

## Quick Facts: Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant (CAA)

<p><b>Is this career right for you?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you excel in science?</li> <li>• Do you want to interact directly with patients and their families or caregivers?</li> <li>• Do you have a strong history of clinical and/or research experience?</li> <li>• Are you interested in a hands-on career?</li> <li>• Are you an effective communicator?</li> <li>• Do you have good interpersonal skills?</li> <li>• Do you have strong attention to detail?</li> <li>• Do you enjoy working on a team?</li> <li>• Are you willing to work only in states that recognize CAA certification? (<i>A list of states that recognize CAA certification is posted at: <a href="https://aaaa.memberclicks.net/assets/aaaa%20practice%20map%20april%202027.pdf">https://aaaa.memberclicks.net/assets/aaaa%20practice%20map%20april%202027.pdf</a></i>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What do CAAs do?</b></p>	<p>Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs) are highly skilled health professionals who work under the direction of licensed anesthesiologists to implement anesthesia care plans. CAAs work exclusively within the anesthesia care team environment. CAAs are trained extensively in the delivery and maintenance of quality anesthesia care, as well as advanced patient monitoring techniques.</p> <p>Note: Both CAAs and CRNAs (certified registered nurse anesthetists) are defined as "non-physician anesthetists." Although they have nearly identical responsibilities in the workplace, their education and training pathways are quite different.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Definition courtesy of the American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants</i></p>
<p><b>Length of Professional Training</b></p>	<p>To become a CAA, you must complete a master's level training program, which typically takes 24-28 months to complete.</p>
<p><b>List of CAA Programs in the United States</b></p>	<p>As of this printing, there are 13 accredited CAA educational programs in the United States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emory University - Atlanta, Georgia</li> <li>• Case Western Reserve University – Austin, TX</li> <li>• Case Western Reserve University - Cleveland, Ohio</li> <li>• Case Western Reserve University - Houston, Texas</li> <li>• Case Western Reserve University - Washington, D.C.</li> <li>• South University - Savannah, Georgia</li> <li>• Nova Southeastern University - Fort Lauderdale, Florida</li> <li>• Nova Southeastern University - Tampa, Florida</li> <li>• University of Missouri - Kansas City, Missouri</li> <li>• Quinnipiac University - Hamden, Connecticut</li> <li>• University of Colorado - Aurora, Colorado</li> <li>• Medical College of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, Wisconsin</li> <li>• Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana</li> </ul>

<p><b>Pre-CAA Clinical Experience</b></p>	<p>Although most CAA programs require a minimum of 8 hours of shadowing an anesthesiologist or CAA in the OR, most competitive applicants have significantly greater clinical experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shadowing</b> is defined as the observation of a health care provider while that person cares for patients. <i>We recommend spending one day each with three CAAs and/or anesthesiologists.</i></li> <li>• <b>Direct patient interaction</b> is defined as being in a position to offer comfort and moral support to conscious patients in a health care environment. <i>Most successful applicants have spent at least six months volunteering (~4 hours per week) in a direct patient interaction role.</i> Your objectives are to become comfortable around sick and injured patients, to gain greater understanding of the health care system, and to develop your communication skills in a clinical setting. Although most pre-CAA students gain their direct patient interaction experience by volunteering in a hospital or other clinical setting, you can also find paid work as a medical assistant, CNA, EMT, or phlebotomist. Most such positions require training in advance; your pre-health advisor can refer you to reputable training programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Desired Traits and Experiences</b></p>	<p>Refer to the <b>List of Core Competencies for Pre-Health Students</b>, taking note that CAA programs especially emphasize the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scientific Inquiry:</b> Your future work as a CAA will require you to use strong critical thinking skills on the job and to remain committed to lifelong learning. Getting involved in an independent study project or another form of research is a great way to demonstrate that you enjoy asking new questions and to gain formal practice in critically analyzing your results and presenting your findings. Research is defined as involvement in a scholarly or scientific hypothesis investigation that is supervised by an individual with verifiable research credentials. Accepted applicants typically have a strong history of research experience and/or a strong history of clinical experience. Although involvement in research is not an absolute requirement, most successful applicants have spent at least one year working/volunteering as a research assistant, in a role that offers true intellectual engagement (i.e., attendance at lab meetings/journal club meetings, completion of a literature review, etc.).</li> <li>• <b>Community Service:</b> Most successful applicants have consistently engaged in paid and volunteer positions involving non-clinical service to others since high school. Examples include retail/restaurant jobs, working as a tutor, and volunteering in roles that allows you to directly help others who are in need. Greater consideration is given to long-term efforts that exemplify the applicant’s dedication and depth of commitment to the service chosen.</li> <li>• <b>Effective Teamwork and Leadership:</b> The anesthesia team (Anesthesiologist and CAA) works in collaboration with each other to direct the diagnosis and treatment course of patients in the perioperative setting. Thus, a past history of collaborating successfully with others on a team in a professional setting (such as in research, business, etc.) is valued, as is formal leadership training and experience. Examples of formal leadership positions include serving as a teaching assistant, a resident assistant in a dormitory, a wilderness guide, a manager at work, the captain of an athletic team, or an officer in the military.</li> <li>• <b>Cultural Sensitivity:</b> CAAs care for patients from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, a history of experiences with people of diverse backgrounds is deemed valuable. Such experiences may include living abroad for a period of time, involvement with multicultural organizations, or other volunteer or paid positions that have allowed you to understand and appreciate people whose backgrounds and belief systems are quite different from your own.</li> </ul>

<p><b>GPA</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mean <i>cumulative</i> GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.5</li> <li>• Mean <i>science*</i> GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.5</li> </ul> <p>Although it is ideal to apply with mean cumulative and science GPAs at or above the nationwide means for accepted students, you can become a strong candidate with lower GPAs <i>if your recent academic history demonstrates a long-term trend of academic success.</i></p> <p>If your cumulative and/or science GPAs are currently below the means for accepted students, you can still become a competitive applicant if each of your term GPAs <i>for the four consecutive terms leading up to the time of application</i> are at or above 3.5. If you have already completed the prerequisites, consider taking completing additional semesters with upper-division science elective courses or completing a one-year pre-health master's program before applying to CAA programs.</p> <p><b>Specific GPA details for CU's CAA program at Anschutz:</b> They focus primarily on prerequisite GPA. If you take a prerequisite course twice, they will use only the higher grade in their GPA calculations.</p> <p><i>*Science GPA is defined as your average GPA in all biology, chemistry, and physics courses. (CU Boulder prefixes of EBIO, IPHY, MCDB, NRSC, CHEM, and PHYS.) Writing and Statistics courses taken in these departments do not count toward your science GPA.</i></p>
<p><b>Admissions Test</b></p>	<p>Some CAA programs require the MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test). Scores typically “expire” after 5 years. Generally, a score at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile is considered competitive. On average, successful MCAT test-takers devote a total of 300+ hours to MCAT prep.</p> <p>Topics covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading comprehension: the ability to read dense material quickly, for detail</li> <li>• General Chemistry 1 and 2</li> <li>• Organic Chemistry 1 and 2</li> <li>• Biochemistry (CHEM 4611 or CHEM 4700)</li> <li>• Intro to Molecular and Cellular Biology (MCDB 1150 or EBIO 1210)</li> <li>• Human Physiology (covered in courses such as EBIO 1220, IPHY 3430, and IPHY 3470 &amp; 3480, but note that the IPHY options will require Anatomy as a prereq as of Fall 2018)</li> <li>• Physics 1 and 2</li> <li>• Statistics</li> <li>• General Psychology (use the AAMC's Khan Academy materials to learn this subject)</li> <li>• Introduction to Sociology (use the AAMC's Khan Academy materials to learn this subject)</li> </ul> <p>Other CAA programs accept the GRE (Graduate Record Exam) General Test in place of the MCAT. Generally, a score at or above the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile on the GRE is considered competitive. On average, successful GRE test-takers devote a total of about 150 hours to GRE prep.</p> <p>Topics covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Reasoning</li> <li>• Quantitative Reasoning</li> <li>• Writing Sample</li> </ul>
<p><b>Common Application</b></p>	<p>The Central Application Service for Anesthesiologist Assistants (CASAA)</p>

<p><b>Application Fee Assistance</b></p>	<p>Although the CASAA application does not offer a fee assistance program toward the cost of applying, you may want to consider applying for the AAMC's Fee Assistance Program, which can help you cover the cost of preparing for and taking the MCAT.</p> <p>AAMC Fee Assistance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced MCAT registration fee</li> <li>• Complimentary set of MCAT preparation books and practice exams</li> <li>• Up to \$800 toward an updated psycho-educational or medical evaluation if you are applying for MCAT accommodations and an updated evaluation is required</li> </ul> <p>The AAMC Fee Assistance Program opens in mid-January each year. Awards are limited, so we recommend applying early if you think you may qualify.</p>
<p><b>Timing of Application</b></p>	<p>Application season varies significantly from school to school. For this reason, it is strategic to identify your schools of interest early on so that you can create a spreadsheet listing the opening date, closing date, and start of interviews at each of your schools. Since many CAA programs conduct their admissions processes on a rolling basis, early applicants gain an advantage in the application process.</p> <p>Aim to have your entire application file complete (CASAA application with supplement materials, MCAT score report, and letters of recommendation) by the time your top-choice schools begin their interview process.</p> <p>If you are interested in the CAA program at CU's Anschutz campus, you should aim to have your entire application file complete by the end of October (for the following year's entering class).</p>
<p><b>Letters of Recommendation</b></p>	<p>Each CAA program sets its own guidelines regarding letters of evaluation, but the following assortment meets the requirements at many schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One science* faculty member, ideally one who has taught you in a lecture or seminar course and thus can comment upon your intellectual engagement as a student.</li> <li>• One supervisor from a long-term job or volunteer position that has been meaningful to you.</li> <li>• One additional faculty member or work/volunteer supervisor. (If you have been strongly involved in research, you should get a letter from the PI of that research lab.)</li> </ul> <p>*"Science," for the purposes of applying to CAA programs, is defined as Biology, Chemistry, and Physics (CU departments: MCDB, EBIO, IPHY, NRSC, CHEM, PHYS.) Note that scientific writing courses are considered writing, not science, even if taken in one of these departments.</p>