

Clark Launches Surgical Technology Degree



The Clark Building at WSU Vancouver is home to many of Clark College's allied health programs including the nursing program with its state-of-the-art simulation lab.

Clark College is expanding its health care offerings with a new Surgical Technology program, equipping students with the skills to assist surgeons and nurses in operating rooms. Developed in collaboration with Clark County health care providers, the program offers a direct pathway to family-wage jobs in high-demand medical careers.

The degree: This two-year program leads to an associate of applied technology (AAT) degree, preparing graduates for critical roles in surgical teams.

Timeline:

- The first cohort will start in fall 2025, with space for 20 students

- The first students will graduate in spring 2027

What does a Surgical Technologist do? The surgical technology program will prepare students to function effectively with surgeons and nurses in the operating room, performing duties that are vital for the safety and care of surgical patients.

Jim Reynolds, director of surgical technology and professor at Clark College is an experienced surgical technologist with years of working alongside surgeons in operating rooms. He explained that during surgery, a surgical technologist plays a crucial role by passing sterile instruments and supplies to the surgeon.

Reynolds said he is excited that Clark is offering this vital program.

“The hard work of bringing this program to Clark College has been shared by this college, the local community, and local hospitals,” Reynolds said. “I am thrilled to be a part of such an amazing team that knows not just about the need for more surgical technologists in the area but also has the resources and the passion to assist in the creation of the program and to provide assistance in the years to come. Our advisory committee has been working together to build this program. I can’t wait to bring in our first cohort in September.”

First in Southwest Washington: Clark’s Surgical Technology program is the first of its kind in Southwest Washington, with the closest Washington programs offered at community colleges in the Puget Sound region. In the metro area, the closest program is at Mount Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon.

Prerequisites: Students can begin taking foundational classes this spring term, starting April 7. Before students are admitted to Clark’s program, they must complete prerequisite courses including microbiology, a sequence of two anatomy and physiology courses, and more.

Required certification: Prior to graduation, students will sit for the national certification exam for qualification as a certified surgical technologist, which allows surgical techs to practice in operation rooms nationwide.

“Graduates from this new program will meet a critical workforce need,” said Clark College President Dr. Karin Edwards. “This program will ensure that our hospitals will have well-trained surgical technologists. We are dedicated to preparing a trained workforce for our community to meet current and future needs.”

The surgical technology program joins a robust offering of allied health programs at Clark College: dental hygiene, emergency medical services, medical assistant, health information management and medical billing and coding, nursing, pharmacy technician, and phlebotomy.



Surgery stock photo.

Funding and partnerships

Clark College received a \$141,260 Hospital Education and Employment Training (HEET) grant to develop the program to meet a critical workforce need in 2023. The grant proposal was developed in collaboration with PeaceHealth and the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP).

The grant is administered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). HEET funding is used to develop or expand innovative training programs in partnership with labor and employers that support incumbent health care workers to advance their careers in the health care field while meeting the rapidly changing workforce needs of our health care system.

In collaboration with PeaceHealth and OFNHP, the Surgical Technology HEET project has included developing the program, including curriculum; integrating worker voice to ensure accessibility for workers; developing an incumbent worker pathway; and leveraging industry resources for quality instruction.

Clark College is pursuing a second HEET grant to fully implement the first cohort. The expectation is that the program will be sustainable after initial implementation.

What Clark's partners say

"Surgical technologists are in high demand, and play key roles on our clinical team," said Chief Hospital Executive Cherelle Montanye, PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center. "This program will be a critical resource to prepare students for an excellent career path at hospitals and surgery centers across our region."

"This is the type of program that OFNHP enthusiastically supports," said Jonathon Baker, OFNHP vice president.

“Programs like this will add to the skill set of our medical technicians, support health care in our region, and lift up our community.”

Learn more

- Clark College’s surgical technology program
- Clark College’s health care and biosciences programs
- Read an article in *The Columbian* [here](#)