog.

[Return to top](#)

Do I have to complete the prerequisites in one year?

No. You may take as long as you need in order to complete the requirements for admission into the program, however, the final year of PTA Program classes must be completed within the specified 3 semester sequence. The final 3 consecutive semesters begin in the fall each year for students attending the on-campus program. The 3 semester sequence for off-campus students begins in the spring.

[Return to top](#)

Can the prerequisite courses be taken at any other colleges?

Yes. Wallace State Community College in Hanceville has linkage programs with many other colleges in the state. This linkage relationship guarantees the transfer of certain specified prerequisite classes. For more information on the Linkage Program, follow the link on the PTA Program website. Even if your college is not part of our linkage program or may be out of state, courses are still transferable as long as they are equivalent to our prerequisites. Information on course equivalency may be obtained by contacting the Admissions office at 256-352-8128. A course description from your college catalog may be required.

[Return to top](#)

Am I required to retake the Placement Test if I am transferring in from another school and have had the English and Math requirements?

No. If you have just graduated high school and are entering WSCC for the first time a placement test is required prior to registering for English or Math classes. Placement testing is at your convenience in our computer lab. If you are transferring in Math or English classes it is not necessary to retake the placement test.

[Return to top](#)

Are there additional courses for the PTA program that can be taken prior to my acceptance?

Yes. HIT 115-Pathophysiology and Pharmacology is listed under the second year of classes. It is strongly recommended that it be taken prior to entering the program. This course is not required for program admission but in the event of an applicant tie for admission, priority will be given to individuals who have completed, or are currently enrolled in this course.

[Return to top](#)

When must the prerequisite courses be completed?

All prerequisites should be completed prior to the application deadline. Students who have completed all prerequisites prior to the application deadline will be considered over those applicants who are in the process of completing courses. Students who are completing prerequisite work during the term in which they are applying will only be considered on a space available basis. Currently the program is receiving a large number of applications from individuals that have completed all prerequisites. At this time it is highly unlikely that you will be considered for admission without having completed all prerequisites. Please see the [Program Statistics](#) link for additional details.

[Return to top](#)

What is the minimum GPA required for program admission?

A minimum 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale is required. The GPA is one of three factors considered for admission, thus the higher the score the better your chances for admission.

[Return to top](#)

How is the prerequisite GPA determined for program admission and what if some of the courses have been retaken?

The prerequisite GPA considers only the grades achieved in each of the prerequisite courses. The PTA Program no longer uses a cumulative GPA. During the application process the highest grade achieved in each prerequisite class is used to determine the applicant's prerequisite GPA. Thus, this score can be improved by retaking any course in which you achieved less than an "A". Every prerequisite class in which you score an "A" put you that much closer to a 4.0 prerequisite GPA and thus the highest possible score in this category. The GPA is extremely important to program admission.

[Return to top](#)

How many students apply to the program and how many are accepted each year?

The number of applications submitted varies from year to year. For example, in 2008 more than 95 individuals submitted applications to the PTA Program. There is not a waiting list and every qualified applicant will be considered. Currently, the program accepts 30 on-campus students each year in the fall and 20 off-campus students each year in the spring using a process that considers prerequisite GPA, ACT and hours of observation. More specific information is available on the [Program Statistics](#) link.

[Return to top](#)

Are CPR certifications, physical examinations, background checks, drug testing or any other medical testing required in order to complete an application?

No. The required physical exam, drug testing, background screening, and CPR certification are completed after beginning the program so that each will be current and valid throughout the clinical rotations.

[Return to top](#)

What is the timeline for the admissions process?

The Program begins accepting applications for the on-campus program in March of each year with a final deadline for all applications by June 15. Applications for the off-campus programs are accepted beginning in September of each year with a final deadline for all applications by November 1. All applicants are contacted by letter within approximately 4 – 6 weeks, prior to PTA Program on-campus classes beginning in mid-August or off-campus classes beginning in January.

[Return to top](#)

Upon acceptance, what is the expected financial cost of the second year of study?

Generally, an in-state student should anticipate a tuition/fees cost of \$3780, a book cost of \$1400, and approximately \$1000 in miscellaneous expenses. This does not include any expenses related to clinical classes. Tuition and fees for out of state students is approximately \$6500. This is an estimate and subject to change. Tuition costs are published each semester when the schedule is released – please see the WSCC website to view the current schedule.

[Return to top](#)

What is the length of the program?

Ideally, the Program takes approximately 2 years to complete - 2 semesters of prerequisites and 3 semesters of major required courses. The PTA Program classes are 3 consecutive semesters and must be completed within those 3 semesters. The on-campus classes begin in the fall of each year and graduate the following summer term. The off-campus programs begin in the spring and graduate the following spring term.

[Return to top](#)

If accepted to the PTA program, what type of class schedule can I expect in a typical week?

The PTA student should prepare for classes that meet five days a week in the fall and spring semesters. The PTA Program is not a part-time program and requires an intensive amount of studying when not in class. However, the program is currently exploring new class schedules that reduce the total number of days a student comes to campus. For example, fall 2008 classes met on Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00 – 6:00 and Wednesday from 8:00 – 12:00. Off-campus program students can expect to follow a similar Tuesday / Thursday schedule at the off-campus facility and be on-campus at WSCC one day per week. However, during clinical education assignments students will be required to stay at their assigned facility during normal business hours which may run 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Hours will vary depending on the facility.

[Return to top](#)

When does Clinical Education Fieldwork begin and where does it take place?

The first clinical rotation is during the last two weeks of the first program semester and a second clinical rotation is scheduled for three weeks midway through the second semester. The final semester of the program consists of 2 five-week full-time rotations. The program has an extensive clinical network ranging from Hanceville, Alabama to Alaska. Students are placed based on educational needs and site availability. All clinical travel expenses are the responsibility of the student.

[Return to top](#)

Are students able to work during the program?

Yes. However, full-time employment is not recommended so that appropriate study time is available. The course load is a full-time load and a student should expect to spend 2-3 hours of study time outside of class for each credit hour in which they are enrolled. Students should contact the Office of Financial Aid at 256-352-8137 to discuss financial aid options.

[Return to top](#)

Are all of the PTA courses held on the campus at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville?

All of the academic course work for the on-campus, fall start date is held at the Hanceville campus. However, the PTA Program also plans to offer two off-campus program options beginning spring 2009. We are currently finalizing partnerships with Northeast Community College in Rainsville, Alabama and Beville State Community College in Hamilton, Alabama. Plans are to accept 20 students – 10 at each off-campus location. Students attending the off-campus locations are still WSCC students – they simply attend lab classes at a location closer to their home. The clinical education portion of the Program is in various health care facilities both in-state and out-of-state. Additionally, there may be field trips that require students to drive and/or carpool to a given facility within a reasonable distance of the school.

[Return to top](#)

Is the PTA program fully accredited?

Yes. The Program is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Accreditation approval for the off-campus locations is expected to be granted in late October 2008. Information about accreditation can be obtained from the APTA at www.apta.org. Further contact information can be found on the [Licensure/Accreditation](#) link.

[Return to top](#)

Will the PTA program help me if I decide to go to PT school later?

All physical therapy programs require that you complete at least a bachelor's degree, and sometimes a master's degree, prior to admission. While many of the PTA program prerequisites and required courses may be counted toward completing your bachelor's, it is not a direct step into a PT program. Advantages of completing the PTA program prior to beginning a PT program include enhanced academic preparation, improved understanding of the profession and an excellent job to finance your future education plans. Individuals who are interested in pursuing a degree as a physical therapist should contact the school of their choice for admission requirements. A listing of accredited physical therapy programs is available through the American Physical Therapy Association website at www.apta.org

[Return to top](#)

Will I be able to get a job after completing the PTA program?

Graduates are eligible to sit for the National Physical Therapist Assistant Examination. Following successful completion of the exam, a licensed physical therapist assistant will find job opportunities nationwide. Naturally, employment opportunities fluctuate within geographic regions and practice locations. Currently a new graduate can expect a starting salary of \$35,000-58,000 annually.

[Return to top](#)

I have heard that there are about to be changes made to the PTA curriculum/program. What changes can I expect?

The PTA Program is constantly changing and improving to meet the demands of a dynamic marketplace. However, when changes occur in admissions standards, prerequisites or program classes, the changes are first communicated through the WSCC and PTA Program websites. It will also be published in the next catalog release and PTA Program brochures or other advertising. Also, changes of this type always involve a transition year in which either old or new requirements are acceptable for program admission consideration.

[Return to top](#)