The background features a complex geometric design. On the left, there are several overlapping shapes: a dark purple triangle at the top left, a blue square with concentric circles, a light grey semi-circle, a pink triangle with diagonal lines, a pink square with a grid of lines, a blue square, a grey triangle, and a pink triangle at the bottom. A white dot is connected by a thin white line to the top-left corner of the pink triangle with diagonal lines. The text is positioned on the right side of the image, set against a solid blue background.

**BEYOND THE
MASTERS:
EXPLORING THE PA
DOCTORAL
FRONTIER**



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DISCLOSURES

We have no financial relationships or commercial interests with the grantor that may have direct impact on the content of this program.



OBJECTIVES:

- Differentiate the primary PA doctorate pathways and emphases (Pros & Cons).
- Explore the return on investment related to professional and personal goals with obtaining a doctorate.
- Evaluate how earning a PA doctorate may impact clinical practice, leadership roles, academic positions, and career advancement opportunities.
- Explain the current national landscape regarding the entry level PA doctorate education.

EXPLORING THE PRIMARY PA DOCTORATE PATHWAYS

Pros & Cons

EdD & PhD

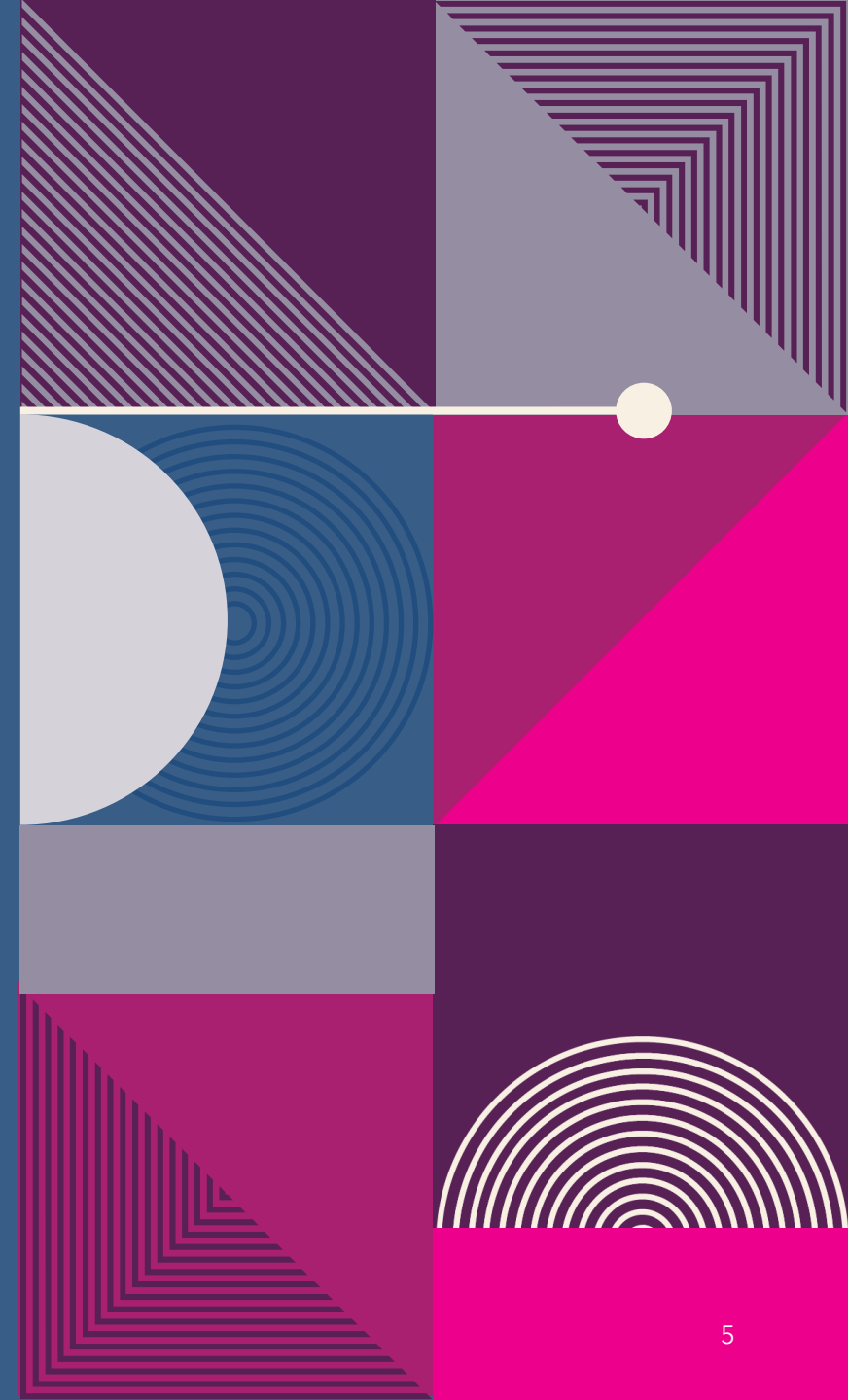
DMSc, DHSc, DHEd

DMSc - diverse landscape

Barriers: Cost & Length (Wages vs. Duration/Opps)

Clinical Work Preference

Competing Priorities vs. Career Benefit





EXPLORE THE ROI RELATED TO GOALS WITH OBTAINING DOCTORATE

Professional

- Impact on Earning
- Career Advancement
- Professional Skills
- Financial

EVALUATE PA DOCTORATE IMPACT

Clinical Practice & Career Advancement

Primary Reason Clinician

Hold Leader Roles

Many in Surgical Areas

Hold above median Salaries

Market Place Competitiveness

Military (VA Pays More)

Leadership & Academic Positions

Secondary Reason Educator

Most are older than 30 & Female

More among Black & Asians

Research & CME Skills

Strengthen Professional Identity



NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Entry Level PA Doctorate

- At the 2023 annual business meeting, PAEA members approved a resolution directing the board to "...explore how doctoral degrees can contribute to PA education."
- In a first step toward meeting this goal, the PAEA Doctoral Education Commission was established and began to meet in August, 2024.
- PAEA's history of exploring the entry level doctorate is documented

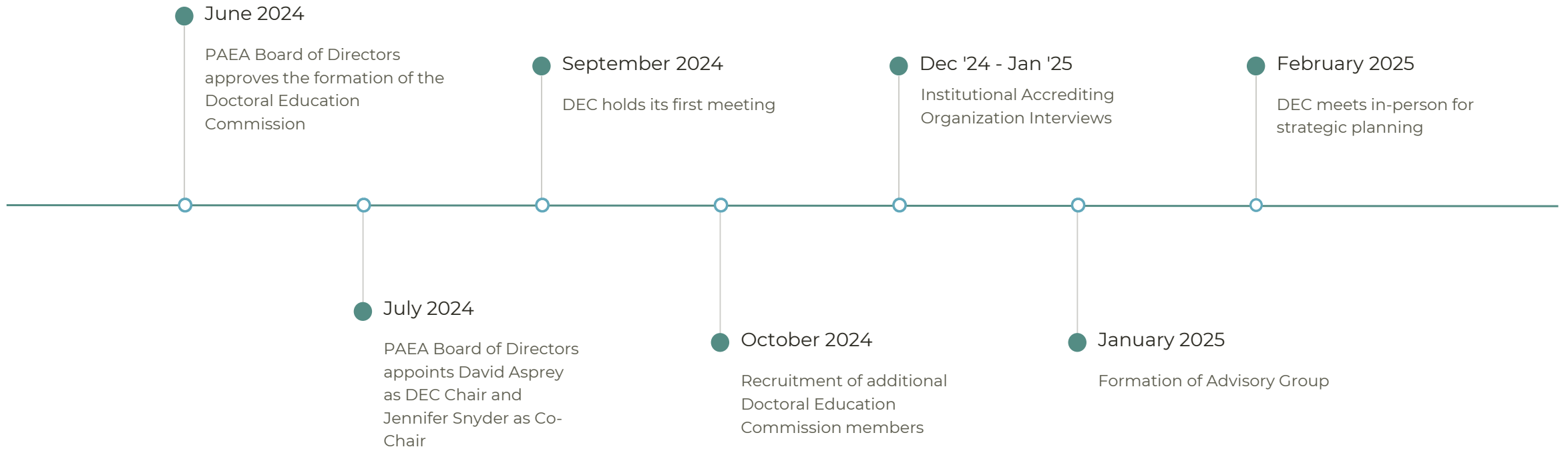
<https://paeaonline.org/entry-level-doctorate-degree>

Timeline of PAEA's Work on the Entry-Level Doctoral Degree



Timeline of PAEA's Work on the Entry-Level Doctoral Degree

Continued



Timeline of PAEA's Work on the Entry-Level Doctoral Degree

Continued





PAEA DOCTORAL EDUCATION COMMISSION (DEC)

The commission's work is to investigate the widespread implications of moving toward an entry-level doctoral degree for PAs. This includes understanding:

- How such a move would affect PAs already in practice and those nearing practice
- How it would affect efforts to attract a more diverse group of students and faculty
- How it would affect programs and their home institutions



DEC ENGAGE NUMEROUS STAKEHOLDERS

- PA Educator Advisory group
 - Two Listening sessions
 - Email responses
- Institutional Accreditors
 - Independent structured interviews with each accreditor leaders – 6 total
- AAPA Conference Survey and Listening Session
- Pre-PA and current PA Students Survey
- Student Academy Board
- PA Administrators and the Department of Veterans Affairs
- AAPA HOD Leadership
- Pharmacy ACPE
- Discussion with AAPA/PAEA legislation, regulatory & reimbursement experts
- The 4 PA Organizations Leadership
- DMS/DMSc Consortium Members



SUMMARY OF ADVISORY GROUP, INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITORS, AND AAPA CONFERENCE ATTENDEES FEEDBACK

Advisory Group: Benefits

- Credit hours reflect doctorate level work
- Parity with other professions
- What happens if we don't?
- Healthcare changing-opportunities to grow and prepare graduates for the future
- Cost: students now have to go back and get another degree
- Access: could an entry-level doctorate program attract candidates with limited resources?
- Increased number of PA for faculty roles/research



SUMMARY OF ADVISORY GROUP, INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITORS, AND AAPA CONFERENCE ATTENDEES FEEDBACK

Advisory Group: Challenges

- Risk for Patient confusion
- Lack of PA Faculty with doctoral degrees
- Market/employer demands
 - Does it improve opportunities for PA leadership?
- Identity
- Training length and cost for students
- Physician tension
- Accreditation concerns
- Diversity within the profession



INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

Interviews conducted with all 6 U.S. institutional accreditors

- Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
- WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)



INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

- **Key Findings (Themes Across Accreditors)**
 - **Curriculum:** Non-prescriptive; institutions decide; justification needed for doctoral-level rigor
 - **Experiential Education:** Clinical/experiential year can support added rigor
 - **Program Length & Credit Hours:** No minimum set; some agencies expect modest expansion; wide flexibility
 - **Admissions:** No new requirements; transparency for applicants emphasized



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INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

- **Key Findings (Themes Across Accreditors)**
 - **Faculty Qualifications:** Terminal degrees generally expected; flexibility for experienced clinicians; must justify faculty expertise
 - **Faculty Scholarship:** Expected to align with institutional doctoral standards; can include applied/teaching/clinical scholarship
- **Accreditation Process**
 - Transition = *substantive change* requiring accreditor approval
 - Pathway depends on:
 - Prior doctoral experience at institution
 - Accreditation status and history
 - First-time doctoral programs face more extensive review



FINAL TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

1. PA related doctoral degrees have pros and cons and are situationally and personally dependent.
 2. Different Degrees have different pros and cons/
 3. The PA profession continues to wrestle with the appropriate/best entry level degree.
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THANK YOU

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