



PROPOSED

RESOLUTION

COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

November 8th, 2018

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES OF
WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY
APPROVE THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES TO MOVE
FORWARD TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER
EDUCATION FOR FINAL APPROVAL, PENDING APPROVAL BY THE OFFICE OF THE
CHANCELLOR

APPROVED PENDING ACTION BY THE COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES

Christopher M. Fiorentino, Ph.D.
President

November 8, 2018
Date

APPROVED BY VOTE OF THE COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES

Thomas Fillippo, Chairperson
Council of Trustees

November 8, 2018
Date



Council of Trustees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

The Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies at West Chester University of Pennsylvania will provide regional students with access to an affordable, high quality education within the healthcare field. It is intended to prepare regional professionals to practice medicine on multidisciplinary teams with physicians and other healthcare providers. The proposed course of study is a two-year 93-credit program. The high number of credits is consistent with other physician assistant programs that are accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant. Through both online and face-to-face instruction, the proposed program provides students with an opportunity to learn how to infuse evidence-based practice in pursuit of improving patient outcomes within the Commonwealth.

There are two masters level programs in Physician Assistant Studies within the State System: Lock Haven and Slippery Rock. Because of specialized accreditation requirements, the majority of the curricula at these institutions have course sequences that lead to similar student learning outcomes and competencies. However, the proposed program's curriculum and elective clinical rotations differ in terms of focus and reflects regional healthcare needs. Both Lock Haven and Slippery Rock's programs focus on filling the gap in healthcare services particularly among rural communities. The proposed program at West Chester University instead focuses on chronic injury/illness resulting from the aging process. Individuals are living longer and are more active today than they were 10 years ago and as a result, are more likely to experience chronic injury/illness needing both preventive and acute care treatment. Thus, the focus of the proposed program is uniquely different from those that currently exist in the State System, allowing System institutions to target and recruit different populations of students.

In addition to the two physician assistant programs within the State System, there are six programs at institutions within West Chester University's service region (Arcadia, Drexel, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Salus, Temple, and Thomas Jefferson). Each of these programs receives over 2,000 applications for their incoming classes with admissions offers ranging from 33 to 100 students, with more than half admitting 50 or fewer students. This data clearly indicates significant student demand for physician assistant programs.

The employment outlook for physician assistants is equally positive and complements the data on student interest in these educational opportunities. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that job opportunities for physician assistants will grow nationally by almost 38 percent between 2012 and 2022. A study conducted by Hanover Research (2015) states that the regional labor market for the occupation is also positive. Emsi Q4 2018 Occupational Overview data clearly indicate that the regional demand for this profession suggests graduates of physician assistant programs will encounter a positive employment environment. In fact, for each of the states in the Mid-Atlantic region, physician assistant jobs have or will increase by more than 10 percent, which is faster growth than for all occupations.

By allowing West Chester University to offer a physician assistant program, the State System of Higher Education will be providing residents of the southeastern region of the Commonwealth with access to a public higher education option, which is currently lacking in the area. Additionally, this program will provide local communities and healthcare settings with access to an educational offering designed to meet their needs.