



– [Xavier University of Louisiana](#), in partnership with [Ochsner Health](#), has received national accreditation from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) for its [Physician Assistant \(PA\) Program](#). The PA Program started the accreditation process in 2019. The recent accreditation makes Xavier one of four colleges in Louisiana, one of two in New Orleans, and one of only seven Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the nation to offer the program.

The [American Academy of PAs](#) estimates there are more than 168,300 PAs in the United States today, and according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the demand for physician assistants is projected to grow 37 percent from 2016 to 2026. Currently, Ochsner has more than 180 PAs working across its health system. ARC-PA is the accrediting agency that protects the interests of the public and PA 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. The process has three different stages: initial, provisional, and final.

“Xavier is committed to producing exceptional servant leaders who positively impact the communities they serve, and the full accreditation of its Physician Assistant program is an example of that commitment,” said Marguerite Giguette, Ph.D., Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs of Xavier University of Louisiana. “Our students are trained to fight inequity and disparity, and we are proud of their progress as they live out the university’s mission to promote a more just and humane society. We are proud to continue deepening the partnership between Xavier and Ochsner Health, especially as we embark on the journey to open the Xavier ~~MSRR~~ a

Following three semesters of classroom instruction, the PA students complete approximately 2,000 hours of hands-on clinical experience through 11 rotations at various Ochsner facilities. Students work and study with healthcare professionals across multiple specialties, including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, General Surgery, Emergency Medicine, Behavioral Health and Women's Health.

Founding Physician Assistant Program Director Varsha Castro Gusman ('06), PA-C, oversees the program and serves as an instructor, mentor, and advisor to students. Gusman, a Xavier alumna, has been a practicing Ochsner Health PA in Neuro Critical Care for over 11 years.

"This is a milestone celebration for both Xavier and Ochsner Health. The legacy that we have created will greatly impact the health of the diverse communities that we serve. We have the potential to diversify the PA profession and make a direct impact by eliminating health disparities in our communities. I firmly believe that we will become a national leader in the advancement of PA education and become one of the top PA programs in the country," said Gusman.

For more information about the Xavier University and Ochsner Physician Assistant program, visit <http://www.xula.edu/physician-assistant-program> or call 504-520-5119. For more information about Ochsner Academics, visit education.ochsner.org or call 504-842-1205.

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