

**ALVIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DIAGNOSTIC CARDIOVASCULAR
SONOGRAPHY PROGRAM**

**APPLICATION
AND
INFORMATION PACKET**

Offering Specialties in:

**Adult Echocardiography
Pediatric Echocardiography
Vascular Technology**



General Information – The Cardiovascular Sonography Program at ACC offers a series of courses leading to an Associate of Applied Science or Advanced Technical Certificate degree in either specialty of Echocardiography or Vascular Technology. See the information below to determine which option is right for you.

1. Continuing Education: Non-credit (CEU) – This option is only for sonographers who would like to take one of the cardiovascular sonography courses for refresher or to help prepare for the registry examination. Any course may be audited for CEU by registering through the continuing education department and paying the course fee. Students may wish to register through the credit side of the college if they would like to receive full college credit for a course, but those who go through regular registration must meet the requirements for college admission, advising and testing. (Anytime)

2. Advanced Technical Certificate (ATC) - This is a one and a half year option for those who already have a college degree in an area of allied health from an accredited institution. This certificate is advanced in that, it is above and beyond the degree you already have. Only people with a degree in healthcare will be allowed into the ATC program. (Starts in January)

3. Associate of Applied Science (AAS) – This is a two-year option for beginners with little or no healthcare experience and/or no prior degree. Anyone interested in obtaining a degree in this field may apply to the AAS program even if they already have a degree that is or is not healthcare related. (Starts in June)

Specific Program Information, Admission Criteria, Schedule and Start Dates

*The admission criteria are different for each option and the acceptance process is competitively based on academic grades and test scores. Each student is evaluated by academic merit, reference letters and the interview with the program director. There are only 6-10 spaces available for each tract. Applications are taken year round, but please take note of **APPLICATION DEADLINES listed below.** Once accepted, students must have a physical exam, TB skin test or CXR, provide proof of immunizations, become current with vaccinations, have a current CPR card, pass a criminal background check, drug screen, and attend a mandatory orientation .PLEASE NOTE: HEPATITIS B SHOTS – ALL 3 SHOTS ARE DUE PRIOR TO ADMISSION INTO THE PROGRAM.*

CEU – Anyone interested in auditing a course for CEU must contact the program director for approval. Only experienced sonographers may take the courses for refresher or registry review. Once approved, students will contact the continuing education department to pay the fee and register for the course. No other documentation is required. The courses may be taken any time they are offered. The cost of each course is approximately \$150.00 through CE (based on in-district).

ATC – Students interested in taking the ATC option must first apply to the program and the college for admission, visit academic advising and admissions, provide proof of their allied health college degree, submit all high school and college official transcripts, complete a professional observation and submit 2 letters of reference. ATC students must also document prior completion of the program pre-requisites including: English I, Anatomy and Physiology, Physics (may be allied health physics), and College Algebra. ATC Students must have a **professional** credential. This program is one and a half years and 40 credit hours long. The classes may be day, afternoon, or evening. Clinicals are 2 – 3 days per week on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. It starts with the spring semester in January. The deadline to apply is October 15th. Applicants are judged on their cumulative GPA first and then the GPA from the science courses. Acceptance letters are sent out in November and mandatory orientation is in December. The **approximate** cost of the ATC program is \$5000.00 including tuition, fees, scrubs, physical exam, and books (based on in-district and subject to change).

AAS – Admission requirements for this option include pre-requisite courses:

- English I
- Anatomy and Physiology I
- **Anatomy and Physiology II – **if applying for AAS Pedi-Echo program**
- College Algebra
- College or Applied Physics with a grade of C or better
- ACT composite score of 19 or higher (**Writing portion of test is not required and is not counted toward the overall score**)
OR Combined math/verbal score of 900 or higher on SAT test
- Meet all THEA requirements
- Apply to the program and college; visit with academic advising and admissions offices
- Provide all official high school and college transcripts
- Complete a professional observation
- Submit 2 letters of reference from a professional source

This program is two years and 70 credit hours long. The classes and labs may be days, afternoons, or evenings, with clinicals 2 – 3 days per week on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm The AAS program starts with the summer semester in June. The application deadline is February 15th. Acceptance is based on ACT / SAT score, and GPA in the prerequisite courses and it is competitively based. Acceptance letters are sent out in March and mandatory orientation is in April. The **approximate** cost is \$7000.00 including tuition, fees, scrubs, physical exam, and books (based on in-district and subject to change).

For more information or if you have questions, please contact:

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The Profession of Diagnostic Medical Sonography

Diagnostic Medical Sonography is an umbrella for many specialties in the field of ultrasound, which include: Abdomen, Ob/Gyn, Fetal, Breast, Musculoskeletal, Neurosonology, Ophthalmic, Cardiac, and Vascular. ACC only offers cardiac (Echocardiography) and vascular (Non-Invasive Vascular Technology). Registry exams and credentials are offered in each of the branches of ultrasound by the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS).

Job Title

People in this profession go by many names. "Sonographers" are people who perform ultrasound, specifically, cardiac ultrasound are Echocardiographers (or echo techs for short), and people who perform Non-Invasive Vascular exams are known as Vascular Technologists (or vascular techs for short).

Credentials

Graduates of the ACC DCVS Program may sit for the registry exam through the ARDMS or CCI to earn their credential immediately upon graduation.

Job Description

People in this profession are responsible for performing ultrasound and some non-imaging diagnostics of the heart and peripheral blood vessels. Pediatric Echocardiography is highly specialized and focused on identifying congenital heart disease in infants and children. These are non-invasive exams to check the size and function of the heart and to look for obstructions and other problems in the blood vessels. It is much like detective work in the human body.

Physical and Mental Requirements

Cardiovascular sonographers must be able to think critically, make decisions, work independently with little supervision, communicate with physician and nurses, have excellent organizational skills in order to prioritize and complete the workload, and be able to interact compassionately and professionally with patients and coworkers. Computer skills are a must because all ultrasound machines are big computers on wheels. The physical skills include good eyesight in the dark, excellent hearing, and the ability to lift, position and transport patients and push heavy ultrasound equipment around to do portable exams. Sonographers must also be able to hold a stationary position for prolonged periods of time and often in an awkward position while trying to maintain an image. Sonographers must have good upper body strength and manual dexterity to push small buttons on the equipment. Applicants to the Cardiovascular sonography Program at ACC are required to attend a professional observation at one of our clinical affiliates to be sure that they know what to expect and are able to perform the required job duties.

Salary and Job Opportunities

Starting salary is about \$35,000 per year for a new graduate. Once you pass the national registry exams, the pay increases dramatically to about \$45,000-\$70,000 per year. Sonographers can make more money if they are registered in more than one specialty and if they take call. Sonographers typically work in hospitals, but they may also work in physician offices, diagnostic centers, manufacturers, mobile services, and contract agencies. Some are self-employed and perform studies on a fee per test basis. The hours are usually day shift, but some labs have evening and weekend hours. Most hospitals require on call time during off-hours. Job opportunities are plentiful in the Houston and Galveston area and nationally. I get phone calls, post cards, and flyers on a daily basis from local and national recruiters. We inform current students and graduates of job openings and post them on the bulletin board in the classroom.

Career Advancement and Employment Options

Cardiovascular Sonographers have the same opportunities for advancement and career choices as other allied health professions. Sonographers can expand their horizons in supervision, management, education, research, sales, applications training, travel, and much more. Graduates of ultrasound programs with an Associate Degree are a hot commodity.

Accreditation

This program is accredited by CAAHEP (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs). For more information contact: CAAHEP, 1361 Park Street, Clearwater, FL 33756, or by phone at 727-210-2350.

To Find Out More

Visit these web sites: sdms.org, ardms.org, cci.org, ase.org, aium.org, svt.org, www.caahep.org.