

2027-2028 Surgical Technologist Training Program FAQs

Program Dates: September 13, 2027 – August 19, 2028
Accepting Applications through February 1, 2027

What does a Surgical Technologist do?

Certified Surgical Technologists (CSTs) are highly skilled individuals who collaborate with surgeons, registered nurses, and other health care professionals to deliver high-quality care in the operating room and are responsible for adhering to sterile principles. They assist in every aspect of the surgical setting, including preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative procedures.

The CST role is physically demanding, mentally stimulating, and rewarding. It requires the ability to focus, problem-solve, pay attention to detail, communicate effectively, and have an underlying commitment to doing what is right for patient safety and well-being.

Responsibilities include:

- Create and maintain the sterile field for surgical procedures
- Review the surgeon's preference card
- Acquire needed instrumentation and equipment for a surgical procedure
- Assist OR team with patient positioning
- Set up and maintain a sterile surgical field
- Anticipate needs and pass instrumentation during the surgery
- Mix medications as directed
- Handle and label specimens obtained during surgery
- Aid in patient transfer at the end of the case
- Breakdown and account for surgical counts

What does the Surgical Technologist Training Program offer?

The Dartmouth Health Career Institute (DHCI) Surgical Technologist Program offers 11 months of classroom education, skills training, and hands-on experience and is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) to provide you with the knowledge to become a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST).

Participants have two tuition options through the program: The "Sponsorship" option is available to Dartmouth Health employees and provides a training wage through the 11-month program, pays all prerequisites and in-program tuition, and offers job placement at the end of the program. The "Self-Pay" option is available for those who only need to obtain the education and skills training required to sit for the certification exam.

Over the 11-month program, all participants will complete more than 200 hours of practical lab skills training and spend more than 600 hours in a professional operating room setting, acquiring hands-on clinical skills through demonstration and application.

While in the program, all participants are co-enrolled as Colby Sawyer College (CSC) students, earning 92 college credits during the 11-month training program. Sponsored participants who completed the program prerequisites through CSC earn an Associate of Science in Health Sciences from Colby Sawyer College – all at no cost to the student through the program's sponsorship option!

At completion of the 11-month program, graduates sit for the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) exam. Sponsored trainees are promoted to full-time Surgical Technologist Apprentices and will work in the assigned operating room location to gain on-the-job experience while completing a required 2,000-hour Registered Apprenticeship with the US Department of Labor.

Tell me more about the “Sponsorship” and “Self-Pay” Tuition Options?

Sponsorship Tuition

As a sponsored trainee, Dartmouth Health will pay for in-program tuition and any of the 6 prerequisite college courses needed, so by the end of the program, you will earn an associate’s degree, which is required to sit for the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) exam.

Additionally, through the 11-month training program, you will earn \$9.72/hr. plus a weekly homework stipend of \$291.20, averaging \$17/hr. for a 40-hour work week. Upon completion of the training program, you are promoted to Surgical Technologist Apprentice, work full-time in a Dartmouth Health operating room, and earn \$29.25/hour. After approximately 10 months, you’ll complete your apprenticeship and be promoted to Surgical Technologist II. As a Surgical Tech II, you earn \$30.50/hr, and you will have a 2-year work agreement with Perioperative Services for their investment in your training.

Sponsorship Requirements:

- Current Dartmouth Health employee in good standing, with at least 3 months of work experience
- Submit a “Request for Sponsorship” Letter: A formal letter to the Department of Perioperative Services that demonstrates how your contributions and performance as a Surgical Technologist will support the department and the Dartmouth Health community

Self-Pay Tuition

Individuals interested in earning their surgical technologist certification but not seeking job placement may select the Self-Pay tuition option. Tuition for the 11-month program is \$8,000 and is billed in quarterly installments. Additional fees and expenses for required background checks, certification registrations, textbooks, and learning supplies, totaling approximately \$2,000, are also the individual’s responsibility.

How are candidates selected for the program?

Submit a [DHCI Application](#), including a current resume. Additional application requirements include:

- Statement of interest (500-word min)
- 1 professional letter of recommendation
- Request for Sponsorship letter, if applicable
- Official college transcripts, if applicable
- Select tuition type: Sponsorship or Self-Pay
- Online skills assessment

Once all application materials are received, pathways to entry are as follows:

Candidates with an Associate’s Degree (or higher) & Self-Payers

Applications received by February 1, 2027:

- Select candidates will have a pre-screening interview with a program; notice of consideration for the next phase will be shared within 48-hours
- Candidates will be notified by early February if they have been selected for an in-person interview with the Perioperative Services and Surgical Tech Program Educators
- Conditional program acceptances are made within one week of interviews/by the end of Feb.

Candidates Without a College Degree Seeking Sponsorship

- First, we will verify Dartmouth Health employment for a minimum of 3 months
 - o If not a current employee, we can provide assistance with pre-program job placement; after 90-days of employment, you may reconnect with us for reconsideration
- Select candidates will have a pre-screening interview with a DHCI program representative
- Select candidates will then interview in-person with Perioperative team member(s)
- With support from the current supervisor, a conditional program acceptance may be extended

What are the next steps once I receive a Conditional Program Acceptance?

All initial offers are conditional program acceptances and depend on the candidate fulfilling all required prerequisites. Program staff will assist and guide candidates through completion of the prerequisites.

Prerequisites for ALL Selected Candidates (sponsored and self-payers):

- Complete 6 hours of shadowing in the Dartmouth Hitchcock Operating Room to observe the surgical technologist role in action
- For those with college degrees, you'll need to show proof of college-level Anatomy & Physiology and Medical Terminology with a passing grade of C or higher, taken within the last five years. If not, we will assist you in enrolling in comparable online courses
- Comply with Dartmouth Health Occupational Medicine [Pre-Placement Screening](#) (read for awareness), and additional requirements, such as a criminal background and reference checks
- Meet the physical demands of the surgical technologist role
- Attend in-person program enrollment session in August on-site in the Lebanon, NH classroom
- Maintain professional and academic standards present at the time of program acceptance

Additional Prerequisites for Candidates Without an Associate's Degree:

- You will be introduced to a Colby Sawyer College (CSC) advisor to determine which of the 6 required courses you need to complete prior to the start of the training program
- The CSC advisor will help you enroll in the required courses you need as they are available on the CSC schedule; each CSC course is 6-weeks, in an online format
- Textbooks and other classroom expenses for these courses are NOT covered by sponsorship; individuals are responsible for paying these expenses out of pocket
- All courses must be passed with a grade of C or higher to maintain program sponsorship

What should I expect when the training program begins?

The DHCI Surgical Tech classroom is located at 21 Lafayette Street, Lebanon, NH. Class is Monday – Friday. The weekly schedule will vary and consist of in-class work, remote work, and clinical rotations. Expect a significant amount of homework and studying outside of standard business hours.

Visit the [Curriculum](#) webpage to learn more about the courses you'll take through the program.

Additionally, through clinical rotations, you can expect to develop basic surgical tech skills in the following specialties:

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| - General surgery | - Peripheral vascular |
| - Ob/GYN | - Pediatrics |
| - Genitourinary | - Plastic and reconstructive |
| - Orthopedic | - Ophthalmology |
| - Neurosurgery | - Otolaryngology/Audiology/Maxillofacial Surgery |
| - Cardiothoracic | |

How often is the Surgical Technologist Program offered?

The program is offered once a year, beginning in mid-September. Each cohort is limited to 12 training seats. Applications officially open approximately 16 months prior to the program start; for example, applications will open in May 2027 for the program starting in September 2028.

Depending on the progress toward prerequisites of the conditionally accepted candidates, we may reopen applications in the spring, 6 months prior to the program start. We will post updates on the website.

Got more questions? Visit us online at DHCareerInstitute.org or email CST.Training@Hitchcock.org