

2027-2028 Surgical Technologist Training Program FAQs

Currently Accepting Applications through February 1, 2027

For Program Dates: September 13, 2027 – August 19, 2028

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 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 to provide you with the knowledge to become a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST).

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. Additionally, all participants are co-enrolled at Colby Sawyer College and earn 92 college credits for the Allied Health Science education they acquire during the 11-month training program.

At the end of the 11-month program, graduates are eligible to sit for the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) exam. Note that an associate's degree is required to sit for the certification exam taken at the end of the program.

Upon successful completion of the program, participants will:

- Exhibit practical proficiency in the surgical arena
- Be knowledgeable in anatomy & pathology of each body system that prompts surgical intervention
- Be proficient in the surgical steps of all surgical specialties
- Develop effective communication and decision-making skills in a high-stress environment
- Master skills in aseptic technique for successful patient safety outcomes
- Analyze the departure from classroom theory to on-the-job training in the operating room
- Integrate knowledge of personal and medical ethics into the surgical arena
- Develop a familiarity with commonly used surgical instruments

How much is the tuition for the Surgical Technologist Program?

Tuition Sponsorship

Candidates can apply for tuition sponsorship, which means that all in-program tuition and any [prerequisite college courses](#) required to begin the program are paid for by the Perioperative Services Department. As a sponsored trainee, you are a full-time, benefits-eligible Dartmouth Health employee.

Additionally, through the training program, sponsored trainees 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 Technologist II, you earn \$30.50/hr. and will have a 2-year work commitment to Perioperative Services for the investment in your training and education.

Sponsored trainees who complete the prerequisite courses through Colby Sawyer College and the 11-month training program earn an Associate of Science in Health Sciences from the College, all at no cost to the trainee through tuition sponsorship by the Perioperative Services Department.

Self-Pay Tuition

Individuals who have or will have an associate's degree (or higher) by the start of the program, and are interested in earning their surgical technologist certification but not seeking job placement at Dartmouth Health, may select Self-Pay tuition. There are no wages earned while in the program, and tuition for the 11-month program is \$8,000, billed to and paid by the student quarterly. Additional fees and expenses for required background checks, certification registrations, 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)
- Request for Sponsorship (if applicable): A letter to Perioperative Services to explain how your contributions as a Surgical Technologist will benefit the department
- 1 professional letter of recommendation
- Official college transcripts (if applicable)
- Online skills assessment

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

Candidates with an Associate's Degree (or higher)

Applications received by February 1, 2027:

- Selected candidates will interview as applications are received with the program manager and/or instructor; notice of consideration for an in-person interview 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 program teams
- Conditional program acceptances are made within one week of interviews/by the end of Feb.

Candidates Without a College Degree Seeking Sponsorship

- Selected candidates will interview as applications are received with the program team
- The next step is an in-person interview with Perioperative team member(s)
- If an offer for a position is made, Dartmouth Health employees may begin prerequisites immediately. Non-employees must work a 90-day introductory period before prerequisites can be started.

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
- 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 (detailed later in this document)
- 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
- For those with college degrees, show proof of college-level Anatomy & Physiology and Medical Terminology with a passing grade of C or higher, taken within the last five years.
 - o If you have not done so, we will assist you in enrolling in comparable online course(s)

Additional Prerequisites for Candidates Without an Associate's Degree:

- You will be introduced to a Colby Sawyer College (CSC) advisor to review any previous college coursework you have completed and to determine which of the required courses you need to complete prior to the start of the training program.

Prerequisite Courses Include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Introduction to Academic Writing o Introduction to Statistics o Biomedical Ethics o 1 Integrative Elective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 1 Liberal Education Course o Medical Terminology o Human Anatomy and Physiology |
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- 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
 - Tuition for these courses is paid for by Perioperative Services for sponsored candidates
 - o Please note that textbooks and other classroom expenses for these courses are not covered by sponsorship; students are responsible for paying for these items
 - 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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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General surgery - Ob/GYN - Genitourinary - Orthopedic - Neurosurgery - Cardiothoracic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peripheral vascular - Pediatrics - Plastic and reconstructive - Ophthalmology - Otolaryngology/Audiology/Maxillofacial Surgery |
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What are the physical demands required for surgical technologists at Dartmouth Health?

The following are considered "essential functions" which cannot be covered through reasonable accommodations:

- Lifting: 16 – 30 lbs. and Carrying: 35 lbs. max
- Physical requirements include:
 - Sitting
 - Standing
 - Bending
 - Kneeling
 - Stooping
 - Pushing
 - Lt/Finger Dexterity
 - Rt/Finger Dexterity
 - Climbing stairs
 - Twisting
 - Pulling
 - Walking
 - Balancing
 - Reaching (above shoulders)
 - Reaching (below shoulders)
 - Repetitive motion (passing instruments, handling case carts)
- Occupational requirements:
 - Work with others
 - Work around others
 - Hearing
 - Talking
 - Far vision
 - Near vision
 - Depth perception
 - Color vision
 - Peripheral vision
 - Rotating shifts (LIMITED)
- Exposure to the following conditions:
 - Tasks requiring routine exposure to blood and body fluids (OSHA Classification 1)
 - Noise
 - Limited work space
 - Heat
 - Hazardous machinery
 - Fumes
 - Cold
 - Electrical hazards
 - Exposure to burns
 - Poor lighting
 - Vibration

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. Program inquiries are always welcome, while official recruiting for a cohort begins approximately 16 months prior to the program start; for example, applications will open in May 2027 for the program starting in September 2028.

More questions?

We're here to help! Email us at CST.Training@Hitchcock.org.