

2012

Road Map to Becoming a Physician Assistant

Maguire J. Miller

University of Rhode Island, maguire_miller@my.uri.edu

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/srhonorsprog>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Medical Education Commons](#), and the [Other Medical Specialties Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Miller, Maguire J., "Road Map to Becoming a Physician Assistant" (2012). *Senior Honors Projects*. Paper 270.
<http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/srhonorsprog/270><http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/srhonorsprog/270>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at the University of Rhode Island at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.

Roadmap to Becoming a Physician Assistant

Maguire Miller

Sponsor: Brian Clinton, Biological Sciences

The field of medicine is under constant change and reconstruction, especially when it comes to healthcare practitioners. When a demand is placed on the system, healthcare providers must figure out how they can satisfy the medical needs of the population. Within the past few decades there has been a shortage of people who are capable of fulfilling these needs. For this reason a new profession has been developed; it is called a Physician Assistant (PA). Professionals with this title have been through a rigorous training modeled after what a medical student goes through, but it is condensed into a much shorter program. Once completed, a PA must pass a national board exam, and then they can work in practically any healthcare setting to diagnose and treat patients, including writing prescriptions, ordering tests, and interpreting labs results. The one limitation is the PA must work under the supervision of a doctor (MD or DO). However, supervision varies and can simply mean that the doctor needs to be available by phone.

Undergraduate students at the University of Rhode Island who are planning on going into healthcare may consider becoming a Physician Assistant. The problem with that is since the programs are newer than other healthcare options; there are currently a very limited amount of resources available to students exploring this opportunity. The requirements are different than those of medical schools, and can vary from PA school to PA school. The field also demands the student to experience a substantial amount of direct patient care to even be considered a good candidate. If an applicant is unaware of these requirements, he or she may need to take a few years off after graduating before being a strong enough applicant to be accepted into a program to become a PA.

As a senior, I have already been through this application process. It is highly competitive because there is less schooling and less expense (than medical school) and the profession itself is ultimately appealing. I found that the students at URI could benefit from a resource that guides them through the steps of becoming a successful applicant. Therefore I have compiled a web-based resource that can be used as an advising tool in the future. I researched background information on the profession, which includes comparing it to other similar professions and job satisfaction. I also looked into specific resources that the University of Rhode Island has to offer students who are headed down the path to becoming a Physician Assistant. This includes recommended courses, campus involvement, and ways to get hands-on patient care. Finally, I take the students through the application process. Graduate programs require personal statements, letters of reference and if you seem promising, an interview. I believe that many URI students seeking to become a Physician Assistant will benefit from my research in the future.