

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Workforce Readiness Institute

Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) FAQ

WHAT DOES A CERTIFIED SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST (CST) DO?

Certified Surgical Technologists (CST)s are highly skilled individuals who collaborate with surgeons, registered nurses, and other health care professionals to deliver high quality standards of care, demonstrate principles of asepsis, and participate in creating an operating room environment. A Surgical Technologist assists in every aspect of the surgical setting including pre, intra and post-operatively.

This is an exciting, growing career with great responsibility that requires safely working in a fast-paced, high-pressure, task-oriented and highly efficient Operating Room (OR) environment. Individuals must have steadfast attention to detail, be strong communicators, work as a cooperative unit and be committed to quality patient care.

Pre-Operative Responsibilities:

- CSTs have pre-operative responsibilities, which take place prior to a surgery. CSTs assist with collecting/organizing surgical supplies and equipment which are required for a surgery. They review a surgeon's "preference card" which has many specific details for what a surgeon needs/prefers to use during surgery, including whether the surgeon is right or left handed, special equipment, medications to be used, and reviews the surgical consent/schedule for the patient's surgical site location. Knowing where the surgical/operative site will be influences the way the CST organizes the operating room in preparation for surgery.
- When the patient is brought into the Operating Suite, a CST may assist the circulating nurse and anesthesia provider to position the patient correctly and perform duties such as surgical prep, visualize the surgical site, assist with catheter placement, gown surgical team members, and pour sterile fluids and open sterile supplies onto the sterile field.

Intra-Operative Responsibilities:

- CSTs are the guardians of the sterile field and surgical equipment within the OR suite. Their core responsibilities during surgery are to perform surgical scrubs, don sterile gowns, gloves and protective masks, and manage and maintain sterile fields with surgical instruments/equipment. They organize and collaborate with the surgical team, use sterile/non sterile supplies appropriately, perform surgical counts, label medications being used, pass and assist surgeons with sterile surgical instrumentation and use their surgical conscious in maintaining sterility and safety at all times.
- CSTs must be proficient and knowledgeable with several surgical instruments and several simple up to complex surgical procedures. CST are also responsible for the proper handling and precise labeling of any specimens that are collected during surgery. In some circumstances, a CST may assist the surgeon with surgery by holding retractors, manipulating tissue or cutting sutures.
- Throughout a surgical procedure, CSTs must anticipate the surgeon's needs, be aware of their surgical and non-surgical surroundings, communicate effectively with team members, troubleshoot any complications and correct issues when they arise. CSTs work in tandem with the whole team in the OR to make sure that the surgery stays on time.

- The CST participates and verifies surgical counts (sponges, needles, sharps, and instruments). A CST will also verify appropriate supplies /equipment are in working order for the correct time, place, and patient. A CST will assist the surgical team in creating a sterile field around the operative site with the appropriate sterile drapes and equipment.

Post-Operative Responsibilities:

- After a surgery is completed, the CST may apply or assist with the surgical dressing process. A CST may also aide other health care team members in patient transfers from OR table to stretcher and out of the operating suite.
- CSTs will support the clean-up of the OR including accounting for all materials used, sterilization steps to lower the risk of infections, gathering any used instruments, equipment or laundry, disposing or returning any unused medications and helping to prepare the room for the next surgery by returning everything to its place.

For more information about this career field, please visit: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/surgical-technologists.htm>

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Anyone interested in pursuing a career as a Surgical Technologist is eligible to apply for admission.

Sponsorship is available to highly qualified individuals. Anyone selected for sponsorship, which covers cost of tuition and provides a training wage, must also apply for employment and agree to a 2-year commitment. Anyone interested in learning more about sponsorship is encouraged to reach out to us at CST.training@hitchcock.org.

WHEN ARE APPLICATIONS DUE AND WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

Details about the application process can be found here:

[Surgical Technologist Training Program Application - D-H Workforce Readiness Institute \(dhwri.org\)](https://www.dhwri.org/surgical-technologist-training-program-application)

ARE THERE ANY PRE-REQUISITES?

All applicants must complete the following pre-requisites to be eligible for admission:

1. College Level Anatomy & Physiology (**taken within the last five years**)
2. Medical Terminology
3. CPR

WHAT COSTS ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDENTS IN THIS PROGRAM?

Tuition

As of 2023, the Dartmouth Health Certified Surgical Technology program is partnered with Colby-Sawyer College to ensure that all students have an Associate's Degree upon completion of the program.

- Cost for "Year 1" with Colby Sawyer College: Tuition for classes taken during year 1 is \$270 per credit for a total of \$5600. This includes all the liberal education and health science classes.
- Cost for "Year 2", the 11-month Surgical Technology Program is \$8,000.00.

Please see the Withdrawal and Refund Policies for additional information about eligible tuition refunds and applicable fees.

Text Books

The estimated cost of purchasing books is \$1,205.00. Students may also choose to purchase additional learning materials during the program to supplement text books and any course material.

The text books listed below will need to be purchased directly from Cengage to ensure you receive the bundle price and online access.

Book Name	Pricing
Mindtap with 5th Edition Surgical Technology for the Surgical Technologist	\$250.00
Fundamentals of A&P 4th Edition by Donald C. Rizzo	\$127.00
Learning Lab for A&P	\$98.00
Medical Terminology for Health Professionals 8th Edition	\$140.00
Microbiology for the Surgical Technologists by Rodriquez **	\$175.00

Elsevier/Evolve

Pharmacology for Surgical Technologist 3rd Edition can be bought used ISBN 978-1-4377-1002-1 **	\$70.00
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Other: (Note: many of the books below can purchased used on Amazon)

Tabors Medical Dictionary	\$25.00
Pocket Guide to the Operating Room ISBN 978-0-8036-1226-6 **(optional)	\$45.00
Pearson's Surgical Technology Exam Review ISBN 978-0-13-500048-9	\$90.00
Surgical Mayo Setups ISBN 978-1-111-13818-9	\$113.00

Book Name	Pricing
Surgical Instrumentation an Interactive Approach by Renee Nemitz ISBN 9781-4557-0719 (optional)	\$72.00
Total Book Costs	\$1,205.00

**Microbiology for the Surgical Tech will not be required until 2nd quarter, Pharmacology for the Surgical Technologist 3rd Ed (or 4th available) will not be required text until 3rd quarter, and Pearson's Surgical Technology Exam review will not be required text until 4th quarter.*

Personal Supplies

Trainees are responsible for purchasing any personal supplies needed for the program, including but not limited to:

- **Footwear:** only plain closed toe and heel shoes (shoes cannot have multiple colors and large insignias), and socks or hose are permitted. The cost can vary per personal preference, with an estimated range of \$25-\$100
- **Program vest:** ordered through the Program Director with an estimated cost of \$30.
- **Black Scrub Pants:** estimated cost of \$20.
- **Classroom Supplies:** including items such as notebooks, pens/highlighters/markers, note/flash cards, etc. These costs vary per personal preference, with an estimated range of \$25-\$100.
- **Laptop Computer:** cost varies per personal preference, with an estimated range of \$200-\$1500.

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT FOR THIS PROGRAM?

Becoming a CST is not a fast or easy journey. This is a 2-part curriculum.

"Year 1" is the first part, and consists of five online classes through Colby Sawyer. During this time, students can also complete the 2 prerequisite classes, Medical Terminology and A&P (with a lab), if needed. Each class is eight weeks.

"Year 2" is an 11-month college-level curriculum that will require dedication and commitment. Students who participate in the D-H program will cover topics such as anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, microbiology, surgical instruments, pathophysiology, pharmacology, principals of surgical technology, and clinical training that is best-in-class.

WHAT IS THE ADMISSION COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR IN A STRONG CST CANDIDATE?

Being a CST is a physically demanding, mentally challenging and incredibly rewarding professional role. It requires the ability to focus, problem solve, pay close attention to detail, have excellent listening and communication skills, and an underlying commitment to doing what is right for patient safety and well-being.

A successful candidate for this program will demonstrate a strong work ethic through reliability and dependability, time management skills, team work and communication skills, the ability to work under pressure and stress including the ability to keep composure and think critically.

Flexibility and adaptability are two fundamental skills in the OR, which can be an unpredictable, intense environment. The ability to be flexible, navigate the unknown and adapt to changing circumstances are essential.

WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL DEMANDS OF BEING A CST?

Selected candidates must complete an Occupational Medicine Health Screening and have sufficient strength and motor coordination to perform the following physical activities:

- Frequent reaching and manual dexterity to handle patients and equipment, and to manipulate very fine surgical supplies
- Ability to wear required surgical gear, such as lead aprons, thyroid shields, masks, and eyewear
- Ability to work with complex equipment, such as video systems and microscopes, robotics, etc.
- Standing and walking, functioning without nourishment and/or be unable to have a bathroom break for sustained periods of time
- Frequent transporting, holding, moving, lifting, and transferring patients of various sizes to and from the operating table
- Ability to work with strong, potentially noxious smells
- Visual acuity sufficient to work with figures and other data and to make fine visual inspection of equipment. Sufficient eyesight to manipulate equipment, distinguish instruments, supplies and color and interpret data
- Sufficient hearing to assess patient needs and to understand instructions from surgeons and others and ability to respond quickly to verbal orders
- Sufficient written and oral skills to communicate needs promptly and effectively, to express and exchange ideas, and to interact with patients, surgeons, peers, and other medical personnel
- Ability to work with frequent interruptions and responding quickly and appropriately to unexpected situations
- Ability to work with wide variations in workload and stress levels

CAN I WORK WHILE I AM GOING THROUGH THE PROGRAM?

This is a full-time commitment for the duration that you are in the program. Academic performance is closely monitored and attendance is mandatory. There will be additional homework, just as there would be if you were enrolled in a post-secondary academic institution, in the evenings and on the week-ends.

WHAT CREDENTIAL OR CERTIFICATION WILL I GET FROM THIS PROGRAM?

Successful graduates will earn an Associate's Degree from Colby Sawyer College as well as becoming certified as a Surgical Technologist through the Association of Surgical Technologist (AST).

IS THE D-H SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST PROGRAM ACCREDITED?

The Program is fully accredited through the Commission of Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) as well as the Accreditation Review Council on education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC-STSA).