

Following Her Passions

Colleen Rothaupt Chappell is a practicing Physician Assistant (PA) and professor. As a PA she acts like a detective looking at a patient's symptoms, applying the scientific method, and finding ways to help the patient. She works with patients to identify and group their concerns so they can brainstorm solutions together. She works with her patients to come up with the solution that is best for them. Allowing the patient to be part of the process provides patient education, which is an essential part of good care. She considers caring for patients a privilege, "Patients trust you with their lives and I have always considered that a huge responsibility and an honor."

She has gone through a few career changes following her passions, reflecting "In the end you have to be willing to take a chance and try something, and if you are passionate about it, you find a way to make it work." She originally graduated college with a biomechanical engineering degree studying both biology and mechanical engineering. She applied her degree by spending 3 years designing and testing medical devices before becoming a Project Lead The Way engineering teacher. She met a PA when she needed surgery on her wrist and went back to school to change careers to become one herself. She then spent over ten years caring for people as a PA. Currently, she still works as a PA but is also a professor of clinical medicine teaching physical exam skills at the University of Saint Joseph.

As a professor she does her best to impart all that she has learned to her students, saying, "I am very passionate about teaching. Instilling compassion and the skills to give great care to my students allows me to make an impact on an exponential number of patients."

Her advice is to keep your future career interests broad, "If you like math or science continue to learn about all the options in those fields. For instance knowing I was interested in medicine I considered pharmacy, physical therapy, medical research, and becoming a PA. I think that helped me find a career that fit my interests as well as my personality and career goals."

Colleen's Journey



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Physician Assistant and Professor

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