

Path to PA

Alumna pursues career as a physician's assistant

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Health, well-being, and patient care are only a few of the reasons some people are lured to follow careers in the medical field. Rachael Stanley, a graduate of Mascenic Regional High School in New Ipswich, NH, was lured to the profession very early.

“My first memory of wanting to be a doctor was when I was 9 years old. I told my friend’s dad that I wanted to be a brain surgeon,” Stanley said.

Her path changed in her junior year of high school after a chance meeting with a Physician Assistant (PA) at Mass General.

“She was young, energetic, and loved what she did for work,” says Stanley. N

ow, more than twelve years later, Stanley is well on her way to a career as a PA. After graduating from high school she discovered she could accelerate her education through an articulation agreement with the biology program at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester and MCPHS University’s Manchester campus. An agreement between the institutions allows students to complete their bachelor’s degree in biology at UNH Manchester while meeting the prerequisites, and admission criteria, for the MCPHS University Manchester campus’s Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree.

The most competitive students (top six) are given preferential consideration for admission. ([Contact the office of admission](#) for more information.) Students interested in pharmacy also have an option through the agreement. They complete their first three years in the biology program at UNH Manchester, then upon acceptance at MCPHS University Manchester Campus, they complete three more years for their Doctorate in Pharmacy. In just six years they’ll have earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of New Hampshire and a Doctorate of Pharmacy from MCPHS University.

Stanley finished her bachelor’s degree in biology in only three years, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 2012, and was accepted to the Master’s of Physician Assistant Studies program.

“It was easy because the path was already laid out for me,” says Stanley. “The courses at UNH Manchester really gave me a great foundation.”

The faculty in the biology program provide students with pre-med advising to ensure they are meeting the prerequisites for all of the programs.

“We help students create their undergraduate plan of study in their first year based on their career goals,” says Patricia Halpin, assistant professor of biology at UNH Manchester. “If students are interested in physician assistant studies or pharmacy, they are required to shadow a physician assistant or pharmacist as an internship for which they earn college credit toward their degree. This experience really helps them solidify their career interests.”

Stanley is confident she’s chosen the right career path. “The PA field has been in the Forbes top five careers for the past few years. This was just such a great experience.”

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