

2027-2028 Surgical Technologist Training Program FAQ

Program Dates: September 13, 2027 – August 26, 2028

What does a Surgical Technologist do?

Certified Surgical Technologists (CSTs) are highly skilled professionals who collaborate with surgeons, registered nurses, and other health care professionals to deliver high-quality care in the operating room and adhere 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 commit 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
- Break down & 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). All training takes place in Dartmouth Health facilities in the Lebanon, NH region.

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. Those who enter without an associate's degree will earn one by completing the prerequisites and coursework.

At the end of the 11-month program, graduates sit for the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) exam.

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?**No-Cost Sponsorship**

Candidates can apply for tuition sponsorship, which means the Perioperative Services Department pays all in-program tuition and any prerequisite college courses required to begin the program. Additionally, as a sponsored trainee, you are a full-time, benefits-eligible Dartmouth Health employee and, in turn, make a work commitment to Dartmouth Health for your education and training.

Through the training program, sponsored trainees earn \$9.72/hour plus a weekly homework stipend of \$291.20, averaging \$17/hr. for a 40-hour work week. After completing the training program, you'll be 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/hour and commit to Perioperative Services for 2 years in return 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. No wages are 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 minimum)
- Request for Sponsorship (if applicable)
- 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 complete a first-round interview as applications are received with the program director and/or instructor; notice of outcome will be shared within 48 hours
- Candidates will be notified by early February if they have been selected for a second-round interview
- Program offers will be made by the end of February, with pre-program positions available starting as early as April 2027.

Candidates Without a College Degree Seeking Sponsorship (offers made through October 2026)

- 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 gain employment and complete a 90-day introductory period before starting prerequisites.

What are the next steps once I receive a program acceptance?

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

Prerequisites:

- Applicants must be 18 years or older on or before the start date of class. High school diploma, HiSET, or GED (General Educational Development)
- College-level Anatomy & Physiology with a passing grade of C or higher
- College-level Medical Terminology with a passing grade of C or higher
- Basic Life Support Certification within 30 days of start date

Additional Pre-Admission Requirements:

- Successful fulfillment of prerequisites listed above
- Registered with the New Hampshire Medical Technician Board within 30 days of start date
- Six hours of shadowing at the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center Main Operating Room or within the Dartmouth Health System
- Complete the internal Pre-Employment/Person of Interest screening, which includes a criminal background check and clearance by Occupational Medicine for physical fitness for duty and required immunizations. Learn more about our [Pre-Placement Screening](#).
- Maintain professional and academic standards present at the time of program acceptance

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 following required courses you need to complete prior to the start of the training program:
 - o Introduction to Academic Writing
 - o Introduction to Statistics
 - o Biomedical Ethics
 - o 1 Integrative Elective
 - o 1 Liberal Education Course
 - o Medical Terminology
 - o Human Anatomy and Physiology
- 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:

- General surgery
- Ob/GYN
- Genitourinary
- Orthopedic

- Neurosurgery
- Cardiothoracic
- Peripheral vascular
- Pediatrics
- Plastic and reconstructive
- Ophthalmology
- Otolaryngology/Audiology/Maxillofacial Surgery

Are there any in-program costs I need to plan for?

Self-Pay tuition students should plan for approximately \$2,000 - \$2,500 for in-program costs. Sponsored students should expect to purchase only a couple of required textbooks, with a total cost of approximately \$250. Additionally, students are responsible for purchasing any personal supplies such as:

- Footwear: Plain closed-toe and heel shoes and socks or hose are required. The cost can vary per personal preference
- Black Scrub Pants: estimated cost of \$20-50
- Classroom Supplies: Items such as notebooks, pens/highlighters/markers, note/flash cards, etc.; some are provided in the classroom, but some students may have personal preferences with an estimated range of \$25-\$100

What physical demands are required for surgical technologists at Dartmouth Health?

The following are considered "essential functions" that 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 workspace
 - Heat
 - Hazardous machinery
 - Fumes
 - Cold
 - Electrical hazards
 - Exposure to burns
 - Poor lighting
 - Vibration

View the [DHCI Student Handbook and Program Catalog](#) for more program information.