

Dear Fred,

In response to your question, the impetus for this proposal came from a request from Thomas Jefferson University that CHS establish a 3-year feeder articulation program for a new physician assistant program that they will be launching in a couple of years. As you may know, we already have a highly successful 3-year articulation with the occupational therapy program at Jefferson.

We carefully considered how to construct this program and where to house it within our College. Since the occupational therapy articulation resides within the health studies major, we considered that option. However, health studies is not a strongly science-based major and a pre-P.A. concentration was therefore not a logical fit. Since many of the exercise science majors go on to physician assistant programs, we also considered that major. However, with nearly 700 student majors and being the fourth largest major on campus, the department faculty did not wish to add a new concentration that would attract any additional students.

We settled on the medical diagnostics major as being the best “fit” for a pre-P.A. concentration. Designed as a pre-medical, pre-clinical major, medical diagnostics already includes most of the required prerequisite courses for physician assistant programs. Additionally the students in this major will get a good understanding of diagnostic tests and their clinical framework, which will serve as a good foundation for their later training as a physician assistant. Students in the medical diagnostics major learn the medical concepts associated with diagnostic testing, but do not take the laboratories for hands-on running of these tests which are taken by the medical laboratory science majors. The department faculty are enthusiastic about the opportunity to begin the training of students going on to a physician assistant program.

Of course, it is important to recognize that most physician assistant programs require that students have completed a 4-year baccalaureate degree prior to enrolling. That is to say, most of these programs do not do articulation agreements with undergraduate feeder programs. In reality, a student targeting a physician assistant program may select any major, so long as they also complete the prerequisite coursework required. Many of the majors at UD provide appropriate platforms for subsequent application to physician assistant programs. We fully expect that students coming out of majors such as exercise science and biology will continue to successfully gain admission to P.A. programs. But we are excited about the opportunity to enroll a limited number of highly qualified students in the 3-year articulation with Jefferson.

I hope I have answered your question. Please feel free to let me know if you have others.