



## **Stockton and Philadelphia Universities Welcome Physician Assistant Studies Students**

Stockton Hosts Orientation for First Atlantic City Cohort

***For Immediate Release; with photos on [Flickr](#)***

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**Galloway Township, NJ** – Stockton University today welcomed the inaugural group of students in the Atlantic City cohort of Philadelphia University’s Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program.

Stockton and Philadelphia University (PhilaU) are partnering with Reliance Medical Group to offer this Atlantic City-based program in a growing field of the health sciences.

“The faculty and staff involved in this partnership are extremely dedicated. We have created an experience for you of the highest quality,” said Dean Theresa Bartolotta of Stockton’s School of Health Sciences in her welcoming remarks. “For the next two years, we want you to feel like you are part of the Stockton family.”

This fall, Stockton has admitted freshmen students into the dual-degree program option, where graduates will be able to receive their bachelor’s degrees from Stockton’s School of Health Sciences and their master’s in Physician Assistant Studies from Philadelphia University in five years, instead of the usual six.

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“This is a wonderful experience for both institutions. This is a public/private partnership, across two states, which required multiple entities’ approval,” said Stockton Acting President Harvey Kesselman as he welcomed the 22 incoming Physician Assistant students.

“We are thankful to Shore Medical Center’s Ronald Johnson, CEO, and David Hughes, CFO, both Stockton alumni, for providing the use of Shore’s gross anatomy lab until the opening of Stockton’s anatomy lab in Unified Science Center<sup>2</sup>,” he added.

The Atlantic City program mirrors the M.S. in Physician Assistant Studies program on PhilaU’s main campus, a nationally ranked program that accepts undergraduates into an accelerated “3 + 2” program, leading to a master’s in five years, as well as graduate students into a two-year master’s program. Following today’s orientation sessions, the graduate PA students will begin classes at their respective campuses July 20.

“This is just one example of the innovative programs and academic excellence that are part of a distinctive Stockton education,” Dr. Kesselman said. “Stockton is proud to be part of an affiliation that will guarantee a preeminent program in a field where there is a growing need for highly skilled individuals.”

Physician Assistants are professionals who practice medicine on teams with physicians and other providers. Some of their responsibilities include taking medical histories; performing physical examinations; ordering or performing lab and other diagnostic tests; prescribing medications; developing a treatment plan and performing health-related counseling. Demand for PAs is expected to skyrocket in the coming decade, as more patients are covered under the Affordable Care Act.

The graduate courses will be held at Stockton’s Carnegie Center in Atlantic City. Clinical work will be done in Atlantic City with Reliance and at other health care sites in the surrounding communities.

“This collaboration between Philadelphia University’s Physician Assistant Studies program and Stockton University provides a great opportunity for students to obtain what *Forbes* magazine recently cited as the top master’s degree leading to jobs,” said Dr. Michael Dryer, executive dean of PhilaU’s College of Science, Health and the Liberal Arts.

*Forbes* cited Bureau of Labor Statistics data projecting a 30 percent rise in PA employment opportunities by 2020.

“At the same time, the Atlantic City-based program will help address the significant shortage of primary care health practitioners in New Jersey,” Dr. Dryer said.

“Physician Assistant Studies faculty members teaching in the Atlantic City program will join the experienced graduate faculty from PhilaU’s main campus to deliver the excellent curriculum that students, preceptors and employers have valued since the program’s start in 1995,” explained Dr. Jesse Coale, PhilaU’s Physician Assistant Studies program director, who oversees programs at both sites.

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In addition to providing classroom space for the graduate students at the Carnegie Center in Atlantic City, Stockton has admitted 12 high school graduates as freshmen in the program beginning this fall. In the future, Stockton plans to expand the program to admit 20 students, Dean Bartolotta explained.

“The expansion of the PA profession is an outgrowth of the sweeping changes affecting health care in this country,” Dean Bartolotta explained. “This profession is an excellent choice for students who want to combine a love of science with an interest in work that is truly patient-centered. We are very proud of this innovative partnership between our institutions, which enables us to meet the health care needs of our community.”

Incoming Physician Assistant student Jesse Collier relocated his family to southern New Jersey, including a nine-week old daughter, from Las Vegas, Nev. to begin the program.

“I unintentionally came from one casino town to another,” said Collier, who previously worked as an emergency room nurse. “There’s a distinct difference in community here as compared to West Coast universities and education. The faculty and student body are committed to the common goal to serve the public. Everyone involved with this program has been extremely welcoming and warm. I truly believe the goal here is to see everyone in this room succeed.”

The Philadelphia University master’s program eventually will accommodate 40 students, half from Stockton and half from other schools, Dean Bartolotta said.

Dr. Matt Dane Baker, provost and dean of the faculty at PhilaU and a Stockton undergraduate alumnus, has been instrumental in this project.

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