

Physician Assistant/Associate

Pre-Professional Advising (PPA) can help with your professional school application! Schedule an appointment through [BoilerConnect](https://www.purdue.edu/boilerconnect) (purdue.campus.eab.com and look for CCO/Pre-Professional) or send questions to preprofessional@purdue.edu. As you begin to think about applying, you will find advance preparation will make the process much less stressful. This to-do list will help you prepare for your application.

Applying

- **Explore**—Visit the online common application (application service) you will be using and read over the website and instructions (Help Center). This will educate you on what information you will need for your application.
 - [Application Checklist](https://paeaonline.org/how-we-can-help/advisors/caspa-application-checklist) <https://paeaonline.org/how-we-can-help/advisors/caspa-application-checklist>
 - [CASPA](https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login) <https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>
 - [CASPA Help Center](https://help.liaisonedu.com/CASPA_Applicant_Help_Center) https://help.liaisonedu.com/CASPA_Applicant_Help_Center
 - Individual school websites for schools not included on CASPA
 - [PA Program Directory](https://paeaonline.org/our-programs) <https://paeaonline.org/our-programs>
 - [CASPA programs and accreditation](https://help.liaisonedu.com/CASPA_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_CASPA_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_CASPA_Application/3_CASPA_Participating_Programs_and_Eligibility) https://help.liaisonedu.com/CASPA_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_CASPA_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_CASPA_Application/3_CASPA_Participating_Programs_and_Eligibility
- **Get Advice**—[Make an appointment](https://www.purdue.edu/boilerconnect/) with Pre-Professional Advising to discuss your application. <https://www.purdue.edu/boilerconnect/>
- **Letters**—Figure out who will write your letters and make an appointment to discuss it with them.
 - Letters needed for most schools:
 - 1-2 science faculty who have had you in class—typically the lecture (not lab instructor) and at least one should be from a biology, chemistry, or physics professor
 - Often a physician assistant (or a physician) you have worked with/shadowed
 - 1 personal letter from someone who supervised or observed you in a non-classroom setting—typically this would be from research, shadowing, a job, volunteer work, etc.
 - Research your schools early on and make sure you are obtaining appropriate letters for the schools at which you are applying.
- **Brainstorm**—Start thinking about your application essay and your activities section. Gather some thoughts to help you write your personal statement.
 - Email PPA to request brainstorming handouts to help you in developing your personal statement. preprofessional@purdue.edu
- **Writing the Personal Statement**—These essays are an important element of your application and needs to be taken seriously. It expresses why you want to enter the field and allows schools to get to know you better. Some schools may ask for additional essays as part of a supplemental application.
 - Pay close attention to any required prompt
 - Write clearly and concisely
 - Be descriptive and provide concrete examples
 - Think about your reader
 - You have 3000 characters counting spaces for VMCAS. TMDSAS allows 5000 characters counting spaces. TMDSAS also has a personal characteristics essay of 2500 characters and a third required essay of 2500 characters.
- **Review your Personal Statement**
 - Have trusted friends, faculty, and advisors provide comments on your personal statement. You want a range of people reading and commenting on it as different people will react differently to it.
 - Discuss any writing difficulties with [Purdue Writing Lab](https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/the_writing_lab_at_purdue.html). https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/the_writing_lab_at_purdue.html
 - If you want the Pre-Professional Advisors to read your draft and provide comments, please email as a Word attachment to preprofessional@purdue.edu
- **Research Schools**—Research the schools to which you will apply. The [PAEA Program Directory](https://paeaonline.org/our-programs) is a useful tool for searching for programs. <https://paeaonline.org/our-programs>
 - Your state residency makes a difference in terms of acceptance at state schools. Your state school(s) is/are the

- most likely to accept you. Even if you hope to leave your state, you must apply at your own state school(s).
- Think about what you value in a program. Location (area of country, urban/college town/rural setting, relatively close to family, far from family, etc); curriculum structure; school's mission; etc.
- Make a chart with items such as contact information, any additional requirements you need, extra application requirements, and the types letters of recommendation they require.
- [Duke University's PA Program Database](https://medschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/020122SchoolComparisonSpreadsheet.pdf) has an excellent example you can use to get started
<https://medschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/020122SchoolComparisonSpreadsheet.pdf>
- **Organize**—You will need to list your activities, awards, research, animal experience and veterinarian supervised experiences. Start gathering all this information early. Better yet, as an undergrad, keep a log as you go.
- **Clean House**—Be sure all of your social media is professional and your email address and phone messages are appropriate for communication with professional programs.
 - Please note, some schools do look for and check your social media to see if it is appropriate. Make sure you lock down your privacy settings as much as possible.
 - Make sure your phone mailbox is open and available in case they need to reach you.
 - Check your email regularly during the application process—this is the most common method of communication for schools.
 - Be sure to check your junk mail/spam as well in case a school's messages somehow get caught there.

Additional Preparation

- **Sending Transcripts**—You will need to send transcripts for all college-level credits you have earned.
 - The application service will provide a transcript form (Transcript ID Form) that should be sent along with your transcript. Purdue does not use any of the electronic systems that VMCAS requires for sending electronic transcripts.
 - You must select a PAPER transcript for Purdue.
 - [Instructions for sending your Purdue transcripts](https://www.purdue.edu/preprofessional/Learning%20Center/Applying.php) are available on the PPA website.
<https://www.purdue.edu/preprofessional/Learning%20Center/Applying.php>
- **Interview Preparation**—Watch for news in your professional area and start preparing for interviews.
 - Pay attention to current events, animal news, and health news. These often come up in interviews.
 - Research how your schools do interviews.
 - Look at the PPA website for information on using Big Interview, an online tool to practice interviewing.
 - Email PPA for lists of questions to help you practice.
- **Parallel Planning**—Develop your back-up plan during your application year and fill any gaps in your application in case you need to apply again.
 - Think carefully about where any gaps are in your application as you fill it out.
 - During your application year, work on filling those gaps so that if you need to apply again, you will be in a better place.
 - In interviews, schools often ask about what you will do if you don't get in. You need to be able to answer this. So work on your back-up plan if for no other reason than to have a great answer to this question.
- **Financial Planning**—If you qualify for U.S. Federal Loans, file your FAFSA even if you have not yet been admitted so that you have it if you need it.
 - [Paying for PA School](https://paeaonline.org/how-we-can-help/advisors/paying-for-pa-school) <https://paeaonline.org/how-we-can-help/advisors/paying-for-pa-school>
 - Although it is a medical school site, the [FIRST site](https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid) from the AAMC has some great financial planning information.
<https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid>

Early Application is a Good Thing!

- One of the easiest things you can do to help your application is to apply early. Submit in June or early July if at all possible.
- Sometimes things happen and you want time to deal with any issues. This is why early application is useful.

Preparing for your Giant Leap

[purdue.edu/preprofessional](https://www.purdue.edu/preprofessional)