

SURGICAL TECH TRANSCRIPT:

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Narrator: 98.7% at Chatt Tech. Where 98.7% of our students earn a career. Today, we'll be taking a look at the Surgical Technologist Program at Chattahoochee Technical College. We'll speak to current and former students, professional partners and instructors about this growing career path in the health care industry. Let's start with the dean of health Sciences, Stephanie Puffer.

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Stephanie Puffer: My name is Stephanie Puffer. I'm the Dean of Health Sciences at Chattahoochee Tech. I've been the Dean for two years.

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Narrator: Stephanie, how would you summarize the job description of a Surgical Tech?

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Stephanie Puffer: Surgical Technologist function in a surgical setting. They may assist with positioning a patient, prepping for surgery, and then they assist the surgeon specifically during the surgery. By passing instruments, they have to set up and maintain the sterile field. They have direct patient contact in the operating room. It is a faster paced environment. They have opportunities for growth. They will probably never be bored. Once they learn these skills, they will take an exam to become credentialed and then of course they can take that anywhere. Wherever they move all over the country, they can take that with them. They're part of the surgical team. But of course, the physicians in charge.

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Narrator: How does Chatt Tech's program stay ahead of the pack?

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Stephanie Puffer: Our faculty in that program are amazing, very experienced, and really teach them how to function in the operating room. One of the things that I think is unique to about our healthcare programs, the majority of them are done with a cohort, so students apply to a program, they get accepted to their program of choice. They're with a group of approximately 20 students and they stay together for that year, year and a half. So it becomes a very family like, very supportive environment. They really get to know each other since the core faculty will teach them the entire time. It gives them an opportunity to develop these interpersonal relationships that you don't get to do when you only see a student for one class for one semester. It gives you an opportunity as faculty to really get to know those students and see what are the specific areas we need to help them with to grow as professionals. So it's not just the book knowledge, it's not just this is how you set up a sterile field. It's over the entire course of the time, going from point A to point B, We're going to make you a clinician, not just have book knowledge. And I think our faculty do a great job with that. When they step into a clinical rotation, they have physically and mentally already done everything. The hospital or that physician is going to ask them to do. So they've done it in a mock way in our our F O R R. so that it feels comfortable for them even when they're on clinical.

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Narrator: Wait. F O R R. ? We're just going to go ahead and start calling it the FO - R. What personal qualities are best for this profession?

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Stephanie Puffer: I think that attention to detail, we can't overstress how crucial it is that the sterile field is maintained. You have you have a patient, you've got a surgical patient that's open in terms of infection control. Their role is extremely important. So it does need to be somebody that would feel comfortable when the environment might be stressful. It doesn't mean their day is stressful all day, but certainly they're in a role that has the potential to be very stressful. Someone who would prefer to be up on their feet, that doesn't want to be in a sedentary job and that wants patient interaction, but probably really enjoys being on a team, that that's more their focus is to help being in that health care team environment.

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Narrator: And how does the industry growth look for the immediate future?

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Stephanie Puffer: This one is faster than average 11% growth, and the median annual salary right now is 54,000. I will tell you, there are lots of jobs. I've had several of the bigger hospital systems tell me I'll hire every single graduate you can give us.

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Narrator: Thanks, Stephanie. Now let's speak to the lead instructor, Mary Jo Bergmann. Mary Jo, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

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Mary Jo Bergmann: I'm Mary Jo Bergmann, the Program Director for the Surgical Technology Program at Chattahoochee Tech. I have been in this position for 2 or 3 years, and I'm actually a graduate of this program, have come full circle to lead the program now, and I've enjoyed the process.

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Narrator: So what type of person may be a good fit to be a surgical tech?

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Mary Jo Bergmann: This is a great occupation for people who are fascinated by anatomy and physiology, who like to work as a team, who like to focus on one patient at a time. You are essential to the process of surgery. A lot of people think that. There are only nurses that work in the operating room with the doctors and a lot of people have not heard of the occupation or position of a surgical tech. We are an important part of the surgical team. We set up all of the sterile areas of instrumentation and devices that are needed for surgery.

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Narrator: Oh, wait, I just realized these are all the people who are in the OR with the surgeons on Grey's Anatomy.

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Mary Jo Bergmann: Yes, we're always in the medical shows. We're always in the background. But surgery could not be done if we have not set up a sterile field and we don't have the instruments that the doctor would need.

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Narrator: I'm guessing it's tough to watch medical shows without critiquing Hollywood, right?

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Mary Jo Bergmann: I do love to watch medical shows, mostly just to hear the interesting cases and symptoms that came up. And I do watch for mistakes that they make in how they present medical information. Usually the mistakes that they make are related to that they did not wear the appropriate PPE or protective equipment correctly. You know, like they're in the middle of surgery and they don't have any eye protection on like that's not normal because you do need to protect yourself from blood shooting possibly in your eye.

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Narrator: Why is the cohort model of class so important to surgical tech students?

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Mary Jo Bergmann: A lot of times on the first day of class, I explained to my students that they are no longer in competition with one another, and they quickly learn to work together, to learn together, to learn from each other. They are each other's best support group during this program because nobody, even in their family, quite understands the experience of going into an operating room for the first time and having a small understanding of what's going on and for the stress that that brings. And so these students experience this program together, and they really usually become a very cohesive group. And it's wonderful to see them growing together and being that support system for each other, which leads directly into working as a team in an operating room, because that is the same type of cohesiveness that you generally have when you work with a consistent team in the operating room.

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Narrator: Why did you choose to be a surgical tech?

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Mary Jo Bergmann: You know, for years growing up, I was interested in the medical field, fascinated with surgery, but I really was turned off at the idea of being a nurse. You are one person trying to look after, I don't know, six, seven, eight patients. And so when I discovered that there was a role as a surgical tech, which was the complete opposite, which was a team of people focused on one patient at a time, that was really exciting for me because you could focus all your attention and effort on one patient and you have this team to coordinate and and back you up.

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Narrator: So tell me about The labs at Chatt Tech. By the way, I have to tell you, I'm working on going viral with calling it the FO R.

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Mary Jo Bergmann: Okay! Our lab, our FO R, is set up to mimic two operating rooms. In between the two operating rooms is what we call a sub sterile area. And this is the area that we scrub in. And so we're teaching students the whole process of their role from setting up the O.R., gathering sterile instruments, learning how to scrub, learning how to gown and glove, and then setting up their back table, which is their sterile area. So that whole process we can simulate and train in the labs before they begin clinicals. And so that when they show up into the operating room on day one, that they are able to understand the general process and flow of surgery. They understand kind of the basic roles of each of the different professionals in that room and those rules of the O.R..

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Narrator: Thank you, Mary Jo. Let's speak with Lisa Overton, a registered nurse who works closely with the program. Can you tell us about your involvement with Chat Tech?

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Lisa Overton: My name is Lisa Overton. I currently work at Northside Hospital Cherokee in Canton, Georgia. So right now I am the clinical manager in the operating room and we have Chatt Tech students come to us to do their internships there.

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Narrator: What do you love about surgical technologists?

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Lisa Overton: I started out as a surgical tech before becoming a registered nurse. I feel as though Chatt Tech has a great program. I actually have a really great relationship with their director now. I sit on their board and I do whatever I can for chat tech and their students because they produce some amazing students. Those students are going to get everything they need to know as far as bookwork, their clinical sites. I know that Chatt Tech students are prompt, they're on time. They pay attention when they're there and they're just literally soaking up everything that they possibly can. What are some quality?

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Narrator: That might help someone succeed in this program.

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Lisa Overton: Someone that is hungry for it, someone that is willing and want to learn. Being a surgical tech, you have to come with some level of organization just because of what you're doing. And I mean, we're dealing with patients lives here.

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Narrator: As someone in the medical field, where do you see the industry going in the next decade?

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Lisa Overton: So the demand right now, as you may or may not know, is through the roof. Like we absolutely cannot keep up. I have several surgical tech positions open right now. I'm grateful. I'm thankful that I have a relationship with Chattahoochee Tech so that they send us students. And I'm at my last board meeting with the director. I told her, like, we would like to expand the number of students that we actually receive so that once they're done and once they're, you know, once they graduate, if they live in our area, if they're interested in working for Northside and they've done a great job during their clinicals, we hire them on the demand is over the next ten years, I can see it doubling, possibly even tripling. And that's just where we are in today's world, in our society. The moment you arrive at my facility, you're interviewing for your job.

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Narrator: Thanks, Lisa. Let's talk to a recent graduate of the program now. LeighAnn, can you tell us a little about yourself?

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LeighAnn Brock: My name is LeighAnn. I attended Chattahoochee Tech and graduated in August of 2020, and I currently work in the Cardiovascular OR for just over two years now.

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Narrator: What makes the Chatt Tech program special?

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LeighAnn Brock: I knew that I had a lot of good, strong people to rely on. You learn who are good, reliable resources and you learn to tap into that. And really the most important part would be the fact that our instructors keep a very good relationship with our local hospitals. And because our instructors require much of us as students, then our local hospitals know that they're going to get quality candidates.

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Narrator: Can you walk me through what a day on the job looks like?

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LeighAnn Brock: So our role is to go in and prepare all of the instruments using sterile technique. We're in the room a good hour before the patient ever even comes in and we're opening up. We're counting each item, making sure that everything is identified, preparing it for the surgeon based on whatever procedure is going to take place, making sure we have all the proper supplies open and ready. We're keeping those things organized. Once our procedure is done, we are the one that make sure to get everything back and we count all those items so that no foreign object is left behind in any patient. Then we clean up and make sure that it's all processed in a sterile way so that they're ready for the next patient.

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Narrator: Give me an example of something that you love about your job.

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LeighAnn Brock: I am very fascinated with human anatomy. I think that we as people are very interesting beings, and that's one of the reasons health care intrigued me to begin with. As I've said, the hands on patient care is very important to me. I enjoy being in the action, so to speak. And when you're scrubbed in to a surgical procedure and you're watching the human heart beating and then you watch the patient be put on the bypass heart lung machine while you correct the problems that are going on with that human heart. And then you take the patient off of the heart lung machine and the heart wakes back up.

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LeighAnn Brock: And.

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LeighAnn Brock: That patient lives on. I think that's a pretty cool thing to be involved in.

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Narrator: Thanks, LeighAnn. Now for the final perspective. Let's chat with a current student. Mariah, tell us about yourself and when you graduate.

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Mariah Byk: My name is Mariah Byk. I am a current student in the Surgical Technology program at Chatt Tech, and I am expecting to graduate this summer in July.

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Narrator: What made you decide on getting your education from Chatt Tech?

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Mariah Byk: I was looking into Chatt Tech already because I was looking to leave, you know, my old position that I had because I was looking at, you know, different bridge programs that I could possibly take to get me to my ultimate goal of a physician assistant at school. I was looking at the LPN program. That was when my friend mentioned the surgical technology program that, you know, her sister went to at another school. And I was like, Well, I'm already looking at Chatt Tech. I've heard good things about these certification programs they have let me see if they have a surgical technology program. And as soon as I found out about it, it literally took me like two days and I decided to apply because I was like, yeah, this I think this would be a good opportunity for me.

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Narrator: Can you tell me about the benefits of being in a cohort model of classwork?

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Mariah Byk: It definitely builds like a community, which I think enhances, you know, your ability to learn better. And I say that because you have people that you can rely on. You're not 100% all the time. Nobody is. So I think that when you have a small group of people who, you know, are literally going through the same thing, that you are taking the same classes as you and, you know, have similar



personal things going on outside of school, that it kind of adds like a motivation booster. And I think that it also helps in the sense from the teaching perspective, I have the same professors that teach my classes, so it allows me to feel more comfortable asking questions and I know asking for help if I need it. But they also get to know us better. They know when we're not 100% and they know if we need help, they can tell by our behavior.

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Narrator: Tell me about the life of a student when it comes to classroom time and hands on experience.

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Mariah Byk: I would definitely say that the program is designed that way. Where it is, it really is actually 50% classwork, 50% lab time. I believe we had class on Mondays and Wednesdays and our labs were on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So our whole class time on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. was designated for lab time. And we had time to learn new skills. We were being tested on those skills periodically and that you can keep leveling up to the point where they are comfortable sending you to your clinicals.

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Narrator: Oh by the way, we've renamed it the FO R. Really? Can you help spread that rumor with your class?

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Mariah Byk: Okay.

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Narrator: How does Chatt Tech help you get a job?

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Mariah Byk: Our program directors, Mary Jo Bergman and Patricia Chester are pushing hard for us all the time. So ensuring that we come graduation are getting the best offers and getting all the sign on bonuses that we could possibly get, you know, as new hires at the end of the spring semester. They are bringing out representatives from like major hospitals that we partner with already for clinical sites so that they can look at our resumes and we can talk, you know, potential hiring processes. And I couldn't ask for a better resource because I can't imagine if I was having to do it all on my own, you know, just

going to this program and then being like, okay, well, I have my certification now and I got to look for a job. But they are already trying to ensure that. But before we're getting our pins on our pinning ceremony day, like before we take our last test, that we are already getting offers from major hospitals in the area. So I think that they are definitely setting us up for success.

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Narrator: Thanks, Mariah. To learn more about the Surgical Tech program, visit [Chattahoochee Tech. EDU](http://ChattahoocheeTech.EDU). And thanks for listening to 98.7 Chatt Tech where 98.7% of our students earn a career.