

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 Cardiac 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

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

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.
- possess the general medical knowledge to perform effectively in a health care setting
- perform competently a broad range of examinations within their specialty area
- produce sonography images in a time efficient manner
- optimize and acquire quality sonographic images
- perform comprehensive diagnostic ultrasound examinations
- demonstrate sound clinical judgment within the health care environment
- meet the ethical and professional expectations of the clinical environment
- communicate effectively with patients and members of the health care team.
- become an effective member of the profession and health care organization



Opportunities for Employment

According to the US Bureau of Labor, employment of diagnostic sonographers is projected to grow 14 percent from 2020 to 2030, 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 bachelor's degree may pursue ultrasound manager positions
- Graduates with experience may secure work as a clinical application specialist with equipment, contrast, and device 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 BLS 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 credential in the adult echocardiography specialty area 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. 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 may be charged at a differential 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. Find additional information here:
<https://www.harpercollege.edu/academics/health/geninfo/functionalabilities.php#imaging>

Q: How much do sonographers earn?

A:

- National mean rate 40 dollars per hour (81,000 per year)
- Chicago area mean rate 41 dollars per hour (86,000 per year)
- Illinois entry level rate ~34 dollars per hour (70,000 per year)

Q: Can the program be taken part time?

A: The program is considered a full-time program with courses offered during weekdays. However, theory courses are offered on-line and can be viewed at the student's convenience with the exception of scheduled exams. Lab coursework requires attendance on campus 1 day per week for the first year and 2 days per week the second year. Also the student practices in the Diagnostic Imaging Lab 3-4 days per week (typically late afternoon to evening week days and Friday and Saturday to a total of ~ 8 hours).

Prerequisite and general education coursework can be taken prior to acceptance and transferred into the program which lightens 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 initial semesters of the program.

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

A: A health physical, any needed vaccinations based on a blood titer (MMR, varicella, hepatitis B), Tdap and 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.