

Date: March 9, 2020

To: Cathy Sandeen, Chancellor

From: John Stalvey, Interim Provost 

Cc: Jeff Jessee, Dean of the College of Health; Vice Provost for Health Programs
Terrina McKinnon, Committee Chair & Term Assistant Professor of Surgical Technology
Grace Leu Burke, Assistant Professor of Medical Laboratory Science
Susan Kalina, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Claudia Lampman, Vice Provost for Student Success

Re: **AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings – Surgical Technology AAS**

I have reviewed the dean's findings and the completed Expedited Program Review Template for the Surgical Technology AAS. The Provost's Office did not receive an Optional Program Response Form from the program.

Recommendations

My recommendation is to accept the decision and recommendations of the dean with the additional commentary that this is a costly program, so the program should explore continued and enhanced financial support from the industry, otherwise the program is not likely to be sustainable. An interim progress report on all recommendations is due to the dean by March 1, 2021. The dean will submit a review along with the program's interim progress report to the provost by April 1, 2021. Unless otherwise noted at that time, the next Program Review will be included in the regular ongoing program review schedule.

Decision

Recommend Continuation



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: Jeff Jessee, Dean of the College of Health and Vice Provost of Health Programs

Cc: Terrina McKinnon, Committee Chair & Term Assistant Professor of Surgical Technology
Grace Leu Burke, Assistant Professor of Medical Laboratory Science

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: Surgical Technology AAS

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): The Surgical Technology AAS is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) upon the recommendation of the Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA).

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role:

The mission of the Surgical Technology AAS program is to prepare competent surgical technologists for successful employment in an operating room, assisting the surgeon and other members of the professional surgical team with patient care before, during, and after surgery. Surgical technologists are operating room specialists who perform specific duties for pre-, intra-, and postoperative case management. They are essential for the effective delivery of healthcare services. This program makes a strong contribution to the College of Health goal to meet the healthcare workforce needs in Alaska. Graduates of the AAS in Surgical Technology are eligible to sit for the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) examination. Once NBSTSA certified, graduates are eligible to apply for licensure. The Surgical Technology AAS is a relatively new program. The first cohort of students was accepted in fall 2017. Employment growth for surgical technologists is expected to be robust (+23.8%, with an average of 22 annual openings). The program maintains a strong connection to external partners.

Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity:

Each student cohort includes 12 students. Most students successfully complete the program. The program maintains a good return on investment. In FY19, the full tuition revenues covered 88% of the instructional costs. Additional support is provided by industry partners.

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success:

The Surgical Technology AAS is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) upon the recommendation of the Accreditation Review Council on

Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA). This accreditation is required for students to sit for the national certification examination and to then become licensed. To date, program outcomes are very good. The graduation rate is 94%, the certification examination pass rate is 87%, the employment rate is 100%, the student satisfaction rate is 96%, and the employer satisfaction rate is 90%. All of these exceed the national benchmarks. All (except the satisfaction rates) also exceed national averages. Overall, it is clear that the program is successful. However, the program must fully implement its Academic Assessment Plan. The program must commit itself to a more rigorous assessment process to identify, implement, and assess key recommendations for program improvements.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness:

There are no other surgical technology education programs in the state of Alaska.

Commendations and Recommendations:

The Surgical Technology AAS was created in 2017 to address industry needs for surgical technologists. The employment growth for surgical technologists in Alaska is expected to be robust. With industry support, the program has been successful in preparing competent surgical technologists. As the program continues, it will need to allocate more effort to academic assessment. This will be essential to maintain the program's specialized accreditation and to remain successful in preparing competent surgical technologists.

Decision:

Continuation.

Submission date: February 10, 2020

Program/s in this review: Surgical Technology AAS

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting/the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs CAAHEP

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

- Terrina McKinnon, Program Director (chair), Anchorage
- Grace Leu Burke, Assistant Professor MLS Dept., Anchorage

1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)

Program Relevancy

The mission of the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. Located in Anchorage and on community campuses in Southcentral Alaska, UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities and its diverse peoples. The University of Alaska Anchorage is an open access university with academic programs leading to occupational endorsements; undergraduate and graduate certificates; and associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees in a rich, diverse and inclusive environment.

UAA's School of Allied Health's mission is "to educate and develop allied health professionals to serve all Alaskans," while the College of Health's mission is "Advancing the health and well-being of people and communities."

The mission of the Surgical Technology AAS program is to prepare competent surgical technologists for successful employment in an operating room, assisting the surgeon and other members of the professional surgical team with patient care before, during, and after surgery.

The program's mission aligns with that of the School of Allied Health, College of Health and UAA by educating professionals to address Alaskan workforce needs in healthcare and thereby advance the health of Alaskans.

The goal of the Surgical Technology (ST) program is to enhance and grow to meet the workforce needs of Alaska. As the only in-state education provider, the program supplies Alaska's medical community with locally trained surgical technologists to reduce industry reliance on outside contract traveling technologists to maintain a working capacity to run the operating room. There is a current shortage of surgical technologists in Anchorage/Mat-Su Valley area and this program will help alleviate the need for healthcare facilities to hire from outside of Alaska.

Support for Other Programs, Partnerships, and Extramural Support

The ST program was developed as a result of industry demand, and the program received much of the startup personnel and equipment costs from external stakeholders, who continue to help support the program. The department also supports the UAA Physician Assistant (PA) Program by engaging ST students to provide technique-based training to the PA students in proper surgical scrub preparation, a necessary skill set for their operating room clinical rotation(s). The program has several affiliation agreements with local facilities in the Southcentral area at hospitals and surgery centers that allow our students to observe, as well as rotate throughout their facility for the clinical portion of the program. They donate supplies and have pledged to show their support for the program.

Workforce Development/Employment Opportunities

The employment outlook for the graduates of the program is outstanding. All graduates received a job offer and many of them received more than one prior to graduation. The State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (<http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/occ/occ.cfm?o=292055>) projects robust employment growth of 23.8% from 2016-2026, with 22 position openings each year. This demonstrates a great need for surgical technologists in Alaska, and the graduates of this program will help to fulfill those needs. At the recent COH Health Advisory Council Statewide Meeting, community stakeholders repeatedly verbalized the need for more surgical technologists, over and above the 12 graduates currently being produced by the program. Representatives from various hospitals verbalized willingness to help with faculty needs (currently a limiting factor), encouraged the program to investigate the feasibility of a hybrid delivery model, and requested that the program investigate the possibility of providing training in sterile processing in addition to the current ST AAS.

2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)

Enrollment and Completion

The ST program has only been active since 2017. The very first class enrolled in August of 2017, and enrolled to a full capacity of twelve students. All twelve students graduated the program, and have successfully been employed. The second class enrolled and began in August of 2018. That class also enrolled to a full capacity of 12 students, and most of those students went on to completion. Students who are at risk of not completing the program are offered remediation. So far, all students who completed the program were able to obtain employment. Twelve students are currently enrolled in the program, and on track to progress to the final semester and clinical rotations this summer.

Credits and Semesters for the Degree

The data on average time and credits to earn the degree seems high for an associate degree. The program uses a selective-admission cohort model and students move through major courses together over three semesters (fall, spring, summer). Students may have taken additional coursework prior to their acceptance into the program as full majors that would cause data to suggest more credits and longer completion time than is required for the program.

As with many programs in the School of Allied Health and at UAA, many ST students are considered non-traditional students and enter the program after a change in careers, being discharged from the military, or having raised their children. These other life circumstances may necessitate completing the prerequisites part-time over several semesters/years, thus increasing the time required to complete the degree and the number of total credits earned by graduates.

Cost and External Support

Internal program support comes from tuition and general funds from the College of Health. As stated above, the program has also received a total of \$157,000 in support from community stakeholders. In 2017, the program received an TVEP grant of \$130,930, that was used to acquire program equipment and remodel existing space in the Social Studies Building to serve as a combined lecture and laboratory. Additional external support comes in the form of numerous supply donations from local hospitals and surgery centers.

3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

Specialized Accreditation

Graduation from a CAAHEP-accredited program is required in order to sit for the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA)

In January 2019, the ST program was granted accreditation by the Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARCSTSA)/the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).. Reaccreditation intervals are typically four years, but are determined by CAAHEP. UAA has not been notified of its next review date at the present time, but, per the CAAHEP award letter will occur no later than 2024.

Currency of the Curriculum

The program curriculum is up to date (2017 for formal curriculum documents) and is based on the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) Core Curriculum. The Core Curriculum provides the content and standard of teaching for all ST programs to follow. The UAA ST program follows this directive.

Distance Delivery

The program is delivered through face-to face lecture and hands-on skills practicums and labs. The program could consider a hybrid delivery format with didactic distance delivery and on-site laboratories and practicums if accreditation standards could be met.

Program Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

The AAS in Surgical Technology program assesses whether students are able to:

- (1) apply knowledge and skills of biological sciences in the perioperative setting;
- (2) communicate effectively with surgical team members, patients and their families;
- (3) apply the principles of aseptic technique in the perioperative setting;
- (4) organize routine instrumentation and supplies within the perioperative environment;
- (5) demonstrate knowledge of pharmacology and math calculation principles related to the surgical environment;
- (6) collaborate with members of the surgical team to deliver quality patient care with consideration of the unique psychological and social needs of each patient; and
- (7) demonstrate skills and behaviors necessary to function as a member of a surgical team.

The ST program uses several different assessment instruments to evaluate program student learning outcomes. The first is the outcomes tracking tool, provided by the Accreditation Review Committee for Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA). This form tracks graduation, placement (employment) and certification examination pass rates. Prior to going on clinical rotations, students must demonstrate at least 80% competency with all required skills. In order to be eligible for graduation, students must complete a minimum of 120 surgical procedures, with a minimum of 30 required in general surgery, and minimums of 10 each in four different subspecialties. The program also tracks outcomes through performance on the national certification exam, which tests overall knowledge in every area of surgical technology practice, to include aseptic technique, medical terminology, pharmacology, case management, and sterilization and disinfection. Additional outcome data is collected via graduate and employer surveys, as well as clinical supervisor evaluations.

The program has an advisory board meets at least annually to discuss outcomes of the students as well as program resources. Current program assessment data from all sources indicate student learning outcomes are being met (see below for detail).

Suggestions/actions based on assessment results:

- Student feedback from the first cohort revealed a desire for certification examination review sessions to help prepare students for the national exam. This was particularly important given the lag time between

when the students completed the program (August 2019), and when the program was accredited (January 2019), as program accreditation is what determines examination eligibility. In response to the students' request, classes were held every Saturday for a total of 8 weeks. Online practice exams were also available for the students to practice testing.

- Students also suggested that more having a larger number and a wider variety of instruments available for the lab portion of the program would be helpful. Necessary equipment and supplies were ordered for the second cohort; resultant feedback from clinical sites was that that students were better prepared when compared to the previous cohort.

Student Success

Pre-major advising is done primarily at the UAA COH Student Success Center, at which students receive guidance about program requirements. Once in the program, students must also meet with their program director who advises the students on their progression, behaviors, and any skills and didactics that need improvement. Students are given bi-weekly feedback in the second semester to alert the student to any issues that need to be addressed so that the student can be successful.

ST students participate in a clinical externship for 16 weeks. This allows the students to not only practice hands on skills that they will need to be successful, demonstrate competency in program technical requirements, and to showcase their talents in a "hands-on interview." During the clinical rotation, the students perform skills in the following surgical specialties: General, OBGYN, Vascular, Plastic Surgery, Orthopedics, Ear Nose and Throat, Ophthalmology, and Neurosurgery. All (100%) of the first two graduating classes had job offers at clinical rotation sites before graduation.

Student Accomplishments

The ST program currently meets or exceeds Accreditation Review Committee for Surgical Technologists and Surgical Assistants (ARC/STSA) requirements in all areas:

- The graduate rate for the program is 94%; graduation rate for the ARC/STSA requirement is >60%; and the 2013-2015 National Average* graduation rate is 62.21%.
- The certification examination pass rate for the program is 87%; for the ARC/STSA it is >70%; and the 2013-2015 National Average pass rate is 72.7%.
- The employment rate for the program is 100%; for the ARC/STSA it is >80%; and the 2013-2015 National Average* employment rate is 82.5%.
- The student satisfaction rate for the program is 96%; for the ARC/STSA it is >85%; and the 2013-2015 National Average* student satisfaction rate is 96%.
- The employer satisfaction rate for the program is 90%; for the ARC/STSA it is >85%; and the 2013-2015 National Average* employer satisfaction rate is 96%.

*Reference: <http://www.arcstsa.org/index.php/surgical-technology-program-and-graduate-outcomes/>

4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)

The UAA Surgical Technology Program is the only program in the state of Alaska.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

Again, the goal of the ST program is to enhance and grow to meet the workforce needs of Alaska. Current feedback from community stakeholders indicates a need for the program to grow to help meet workforce needs. The program has met or exceeded minimum CAAHEP standards and national averages for retention, certification, performance on the certification exam and job placement. There is a widespread need across the state of Alaska for surgical technologists, and continued and increased support of the program from industry partners is anticipated. The expedited review committee recommends the program be **continued and expanded**.