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# Certification: A life-long commitment toward education

As the outgoing President of the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting, I would like to share my thoughts on the value of NBSTSA credentialing. To the individual pursuing credentialing through the NBSTSA, certification is a goal representing pride and confidence in their accomplishments. It is the first step toward turning their education into a profession. Maintaining certification represents a lifelong commitment toward education. The surgical environment demands practitioners to stay abreast of changing technologies and evolving techniques.

As an employer, I look to hire individuals who are certified or who are pursuing certification. Most employers will relate a positive correlation between certification and professionalism in the workplace. Other members of the surgical team, such as the surgeon, nurse, and anesthesia providers, also affirm this observation. More than in any other area, the O.R. depends on teamwork to achieve positive outcomes for the patient. By obtaining the CST or CFA credential, you have demonstrated a basic understanding of the roles in the O.R., and how you fit into the team.

With this demonstrated knowledge you are a preferred employee. You ease the risk management burden of the hospital by demonstrating competency through examination in the surgical process. With your education and credential, you have prepared yourself with advanced training in aseptic technique and surgical procedure. This provides you with the background for committee work within the hospital. Employers are always looking for qualified persons to work on the infection control committee, plan new product line implementation, surgical materials management, or to proctor new employees and students. Certification as a CST or CFA can be the first step to professional development in any of a number of healthcare-related fields.

The NBSTSA is constantly working to assure their examination programs reflect current surgical practice and by maintaining certification, the credential holder is educated in surgical advancements. The NBSTSA has also committed resources to legislative and marketing efforts and wants to support legislation recognizing the value of the credential holder in providing

safe, quality patient care. Our marketing efforts have the same message but are aimed at educating the public, legislators, risk managers, hospital administrators, and others within the hospital hierarchy.

In closing, I would ask all NBSTSA certificate holders to participate in the legislative and marketing efforts. Your O.R. team consists of some of the most educated and influential persons in the community. Develop relationships with these persons; demonstrate professionalism in the performance of your duties. Become active in your State Assemblies. Encourage your fellow technologists in their duties and in becoming certified. Remember, your behavior reflects upon every certificate holder. Surgical technology is coming of age through the efforts of AST, ARCT, and the NBSTSA; please join us in efforts toward advancing our profession.

Sincerely,

**Michael A. DeLano, CST, CFA**  
President of the NBSTSA

Have news that others will find interesting?  
Know of an upcoming event? Want to share a story  
or an opinion? Think your ST program is special?  
Let us know at [elizabeth@nbstsa.org](mailto:elizabeth@nbstsa.org)

# Executive Director's Corner

Where has the year gone? As we enter into the holiday season it seems like just yesterday that we were ringing in the new year of 2008. I guess it's true that the busier you are the quicker time goes by. I can remember the intensity of surgical procedures when I was actively scrubbing in the operating room and how quickly the hours would fly by. Our year has flown by here at the NBSTSA as well. And what a year it's been! I would like to take a few moments to let you know what's been going on here at the NBSTSA.

First, I'd like to introduce you to our current staff here in the office. The NBSTSA team consists of:

**Elina Kurys**  
*Credentialing Manager*

**Ann Makofski**  
*Credentialing Specialist—Examinations*

**Kari Allen**  
*Credentialing Specialist—Group Testing*

**Carla Sanchez**  
*Credentialing Specialist—Renewals*

**Amber Callier**  
*Customer Service/Records Specialist*

**Sue Oakes**  
*Customer Service/Records Specialist*

Our staff can be reached at our toll free number (800-707-0057) to assist you in your credentialing needs. We work very hard here in the office to provide you with the best possible client service we can. Please do not hesitate to contact the NBSTSA staff if we can ever be of assistance.

Probably our most intense efforts throughout 2008 have come in development of client services related to our examination development and administration. Our transition to our new testing agency Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP) began in earnest on January 1, 2008 when AMP assumed testing administration from our previous vendor. New examination development and the Job Task Analysis process began in August 2007, and as a result of this work the NBSTSA developed and launched new forms of both the CST and CFA examinations into the AMP testing network on August 1, 2008. Many thanks to all of the CST and CFA professionals who volunteered their time and expertise to make this development possible. Just as importantly,

the NBSTSA thanks all of our candidates for their patience during this development and assessment process through the late summer and early fall.

Working with AMP the NBSTSA has also completed a revision of the CST Self Assessment Examination (CST-SAE) program. Newly renamed as the CST Practice Examination, this program provides to candidates for the CST examination a practice examination which looks and feels like the actual national certification process. Available online through our partner organization AMP, candidates interested in utilizing this service can link directly to AMP through the NBSTSA website. We will begin work in earnest this fall on a complete revision of the CFA Self Assessment Examination, and anticipate launch of that examination preparation program sometime in 2009.

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*...the NBSTSA  
will continue  
to expand these  
efforts supporting  
credentials into  
2009 and beyond.*

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Significant enhancements have taken place for our recognized educational programs as well. The Group Testing Program transitioned to on campus Web-Based Testing (WBT) in early April and has been off and running ever since. The support shown by our recognized surgical technology programs has been nothing short of phenomenal, and we are extremely grateful for your support through the inevitable "bugs" encountered when such a significant transition occurs. Over 150 programs will participate in WBT in 2008; and we anticipate many more to follow in 2009. This program, coupled with enhanced institutional reporting available through the Electronic Eligibility Database hosted by AMP, has significantly improved our ability to provide testing and reporting services to our programs. I would encourage any program requesting more information on WBT to contact the NBSTSA with your questions.

The NBSTSA has also been busy working throughout 2008 to upgrade our IT and data entry system that better serves our clients. These ongoing efforts will continue into 2009 as we strive to provide better and more efficient services for our 26,000+ clients holding NBSTSA credentials.

In 2009, the NBSTSA will continue to promote credentialing of the surgical technologist and

surgical assistant to healthcare organizations. In addition to this work, the NBSTSA actively participated in student day activities at the AST National Conference in 2008, and will endeavor to do so again in 2009. The NBSTSA Board of Directors has directed staff to develop strategies to assist AST in legislative initiatives as well. All in all, the NBSTSA will continue to expand these efforts supporting the credentials into 2009 and beyond.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, committees, volunteers, and staff of the NBSTSA I thank you for your continuing support of NBSTSA examination programs and credentials. We genuinely hope that we effectively address your needs as your credentialing organization, and promise to work diligently to provide you with the best of services.

Best wishes for a joyful holiday season and a safe and prosperous new year.

Sincerely,



**Ron Kruzal, CST, MA**  
Executive Director  
NBSTSA

## Working Hard to Support Your Credentials

The NBSTSA continues to participate and expand opportunities to support your credentials in the healthcare arena. In 2008, we promoted the CST and CFA credentials to the following healthcare organizations:

- OR Managers
- American College of Surgeons
- Association of Surgical Technologists
- Association of peri-Operative Registered Nurses
- American Society for Healthcare Risk Management

# A Word From Your Surgical Colleagues

## *The ACS and Surgical Technology: A Long History*

### Who Are We?

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) is a scientific and educational association of surgeons, founded in 1913 to improve the quality of surgical care for patients. The ACS is committed to maintaining high standards for both surgical education and practice. "Fellows" of the ACS, designated by the title FACS, indicates the surgeon has demonstrated the education, training, professional qualifications, competence and ethical conduct consistent with the high standards established by the ACS. Prior to being admitted to the College, the surgeon undergoes rigorous evaluation by the American Board of Surgery, including a written and oral examination, and an interview.

The relationship between the ACS and the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) and the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) is in part based on the fact the ACS recognizes the need for assistants to the surgeon in the operating room. The ACS defines surgical technologists as "individuals with specialized education who function as members of the surgical team in the role of scrub person". The ACS goes on to state that, "with additional education and training, some surgical technologists function in the role of surgical first assistant".

As a consequence, the ACS strongly supports education and training of surgical technologists and surgical assistants, and the certification process for individuals who complete an accredited education program in these specialized areas.

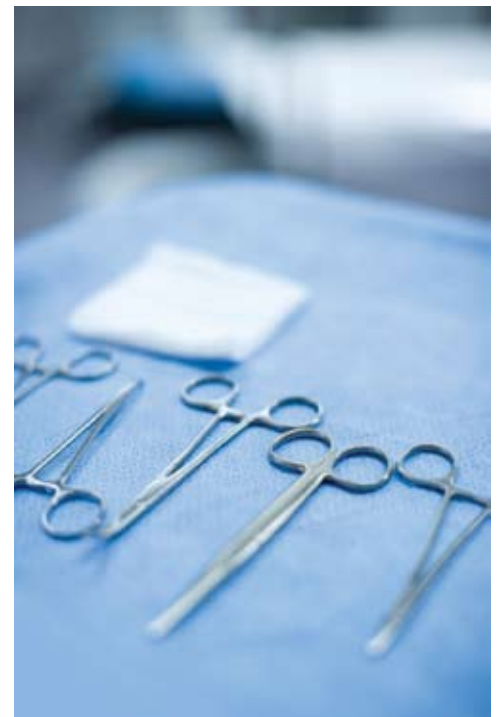
### Our History with NBSTSA

In 1969, the Association of Surgical Technologists self incorporated, with support from the ACS, the American Hospital Association, and the Association of Operating Room Nurses. The Liaison Council on Certification for the Surgical Technologist (LCC-ST) was established in 1974 as the certifying agency for surgical technologists. The LCC-ST name was later changed to the NBSTSA (National Board for Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting)

ing) to better reflect its scope. Since its beginning, the NBSTSA, which includes a surgeon and a non-medical person from the public sector, serves as an independent body.

The ACS also has a strong interest in maintaining adequate educational programs for surgical technologists and surgical assistants. Educational programs are accredited through the Accreditation Review Committee for Educational Programs in Surgical Technology. This is a collaborative effort of the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST), and the ACS, under the direction of the Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). The Committee on Allied Health Professions (CAHP) of the ACS appoints Fellows from the ACS to serve as liaison members on both the ARC-ST and CAAHEP. The ACS liaison participates fully in all aspects of the accreditation review process for surgical technology programs.

Similarly, the ACS has a strong collaborative relationship with the NBSTSA. The ACS Committee on Allied Health Professions appoints a Fellow to the NBSTSA, who participates in board meetings, conference calls, and decisions. The NBSTSA, in cooperation with the ACS assures the certifying examination for the surgical technologist or surgical first assistant adequately assesses the defined knowledge base and skill set for those professions. The ACS participation in the NBSTSA and The ARC-ST reflects the shared commitment to providing patients with the highest quality of surgical care with meticulous attention to patient safety. By working together, the ACS and NBSTSA maintain high standards for the surgical technologist and surgical assistant as part of the surgical team.



In upcoming issues, we will address issues related to patient safety, the disruptive surgeon, who should assist in the operating room, and the changing workforce in the operating room. The ACS welcomes your comments and questions. We have a long history and strong relationship with the NBSTSA, and this relationship allows us to offer the very best in care to our patients, our ultimate responsibility.

**Virginia M. Herrmann, MD, FACS**  
ACS Committee on Allied Health Professionals  
Liaison Member to NBSTSA

## If you want to...

- BE PART OF THE GROWING ELITE
- DEMONSTRATE YOUR PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE
- EXPLORE WAYS TO ADVANCE YOUR CAREER
- PROVE YOUR COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- RECEIVE NATIONAL RECOGNITION



## ...become a CST!

Contact the NBSTSA to schedule your certification exam and start your road to success! For Application and detailed information, visit [www.nbstsa.org](http://www.nbstsa.org) or call 800-707-0057.

# School Recognition

NBSTSA commends the program directors and instructors of the following schools for arranging Web Base Testing (WBT) on their campus for their surgical technology students. Currently, a total of 1,821 students have taken advantage of the WBT.

The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) congratulate the following schools:

**The Academy of Health Care Professions**  
Houston, TX

**Albany Technical College**  
Albany, GA

**Amarillo College**  
Amarillo, TX

**Ashland Community & Technical College**  
Ashland, KY

**Baker College of Allen Park**  
Allen Park, MI

**Baker College of Cadillac**  
Cadillac, MI

**Baker College of Clinton Township**  
Clinton Township, MI

**Baker College of Flint**  
Flint, MI

**Baker College of Jackson**  
Jackson, MI

**Baker College of Muskegon**  
Muskegon, MI

**Baker College of Port Huron**  
Port Huron, MI

**Bevill State Community College**  
Sumiton, AL

**Bluegrass Community and Technical College**  
Lexington, KY

**Boise State University**  
Boise, ID

**Bowling Green Technical College**  
Bowling Green, KY

**Brevard Community College**  
Cocoa, FL

**Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Buckeye Hills Career Center**  
Rio Grande, OH

**Calhoun Community College**  
Decatur, AL

**Canadian Valley Technology Center**  
Chickasha, OK

**Carver Career and Technical Education Center**  
Charleston, WV

**Central Georgia Technical College**  
Macon, GA

**Chattahoochee Technical College**  
Marietta, GA

**Choffin School of Surgical Technology**  
Youngstown, OH

**Cincinnati State Technical and Community College**  
Cincinnati, OH

**Cisco Junior College Abilene Education Center**  
Abilene, TX

**Coastal Carolina Community College**  
Jacksonville, NC

**College of Lake County**  
Grayslake, IL

**College of Southern Nevada**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Collins Career Center**  
Chesapeake, OH

**Community Care College**  
Tulsa, OK

**Concorde Career Center at Arlington**  
Arlington, TX

**Concorde Career College at Aurora**  
Aurora, CO

**Concorde Career Center at Jacksonville**  
Jacksonville, FL

**Concorde Career Center at Memphis**  
Memphis, TN

**Concorde Career Center at Portland**  
Portland, OR

**Concorde Career Center at San Bernardino**  
San Bernardino, CA

**Concord Hospital Surgical Technology Program**  
Concord, NH

**Conemaugh Valley Memorial Hospital**  
Johnstown, PA

**Covenant School of Surgical Technology**  
Lubbock, TX

**Dartmouth Hitchcock School of Surgical Technology**  
Lebanon, NH

**Davis Applied Technology College**  
Kaysville, UT

**Daytona State College**  
Daytona Beach, FL

**Del Mar College**  
Corpus Christi, TX

**Eastern Idaho Technical College**  
Idaho Falls, ID

**EHOVE School of Surgical Technology**  
Milan, OH

**Flathead Valley Community College**  
Kalispell, MT

**Florence Darlington Technical College**  
Florence, SC

**Flowers Hospital Surgical Technologist Program**  
Dothan, AL

**Foothills Surgical Technology Consortium Cleveland Community College**  
Shelby, NC  
**Isothermal Community College**  
Spindale, NC  
**McDowell Technical Community College**  
Marion, NC

**Franklin Technology Center @ MSSU**  
Joplin, MO

**Glendale Career College**  
Glendale, CA

**Great Bay Community College**  
Stratham, NH

**Great Plains Technology Center**  
Lawton, OK

**Greenville Technical College**  
Greenville, SC

**Griffin Technical College**  
Griffin, GA

**Guilford Technical Community College**  
Jamestown, NC

**Gulf Coast Community College**  
Panama City, FL

**Gwinnett Technical College**  
Lawrenceville, GA

**Henry Ford Community College**  
Dearborn, MI

**Hillyard Technical Center**  
St. Joseph, MO

**Horry-Georgetown Technical College**  
Georgetown, SC

**Houston Community College System**  
Houston, TX

**Illinois Central College**  
East Peoria, IL

**Indiana Business College-Medical Campus**  
Indianapolis, IN

**Indian River State College**  
Port St. Lucie, FL

**Iowa Lakes Community College**  
Spencer, IA

**Ivy Tech Community College at Columbus**  
Columbus, IN

**Ivy Tech Community College at Evansville**  
Evansville, IN

**Ivy Tech Community College at Indianapolis**  
Indianapolis, IN

**Ivy Tech Community College at Lafayette**  
Lafayette, IN

**Ivy Tech Community College at Michigan City**  
Michigan City, IN

*continued*

**Keiser University**  
Port St. Lucie, FL

**Lanier Technical College**  
Oakwood, GA

**Laramie County Community College**  
Cheyenne, WY

**Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania**  
Clearfield, PA

**Madisonville Community College**  
Madisonville, KY

**Maine Medical Center**  
Portland, ME

**MedVance Institute at Cookeville**  
Cookeville, TN

**MedVance Institute at Palm Springs**  
Palm Springs, FL

**Mercy College of Health Sciences**  
Des Moines, IA

**Metro Technology Centers**  
Oklahoma City, OK

**Midlands Technical College**  
Columbia, SC

**Mid-State Technical College**  
Marshfield, WI

**Miller-Motte Technical College at Cary**  
Cary, NC

**Miller-Motte Technical College at Clarksville**  
Clarksville, TN

**Miller-Motte Technical College at Lynchburg**  
Lynchburg, VA

**Miller-Motte Technical College at Wilmington**  
Wilmington, NC

**Milwaukee Area Technical College**  
Milwaukee, WI

**Mohave Community College**  
Lake Havasu City, AZ

**Monongalia County Technical Education Center**  
Morgantown, WV

**Moore Norman Technology Center**  
Norman, OK

**Mt. Hood Community College**  
Gresham, OR

**Nassau Community College**  
Garden City, NY

**Nevada Career Institute**  
Las Vegas, NV

**New England Institute of Technology**  
Warwick, RI

**Northeast Wisconsin Technical College**  
Green Bay, WI

**Northland Community & Technical College**  
East Grand Forks, MN

**Northwest Technical Institute**  
Springdale, AR

**NYU Medical Center**  
New York, NY

**Oakland Community College**  
Southfield, MI

**Oklahoma Health Academy**  
Moore, OK

**Palm Beach Community College**  
Lake Worth, FL

**Pearl River Community College**  
Hattiesburg, MS

**Platt College Oklahoma City Central Campus**  
Oklahoma City, OK

**Presentation College**  
Aberdeen, SD

**Quincy College**  
Quincy, MA

**Quinsigamond Community College**  
Worcester, MA

**Renton Technical College**  
Renton, WA

**Richland Community College**  
Decatur, IL

**Rock Valley College**  
Rockford, IL

**Rolla Technical Center**  
Rolla, MO

**Saint Mary's University of Minnesota**  
Minneapolis, MN

**Salt Lake Community College**  
West Jordan, UT

**Sanford-Brown College at St. Peters**  
St. Peters, MO

**San Joaquin Valley College at Bakersfield**  
Bakersfield, CA

**San Joaquin Valley College at Fresno**  
Fresno, CA

**Santa Fe Community College**  
Gainesville, FL

**Sentara School of Health Professions**  
Chesapeake, VA

**Seward County Community College**  
Liberal, KS

**Sinclair Community College**  
Dayton, OH

**Southeast Arkansas College**  
Pine Bluff, AR

**Southeast Community College**  
Lincoln, NE

**Southeast Missouri Hospital College  
of Nursing and Health Sciences**  
Cape Girardeau, MO

**Southeast Technical Institute**  
Sioux Falls, SD

**South Plains College**  
Levelland, TX

**Spartanburg Community College**  
Spartanburg, SC

**Spokane Community College**  
Spokane, WA

**St. Catharine College**  
St. Catharine, KY

**St. Philip's College**  
San Antonio, TX

**Sussex County Community College**  
Newton, NJ

**Tennessee Technology Center at Crossville**  
Crossville, TN

**Tennessee Technology Center at Dickson**  
Dickson, TN

**Tennessee Technology Center at Jackson**  
Jackson, TN

**Tennessee Technology Center at McMinnville**  
McMinnville, TN

**Tennessee Technology Center at Memphis**  
Memphis, TN

**Tennessee Technology Center at Paris**  
Paris, TN

**Texas State Technical College**  
Harlingen, TX

**Trinity Valley Community College**  
Kaufman, TX

**Tulsa Technology Center**  
Tulsa, OK

**The University of Montana College  
of Technology**  
Missoula, MT

**University of Saint Francis**  
Fort Wayne, IN

**Vernon College**  
Wichita Falls, TX

**Vincennes University**  
Vincennes, IN

**Waukesha County Technical College**  
Pewaukee, WI

**West Central Technical College**  
Waco, GA

**Western Iowa Tech Community College**  
Sioux City, IA

**Western Nevada College**  
Carson City, NV

**Western Suffolk BOCES**  
Northport, NY

**West Virginia Northern Community College**  
Wheeling, WV

**West Virginia University at Parkersburg**  
Parkersburg, WV

**Wes Watkins Technology Center**  
Wetumka, OK

**Wharton County Junior College**  
Wharton, TX

**Yakima Valley Community College**  
Yakima, WA

# Volunteer Recognition

A special thanks to all our 2008 volunteers working with the NBSTSA!

## January 2008 JAAC

Casey Besco, CST  
Benson Bradley, CST  
Bill Bresnihan, CST, CFA  
Susan Fisher, CST, CFA  
(NBSTSA Board of Director Rep.)  
Lisa Reed, CST  
Michelle Rey, CST  
Dwain Rosse, CST, CFA-OS  
Fred Schaefer, CST, CFA-OS  
Sherry Thornton, CST, CFA (CFA-ERC Chair Rep.)

## February 2008 Item Writers

Shirley Abram, CST  
Jamie Adams, CST  
Michael "Mick" Blencowe, CST  
Debra Bradley, CST  
Bill Bresnihan, CST, CFA  
Romona Brown, CST

## February 2008 Item Writers *continued*

Karen Chambers, CST  
Winifred Dugger, CST, CFA  
Dana Earnest, CST  
Ebony Green-Sanders, CST  
Jessie Hernandez, CST  
Cheree Jubin, CST  
Chris Lee, CST  
David Pearce, CST  
Robert Poston, CST  
Emily Rogers, CST, RN, BS, CNOR  
(NBSTSA CST-ERC Chair Rep.)  
Karen Sherback, CST  
Mary Sutton, CST, CFA  
(NBSTSA Board of Director Rep.)  
Sherry Thornton, CST, CFA  
(NBSTSA CFA-ERC Chair Rep.)  
Amy Uebelhor, CST

## CST SAE Revision Subcommittee

Michael "Mick" Blencowe, CST  
Benson Bradley, CST  
Ashley Barnes, CST  
Romona Brown, CST  
Chris Keegan, CST, MS  
(NBSTSA Board of Director Rep.)  
Trudy Riehl, CST

## CST Exam Review Committee

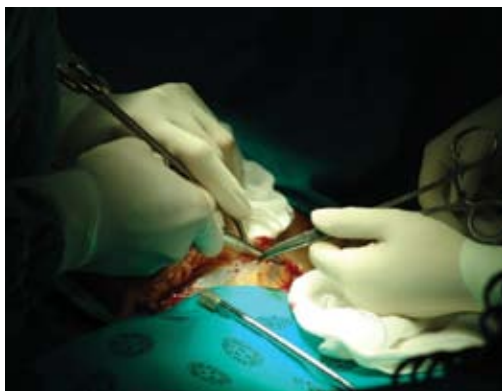
Terry Altstiel, MD  
Jeff Anderson, CST  
Ebony Green-Sanders, CST  
Renee Nemitz, CST, RN  
Amy Uebelhor, CST  
Emily Rogers, CST, RN, BS, CNOR (Chair)  
Dennis Stover, CST  
Gemma Fournier, RN, MSN, CST

## CFA Exam Review Committee

Kim Kenzy-Ulmer, CST, CFA  
Jodie Woods, CST, CFA  
Sherry Thornton, CST, CFA (Chair)  
Cheryl Simmons  
Renee Nemitz, CST, RN



# Obtaining and Maintaining *Certification*



As surgical technologists we are often a worse enemy. For too many years certification has often been viewed as optional. In many areas across the country it is not mandatory to obtain or maintain certification as a condition of employment. Surgical technologists working in this type of environment can often be heard making the following statements: certification gets you nowhere, why should I pay for a certification that is not required at my facility, how does membership in an organization or obtaining/maintaining a certification benefit me? Hopefully, the following will encourage Surgical Technologists to obtain and maintain certification.

Today's workplace is competitive, with changes in technology seeming occurring overnight. Distinguishing yourself from the competition can be challenging.

Obtaining certification illustrates your advanced level of skill, understanding and professionalism. It independently establishes an individual's expertise by demonstrating you have completed a specific education program and passed a validated national certification exam.

A critical component of the process is maintaining certification through continuing education. Certification maintained through continuing education demonstrates the Certified Surgical Technologist has maintained and developed their professional knowledge. This is critical part of the process and extremely important in the operating room as technology and procedures change rapidly.

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*Certification  
can make or break  
a job interview.*

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Certification can make or break a job interview. Employers interviewing an individual holding the credential CST understand this applicant has met and maintains the previous criteria. An applicant who puts in the

effort to obtain and maintain their professional certification demonstrates the values employers look for in an applicant even in a facility that does not require certification as a condition of employment. Professional membership is also viewed very positively during a hiring process.

However, membership to one's professional organization is not just a positive note on an application or interview, but an absolute necessity. The Association of Surgical Technologists is your representative on the state and national level. Through public education efforts, national and state legislative efforts and continuing educational offerings the association continues to advance surgical technology.

In the end, the advancement of surgical technology is really up to each individual member. It can be achieved if all surgical technologists commit to obtaining and maintaining certification as a Certified Surgical Technologist. Begin locally at your facility and educate everyone on the need for certification. Program directors should be on the front lines of this fight by requiring their students take the certification. The benefits to a united surgical technology community are tremendous for the individual surgical technologist and most importantly the surgical patient and their families we serve daily.

**Jeff Bidwell, CST, CFA, CSA, KCSA, MA**

**Editorial correction:** In the Spring 2008 newsletter, the article titled, *So You're Certified, Now What?*, stated Tyley Coutts was employed at Deaconess Surgery Center, which was incorrect. Tyley Coutts is employed at Evansville Surgery Center in Evansville, IN. We sincerely regret the error.

# Clinical Preceptorship

## *As a pathway to surgical assisting*

After graduating in 1978 from a CAAHEP-accredited surgical technology program, I spent the next 27 years working primarily in main operating rooms. The last 12 years of my time in Los Angeles involved directing a surgical technology program (ironically the very one I graduated from) as well as working weekend and trauma shifts at a level-two trauma facility in the San Fernando Valley. It was here that I had many of the best experiences of my professional career as a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST). Working there was a rich experience of multi-specialty trauma cases and professional challenges. Most of my time was spent working 11:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m. weekend trauma shifts, primarily filling the role of the surgical assistant. Needless to say this first-hand experience was more valuable than any other. Despite all the years of working so closely with the trauma physicians who trained me, I never took the step to credential as a Certified First Assistant (CFA).

Why is this important? My professional experience is probably not unlike many other surgical technologists currently in practice around the country. This experience, coupled with the educational background associated with the CST credential, enables practitioners to meet eligibility criteria to sit for the CFA examination.

The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) currently recognize two primary eligibility pathways to acquire the CFA credential. The first eligibility pathway for the CFA examination involves graduation from a CAAHEP accredited surgical assisting program, as evidenced by proof of that graduation. Similar to the CAAHEP accreditation process in surgical technology, surgical assisting programs that acquire accredited status through the CAAHEP process must demonstrate compliance with established standards in the education of surgical assistants. Among the many standards surgical assisting programs must comply with are established curricular, lab, and clinical experiences for program graduates. The NBSTSA recognizes the importance of these educational standards and has established eligibility for graduates of these accredited programs. Approximately 10% of the annual testing population for the CFA examination in 2007 consisted of graduates of CAAHEP accredited surgical assistant programs.

A second eligibility pathway for the CFA examination consists of current CST certification with verification of experience working

in the capacity as a surgical assistant. In 2007, approximately 90% of all individuals (an estimated 270) taking the CFA examination utilized this pathway to establish eligibility to test. Individuals utilizing this pathway to establish eligibility must provide evidence of current certification as a CST, as well as verification of surgical assisting experience in the form of two separate notarized experience verification forms from a surgeon or surgical supervisor attesting to the surgical assisting experience. These forms must document experience in at least 350 surgical cases with minimally two (2) full years of surgical assisting experience during the last four (4) years.

Like CAAHEP accredited programs in surgical assisting, accredited surgical technology programs must meet established standards for education in surgical technology. In addition to curriculum in anatomy and physiology, surgical pathology, microbiology, pharmacology, and medical terminology, accredited surgical technology programs must offer instruction in operating room environment, sterile technique, wound healing and surgical procedures. Comparative to other health career education opportunities related to operating room practice, accredited surgical technology programs offer an extensive education for practice in the operating room. This educational process not only forms a fundamental base for a solid professional career as a CST, but also provides for career advancement within the operating room, including the opportunity for advancement into surgical assisting. While the CST credential establishes a solid and credible foundation for potential career advancement into surgical assisting, verifiable experience is a critical component to establishing examination eligibility for the CFA credential. The requirement of supervised experience to establish examination eligibility through this pathway provides solid supplemental evidence of surgical assisting experience, and is a critical component of a candidate's preparation for the CFA examination.

For the foreseeable future, in addition to accredited surgical assisting programs, the clinical preceptorship pathway to the CFA credential remains available for two reasons. Currently the NBSTSA tests approximately 300 candidates annually in the CFA program. Approximately 90% of those candidates establish eligibility to test by way of the clinical preceptorship pathway. Nine CAAHEP accredited surgical assisting programs, which enroll approximately 235 students annually,



account for approximately 10%, of the total CFA candidates testing annually. Restricting eligibility to 10% of viable candidates will stifle growth of the surgical assisting profession and further fragment the surgical assisting community among alternative credentials. The best hope for consolidation of the profession under one recognized credential lies with the development, ongoing validation, and support of the CFA credential. We simply cannot afford to drive candidates to alternative credentials, which make little investment in examination development and validity.

Inevitably, just as in the surgical technology profession, CFA examination eligibility will be graduation from a CAAHEP accredited surgical assisting program. As the profession develops and demand for surgical assistants grows, so will the educational community supporting it. During these early years, there is a need to build not only the profession of surgical assisting but also a valid and recognized credential. We cannot afford to adopt only one perspective but instead practitioners and educators must seek to build consensus and strategies that will support the growth of surgical assisting through certification, education, and legislation. More CAAHEP programs will develop in response to the demands created. More graduates will test. And like surgical technology, the profession will reach a point in time when eligibility requirements will be built around graduation from a CAAHEP accredited surgical assisting program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron'.

Ron Kruzel, CST, MA



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## Supporting the Community

I had the honor of serving as captain of the team sponsored by the NBSTSA to participate in the 2008 American Cancer Society Relay for Life walkathon at the Grace Center in Colorado

Springs. Our team, the Higney Cancer Fighters, raised an estimated \$2100. We were in the top five teams for raising funds on our own and were voted "most inspirational." With the support of the NBSTSA we were able to reach and exceed our team goal.



**BACK ROW LEFT TO RIGHT** Kory Kurys, Jey Lawson, Doug Pauly, Rusty Lawson and John Butts

**FRONT ROW LEFT TO RIGHT** Helen Cooper, Jenny Butts, Elina Kurys, Kraig Deschaine, Ann Lawson, Tyler Lawson and Elizabeth and Kevin Kurys

According to the American Cancer Society 70% of the public believes cancer should be a top or high priority. To fund and develop the research, service and advocacy programs, the American Cancer Society needs volunteers like mine. It was a 12-hour challenge, but we all felt we had made a difference. The estimated \$86,000 the Grace Center event raised will help fund Colorado's 23 grants that are active. I thank the NBSTSA for the generosity and all my team members for their participation

**Elina Kurys**  
NBSTSA Credentialing Manager

To locate additional information on your local Relay for Life event go to [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

*Best wishes for the  
upcoming holiday season...*



*...from your dedicated  
NBSTSA staff!*

**BACK ROW LEFT TO RIGHT**  
Amber Callier, Customer Service/Records Specialist; Ron Kruzel, Executive Director; Carla Sanchez, Certification Specialist; Kari Allen, Certification Specialist

**FRONT ROW LEFT TO RIGHT**  
Ann Makofski, Certification Specialist; Sue Oakes, Records Specialist; Elina Kurys, Credentialing Manager