



## PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: What kind of work do physical therapist assistants do?**

**A:** Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) work under the direction and supervision of licensed Physical Therapists (PTs) in providing therapy treatments to patients/clients. PT services include manual techniques, activities and modalities to assist persons with functional impairment to reach their full potential. PTAs work in a wide variety of settings with patients of all ages from infant to elderly: acute care and rehabilitation hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient clinics, schools and in athletics. Well-trained PTAs are highly respected in the PT field.

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

**A:** Applicants must complete a minimum of 80 hours of work or observation in a PT work setting. At least 20 hours must be completed in an in-patient setting (hospital or skilled nursing facility) and at least 20 hours must be done in an outpatient setting. Contact local clinical facilities in order to make arrangements to observe PTs or PTAs at work with their patients. This experience may help you decide if PT is the field for you *and* give you some familiarity with PT clinical settings which will heighten your learning experiences during your academic preparation at LLU.

**Q: Where can I find information for the LLU PTA Program regarding.....**

- the acceptance rate of applicants?
- the graduation rate?
- the passing rate for the national PTA licensing exam?
- the employment rate for graduates?

**A:** Please use this link to find the "Student Outcomes Information"

<http://alliedhealth.llu.edu/sites/alliedhealth.llu.edu/files/docs/pta-student-outcomes.pdf>

**Q: What is the job market like for PTAs?**

**A:** The current job market for PTAs is strong and demand is projected to increase. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics projects for 2020-2030 that job growth of physical therapist assistants will increase by 32%. Further, they state this is, "much faster than the average for all occupations". This increase is partly due to the high number of "baby boomers" retiring, a large group of individuals who also may need more rehabilitation services. The *median* pay in May of 2020 was calculated at \$59,770/year. California has the highest annual mean wage for physical therapist assistants in the US at \$70,570. It is important to note: income varies depending on experience, location and type of setting.

**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:

- 1) The annual SAHP **Job Fair**, where you can meet Human Resource Department reps from local and national clinical facilities who are interested in our grads;
- 2) **Email announcements of PTA job openings** received by the program are routinely forwarded to PTA graduates and posted on the **LLUH Connect** website <https://lluhconnect.org/feed>
- 3) Many of our students receive job offers subsequent to networking related to their clinical education experiences.

**Q: Do students take all of the required courses for the PTA program at LLU?**

A: No, only the courses in the *technical* portion of the program are completed in the PTA curriculum at LLU. All of our students must transfer general education courses from other schools to LLU. The natural science prerequisite courses may be taken at LLU or elsewhere. For information on the **natural science courses offered at LLU**, see <http://alliedhealth.llu.edu/academics/general-education/natural-sciences>

**Q: Where can I find the prerequisite courses?**

A: The prerequisite courses may be completed via any *regionally* accredited university or community college. Prerequisites and transfer patterns for many colleges can be found at <http://www.llu.edu/allied-health/sahp/transfer/index.page>? Click on the college name and then scroll down to the PTA program prerequisites section.

**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 through Thursday, typically 8:00 am. – 5:00 pm. However, for the first 8 weeks during the first summer quarter, classes run 1:00 pm – 9:00 pm with a break between 5 pm - 6:00pm. The clinical education courses are generally 40 hours/wk, Monday through Friday.

**Q: How long is the PTA program?**

A: The length of the PTA (technical) program at Loma Linda University spans five quarters, with four days/week for didactic courses and five days/week for clinical courses. The prerequisite courses that must be taken before starting the program may be completed in one academic year (three quarters or two semesters).

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

A: No. The curriculum must be taken in sequence and in step with your cohort, as one course builds upon another. You will enroll in a specific “block” of courses reserved for the PTA students each quarter.

**Q: When should I apply?**

A: The **best time** to apply is **EARLY**: between Aug. 1 and May. 1 for the following June starting date; applications are accepted until April 1. You may apply **BEFORE** you complete all requirements if you have a plan to complete them before the program begins. If you have difficulty finding and enrolling in the prerequisite courses, you may call the program office for assistance: 909.558.4634.

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

A: You must have a GPA of at least 2.5 in the three science courses, and at least 2.5 GPA in the non-science prerequisite courses. However, higher GPAs are more competitive. 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 to get higher grades and improve your GPA. If you retake a course, we re-calculate your GPA using the grade from the most recent course.

**Q: What degree will I get when I finish the program?**

A: Graduates of the PTA program receive an Associate of Science degree (AS) in physical therapy.

**Q: Where will I complete my clinical experiences?**

A: We have clinical affiliation agreements with many hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and outpatient clinics throughout the country which allow for a wide variety of both inpatient and outpatient PT settings for clinical instruction. We have a full time faculty member, the Director of Clinical Education (DCE), who assigns and supervises the clinical education experiences. You will work with the DCE to find a site that is available and appropriate.

**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 which cover the additional costs of student health insurance, clinical liability insurance, graduation expenses, membership in the beautiful Drayson Center (a health and fitness center) and central administration support. The LLU PTA program will cost approximately \$37,000 for tuition for the Class of 2026. Other school-related expenses (including text-books, APTA membership dues, supplies) will be approx \$1,000. Tuition and fees are subject to change.

**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 (909) 558-4509, or visit the website at <http://www.llu.edu/students/financial-aid/>. The sooner you start the financial aid process, the more likely you are to get the best rates. **FAFSA forms must be submitted by October 1 prior to the year you plan to start the program.** The FAFSA website is [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**Q: What is the difference in accreditation between the LLU PTA program, and programs at community colleges or career colleges?**

A: *CAPTE* is the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. Only graduates from *CAPTE*-accredited programs are eligible to take the PTA National Licensing Examination. The LLU PTA program is accredited by *CAPTE* through December 2021, and Loma Linda University is accredited by the regional accrediting body, *Western Association of Schools and Colleges*.

Most *community* colleges are accredited by their respective regional accrediting agencies, such as WASC, and some community colleges have *CAPTE*-accredited PTA programs. The *career* colleges are not accredited by WASC, although a few have *CAPTE*-accredited PTA programs. Only regionally accredited colleges and universities are able to transfer coursework for their students to LLU, or any other regionally accredited institution. For more information on PTA Education in general, visit this website: <http://www.apta.org/PTAEducation/Overview/>

**Q: Can I talk to someone to get advice?**

A: Yes, indeed! We would be happy to advise you. You can contact us at [andlopez@llu.edu](mailto:andlopez@llu.edu) or (909) 558-4634 for questions or to make a personal appointment for advising.