PA Program Accreditation Update and Curriculum Update

February 2015

http://cmich.ly/arcpa

Following the site visit review by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) in fall 2013, CMU’s PA program was placed on a two-year probation effective March 2014. Most of the concerns by the commission focus on administrative matters. This document gives an overview of the program, addresses key questions regarding accreditation, and provides an update as of February 2015.

Faculty and staff of Central Michigan University and its physician assistant program are proud of the contributions our alumni provide to society, and we remain strongly committed to maintaining the highest standards of our profession. We are fully dedicated to exceeding all expectations for optimal performance as determined by our accreditation commission (ARC-PA).

CMU graduates continue to outperform the majority of programs nationally on the PANCE examination, and we have already made significant improvements towards meeting our accreditors’ concerns. For example, we promptly updated our website to help potential and current students better determine their costs for attending the program and be able to seek opportunities for financial aid as appropriate. We also updated our patient encounter database to allow for improved tracking of key data as required by the ARC-PA. Furthermore, we improved our student-to-faculty ratio through the following initiatives:

- In August 2014, we recruited two new faculty: Dr. Vania Naydenova and Dawn Wesenberg, MPAS, MPH, PA-C.
- The PA student class size (starting with the cohort of 2016) was reduced from 41 to 34. Class size will continue to be reviewed annually. For the next PA student cohort of 2017 (admitted in May 2015), the class size will remain at 34. The class size of 34 will continue until process improvement initiatives are fully in place and determined to be sustainable.

With a stronger core faculty base in place, we have been able to implement a number of process improvement initiatives, such as academic advising, enriched course content, refinement of our admissions process, and enhanced program evaluation. We are fortunate to have a strong faculty team to allow us to invest in addressing ARC-PA concerns while strengthening the program’s infrastructure and building our clinical instructor network.
Why are students interested in pursuing their graduate studies at CMU’s PA Program?

Initiated in 1996, CMU’s program has a solid reputation built on over 16 years of excellence in PA education. Here are some of the facts as to why we remain strong in teaching students to ready them for the healthcare workforce:

- Public school of higher learning offering in-state tuition and fees.
- Financial assistance resources provided.
- Excellent student-to-faculty ratio.
- Integrated clinical education mentorship experience in primary care starting in the spring semester of the first year of the program.
- Affiliations with all of the major medical teaching institutions in the Central Michigan area, and with most hospital systems throughout the state of Michigan.
- Affiliations with excellent clinical instructors, private offices and Federally Qualified Health Centers dedicated to rendering quality care and nurturing careers in the medical sciences.
- Low attrition and high graduation rates.
- Consistently strong student success with first time PANCE pass rates.
- As a result of local employers seeking CMU PA program graduates and our assistance to alumni securing employment, 100 percent of CMU graduates seeking employment as physician assistants are successfully recruited into healthcare jobs.
- We continue to integrate more clinical case simulations and interprofessional learning opportunities into our curriculum.
- We have expanded opportunities for students’ elective rotations in the latter part of the second year of the program.
- Since the summer of 2014, as part of our clinical procedures coursework, we have been providing the Society of Critical Care Medicine’s Fundamental Critical Care Support (FCCS) curriculum (http://www.sccm.org/Fundamentals/Pages/default.aspx). The FCCS coursework readies our students to transition from the didactic first year to their second year of clerkship rotations. It also gives them the optional opportunity to take the specialty examination for certification in critical care medicine, a credential well recognized by the medical community that gives our alumni a competitive edge in internal medicine, critical care, emergency medicine and surgery.
- Enhanced efforts in interprofessional education (IPE) have been realized since fall 2013, with PA faculty...
and students collaborating with others from our colleague programs within the College of Health Professions and our new College of Medicine. Our PA students also benefit from relationships with other academic disciplines from across campus, as well as from Ferris State University’s pharmacy program and Mid-Michigan Community College’s nursing program.

- The application of standardized end-of-rotation tests administered through the Physician Assistant Education Association (http://www.paeaoonline.org/index.php?ht=d/sp/i/140844/pid/140844) was initiated for second year PA students in the fall of 2013. These tests better prepare students for their summative examinations and for the post-graduation Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE, http://www.nccpa.net/Pance). Theserotation tests are coupled with case presentation reviews and simulation exercises following many of our clerkship rotations to reinforce concepts, improve team communications and ready students for graduation.

**Should there be any concerns for current students?**

No. The two-year probation is a temporary standing within accreditation. Although the program is on temporary probation, our corrective action plan has been accepted by the ARC-PA. CMU absolutely continues to be accredited.

Program Director Jessica Gordon Rose, who assumed leadership of the PA program in August 2013, has been overseeing rollout of our comprehensive action plan designed to bring the program into full compliance with accreditation standards. Furthermore, the CMU PA faculty and staff team continue to work diligently in maintaining a robust and successful program that addresses a changing health care environment.

**What is the long-term outlook?**

- The program remains accredited and CMU is committed to maintaining a program of the highest quality and standards with graduates, who are known as outstanding clinicians in the community and leaders in the profession.
- Our focused ARC-PA site revisit is slated for December 2015. We are fully confident our accreditation issues will be resolved by late March 2016. We value the importance of obtaining ARC-PA accreditation.
- The status of current students remains unaffected, and they will continue to be eligible for financial aid, to participate in clinical rotations, to graduate, to sit for the PANCE exam and obtain licensure in the field.
- As we admit new students, and as we shall meet the requirements by the ARC-PA, it is fully expected that incoming classes will have the same benefits in the PA program as current students. In the very unlikely scenario that continuing accreditation is not granted, applicants accepted into the program following the fall 2015 interview process would not be allowed to start in the program in the spring of 2016. Class placement hold fees would be returned to accepted applicants. Please periodically visit the accreditation webpage at http://cmich.ly/arcpa for the latest updates on how the program is progressing.
ARC-PA Accreditation Statement

The program and institution must use the following narrative, unaltered, as provided by the ARC-PA (http://www.arc-pa.org) in all printed and electronic media:

At its March 2014 meeting, the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) has placed the Central Michigan University Physician Assistant Program sponsored by Central Michigan University on Accreditation - Probation until its focused visit review in March 2016. Probation is a temporary status of accreditation limited to two years and conferred when a Program does not meet the Standards and when the capability of a Program to provide an acceptable educational experience for its students is threatened. Once placed on probation, Programs that still fail to comply with accreditation requirements in a timely manner, as specified by the ARC-PA, may be scheduled for a focused site visit and/or risk having their accreditation withdrawn. Specific questions regarding the Program and its plans should be directed to the Program director (gardo1jj@cmich.edu) and/or the appropriate institutional official(s).

About ARC-PA

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant is the accrediting agency that protects the interests of the public and physician assistant profession by defining the standards for PA education and evaluating PA educational Programs within the territorial United States to ensure their compliance with those standards.

More Information

To reiterate, our focused ARC-PA revisit is slated for December 2015. We are fully confident that we will be reinstated with full accreditation following our March 2016 review. In the very unlikely scenario that continuing accreditation is not granted, applicants accepted into the program following the fall 2015 interview process will not be allowed to start in the program in the spring of 2016. Please periodically visit the accreditation webpage at http://cmich.ly/arcpa for the latest updates on how the Program is progressing.

I welcome hearing from you should you need assistance or have any questions in need of being addressed.

Regards,

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