

LLU PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What do physical therapist assistants do?

A: Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) work under the direction and supervision of Physical Therapists (PTs) in providing patient treatments. Physical therapy services include many different manual techniques and modalities to assist persons with functional impairments reach their full potential. PTs and PTAs work in many different settings, such as acute care hospitals, rehabilitation hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient clinics, schools and sports areas. Well-trained PTAs are highly respected in the physical therapy field.

Q: How can I be sure that the physical therapy field is for me?

A: Applicants must complete 80 hours of working or volunteering/observing in a physical therapy clinical site. Twenty of the hours must be completed in an in-patient setting such as a hospital or a skilled nursing facility. You may call a local hospital or clinic in order to make arrangements to observe. During this time you will see first hand how physical therapists and physical therapist assistants work with patients. You may wish to ask the therapist you are observing how they enjoy their work. This experience should help you decide if physical therapy is the field for you.

Q: What is the job market like for PTAs?

A: Right now the job market is crying out for PTAs. The reason for this is that several PTA programs have closed and there are not enough PTAs being trained to meet the demand. As a result of this shortage, the pay has increased. The hourly rate for graduated and licensed (passed the National Boards) PTAs is in the range of \$20 - \$30, depending on location and type of setting. After becoming experienced, this rate can increase.

Q: Does Loma Linda University find a job for me when I have finished the PTA program?

A: Not exactly, but we do offer help! The LLU School of Allied Health Professions has two outstanding resources for its students and alumni: 1) the online **Job Resource Center** at <http://www.llu.edu/llu/sahp/jrc.html> provides a wealth of contact opportunities specific to your area; 2) the annual **Job Fair** where local and national clinical facilities are represented by their Human Resource Department agents who come on campus to recruit our students and grads. In addition, the PTA program maintains a **Job Openings** bulletin board near our office for posting announcements and flyers for new PTA positions that we receive almost daily in the mail. Many of our students have a job offer from one or more of the clinical sites they visit on assignment by the time they have finished the program.

Q: Can I transfer into the PTA program at Loma Linda University?

A: Yes. All of our students must transfer to LLU from other schools because most of the prerequisite courses are not available at LLU.

Q: How long is the PTA program?

A: The length of the PTA program at Loma Linda University is 15 months. The prerequisite courses that must be taken before starting the program can be done in one year; however, many students spend more than a year on prerequisites prior to starting the program at LLU. The prerequisite courses may be completed at any *regionally* accredited university or community college.

Q: When does the program at Loma Linda University begin?

A: We start a new class of students once every year – in mid June.

Q: Is this a weekday, full time program or is it done on evenings and weekends?

A: This is a full time program, meeting approximately 8 hours per day, Monday – Thursday.

The usual hours are 8:00 am. – 5:00 pm. However, for the first 8 weeks during the first summer quarter, classes start at 1:00 pm – 9:00 pm with a break between 5 pm - 6:00pm. The clinical education assignments are generally 40 hours/wk, Monday – Friday.

Q: Can I take longer than 15 months to complete the PTA program?

A: We offer a two-year option that spreads the curriculum over a period of two years and three months. During most quarters, you attend classes on just two days per week.

Q: Can I take the courses one by one at my own pace?

A: No. You can either take the program in 1 ¼ years, or in 2 ¼ years. The curriculum must be taken in sequence as one course builds upon another. You will enroll in a specific “block” of courses reserved for the PTA students each quarter. You will have no problems getting into the classes you need to fulfill your program!

Q: When should I apply?

A: The preferred application window is between Aug. 1 and Nov. 1 for the following June starting date. However, the application window may be extended if the class is not full. You may apply if you have a plan to complete all prerequisite courses before the next June.

If you have difficulty finding and enrolling in the prerequisite courses, you may call the program director (Jeannine Mendes, 1 800 422-4558 #4) for assistance.

Q: What are the prerequisites?

A: You can find the prerequisites and transfer patterns for many colleges on the LLU website: www.llu.edu/llu/sahp/transfer. Find the list of colleges and click on the college that you plan to attend. You will find the Physical Therapist Assistant category of prerequisites on page 8 or 9 of that section. Select that page and print it if desired.

Q: What Grade Point Average (GPA) do I need in my prerequisites?

A: You must have a GPA of at least 2.5 from the three science courses, and at least 2.5 GPA in

the remaining prerequisite courses. We do not accept any courses with a C- grade or lower. When calculating your GPA, we only include the grades earned on the prerequisite courses. No other courses are included.

Q: If I do not have the required GPA, is there any hope of getting into the program?

A: You may re-take one or more prerequisite courses, if possible, to get higher grades. When you have received a better grade, we re-calculate your GPA using the better of the two grades. We do not keep both grades in the formula. This allows you to objectively reach the minimum GPA.

Q: What degree will I get?

A: A successful graduate of the PTA program receives an Associate of Science degree (AS).

Q: How much time is spent doing clinical affiliations and where will they be?

A: You will do four clinical rotations, each consisting of 40 hrs/week in a clinical setting. The first rotation is two weeks and the other three are each six weeks in length. Your affiliations will be in different settings to give you a broad experience. We have affiliation agreements with many hospitals and clinics throughout the country, and we have a full time faculty member (Carol Appleton), who oversees the clinical assignments and clinical education experiences. You will work with Carol to find a site that is available and suitable to meet your needs.

Q: How much does the program cost?

A: Because we are a private university, we do not receive any funding from Federal or State Government agencies. We need to provide for our expenses through tuition and fees alone. Your tuition and fees will cover tuition, student health insurance, liability insurance (during clinical rotations), graduation expenses and membership in our beautiful Drayson Center (a health and fitness center). The 15 month program will cost you approximately \$21,650 for tuition and fees. Other school-related expenses, including text-books, professional membership dues, and supplies will come to approx \$1,000. Tuition /fees are subject to change from year to year.

Q: How do I come up with this money?

A: Our Financial Aid Office will work with you to see what grants and loans are available. Contact them at (800) 422-4558 # 9, or visit the website at www.llu.edu/ssweb/finaid The sooner you get the financial aid process going, the more likely you are to get the best deals. **FAFSA FORMS MUST BE FILED BY MID FEBRUARY OF THE YEAR YOU PLAN TO START THE PROGRAM.** The FAFSA website is www.fafsa.ed.gov

Q: What is the difference between the LLU PTA program, and one at a *career* college?

A: Loma Linda University is accredited by the regional accrediting body, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The PTA program is also accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Our latest accreditation visit in 2002, granted us full accreditation until December 2011. **Only graduates from a CAPTE accredited program are eligible to take the National Licensing Examination to become a legal PTA.** Most *career* colleges are not accredited by WASC, and none are accredited by CAPTE. However, *Community* colleges are accredited by their respective regional accrediting agencies. Accreditation is important, because it allows you to transfer your course credits from one college or university to another. Some community colleges have CAPTE-accredited PTA programs. Follow the links at the following website and click on the option for PTA. www.apta.org/rt.cfm/education/accreditation

Q: Can I talk to someone to get advice?

A: Certainly, we are happy to advise you. You can contact us via phone 1 800 422-4558 # 4 or 1 909 558-4634, or by e-mail jmendes@llu.edu or you can make an appointment to come in and visit us in person.

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