

Diagnostic Cardiac Sonography

Associate in Applied Science Degree Limited Enrollment

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Career Definition

A diagnostic cardiac sonographer is a highly- skilled professional who uses specialized ultrasound equipment to record visual images of the heart. They work in hospitals and outpatient settings producing these echocardiograms to assist the physician in diagnosing heart disease.

Program Overview

This degree prepares the graduate to secure their American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonography credential and entry-level work in the adult echo specialty area. The graduate also receives instruction in basic vascular sonography as well as EKG related diagnostic testing. A clinical hospital experience in echocardiography is provided.

Program Goal

Graduates of this program will:

- To prepare competent entry-level cardiac sonographers in the cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (behavior) learning domains.

Program Outcomes

Graduates of this program will:

- recognize abnormal sonographic findings
- recognize significant clinical information that impacts the sonographic examination.
- maintain a safe environment for him or herself and the patient.
- apply concepts of ultrasound physics when imaging.
- perform the necessary types of examinations in their specialty area.
- perform the required modalities (2D, Doppler, other).
- obtain quality images in a timely fashion.
- perform a comprehensive diagnostic ultrasound examination.
- demonstrate appropriate clinical judgment.
- meet professional expectations of the clinical environment.
- communicate effectively with patients and members of the health care team.
- be positioned to pursue a career as a sonographer.



Opportunities for Employment

Employment of cardiovascular technologists and technicians is projected to grow 22 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations

Opportunities for Advancement

- Graduates with experience may advance to a lead sonographer position.
- Graduates with additional experience and/or education may become specialized in other areas of ultrasound imaging.
- Graduates with experience and a business background may pursue ultrasound/radiology manager positions.
- Graduates with experience may secure work as a clinical application specialist or salesperson with equipment and contrast manufacturers.

Helpful Academic Skills or Experiences

- High school biology, anatomy and physiology, physics, algebra
- College level math, physics, anatomy, physiology, English, and health science coursework
- Employment or volunteer experience in a healthcare setting and American Heart Association Health Care Provider CPR certification is helpful.

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Professional Organization Websites

- American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
www.ardms.org
- Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonography www.sdms.org
- American Society of Echocardiography www.asecho.org

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is the program accredited?

A: The program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Program (www.caahep.org) upon the recommendation of the Joint Review Committee on Diagnostic Medical Sonography. Accreditation allows the graduate to sit for the ARDMS credentials in the adult echocardiography specialty areas 60 days prior to graduation.

Q: How do I get started?

A: This is a limited enrollment program and has special requirements. Attendance at a Sonography Information Meeting is mandatory prior to acceptance. At this meeting the following topics will be covered: career and program overview, curriculum plans, preparing for admission, and admission policy. In order to apply to this program you must attend an information session. Please visit this site to access program information: <https://www.harpercollege.edu/academics/health/diagnostic-cardiac-sonography/index.php>

Meeting with an academic advisor is also strongly recommended. Advising information can be found here: <https://www.harpercollege.edu/services/advising/cnso/index.php>

Q: How much does the program cost?

A: Specific tuition costs will be provided at the information meeting. Diagnostic Cardiac Sonography coursework is double the standard tuition. Tuition and fees are subject to change without notice. Financial aid is available through the Harper College Financial Aid and Scholarships: <https://www.harpercollege.edu/registration/financialaid/index.php>

Q: What are the aptitudes, qualities and physical demands needed to be successful in the sonography program?

A: Eye hand coordination, quick reflexes, quick mental processing, physical stamina, musculoskeletal health, visual acuity, critical thinking, ability to attend for long periods:

<https://www.harpercollege.edu/academics/health/geninfo/functionalabilities.php#imaging>

Q: How much do sonographers earn?

A: According to the 2016 SDMS salary survey, beginning sonographers make approximately 26 to 28 dollars per hour (\$54,000 to \$58,000 per year) and those with 5-10 years of experience make approximately 32 to 35 dollars per hour (\$67,000 to \$73,000 per year). According to the US Bureau of Labor approximate mean pay rates for Illinois and Chicago sonographers are 36 and 37 dollars per hour (\$75,000 to \$77,000 per year) respectively.

Q: Can the program be taken part time?

A: The program is considered a full-time day program. However, prerequisites and general education coursework can be taken prior to acceptance and transferred into the program which will lighten the course load. Please note, completion of coursework ahead of time does not guarantee acceptance into the program or shorten the program in length.

The final summer semester involves a four-day per week clinical. The program is academically challenging. For every hour in the classroom, two to three hours are needed outside of the classroom to study. Some students are able to continue flexible part-time work during the first semesters of the program.

Q: Are there specific health or other requirements for this program?

A: A health physical, titers and necessary vaccinations (including MMR, varicella, hepatitis B, Tdap), the flu vaccine, TB testing, random drug screening, a criminal background check, health insurance, and CPR training are required before students can start their first clinical experience, which takes place in the second year of the program. The coordinator will direct students to secure these requirements at the appropriate time. Failing a course or the ARDMS SPI exam can jeopardize program completion. The student must pay for the required ARDMS credentialing exams in order to graduate.