

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is a radiation therapist?

A radiation therapist is a member of the medical team responsible for treating many types of cancers. Radiation therapists administer high doses of radiation to the patient's body to shrink and destroy the nuclei of malignant tumor cells. They are highly skilled medical specialists educated in physics, radiation safety, patient anatomy and patient care.

## Is this program right for me?

As a member of the radiation oncology team, you will be working and interacting with people from varied backgrounds. It requires:

- Problem-solving skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Excellent communication skills
- Proficiency in identifying anatomical structures
- A very solid math background
- Strong comprehension of subatomic particles
- Adaptable to change at any given moment
- Demonstration of radiation safety
- Willingness to physically aid patients in a time of need

## Where can I obtain information about the program?

A success advisor is available in the Center for Student Success located on the first floor of the Bailey building. Students may contact the Center for Student Success by calling 256-352-8040. For general program information, contact Mindie Sandlin at 256-352-8334. Students may also call 256-352-8309 or 256-352-8315 to speak with a Diagnostic Imaging instructor Monday through Thursday 8:00 – 3:00 or Friday 8:00 – 1:30.

## When can I apply for the program?

Applications will be accepted between March 1 and June 1 of the year in which you plan to apply. New students are accepted one time a year (Fall semester). A new application is required each time you apply. Keep copies of everything submitted as items from previous applications will not be released.

## What information is required to complete an application?

Submit to the Admissions Office:

- WSCC application or re-entry form
- Official transcripts from all colleges previously attended
- Proof of high school graduation (transcripts) or GED certificate
- Appropriate ACT test scores
- Any other documents required by admissions

Submit a **COMPLETE** program application:

- Submit the online health division application and submit Verification Sheet (page 2) with all required attachments by deadline of **June 1**.
- Copy of **most current** unofficial college transcripts from **each** college previously attended – no exceptions. **The college's name must print on each transcript. Highlight in yellow the required general courses.** WSCC Admissions office CANNOT PRINT transcripts from other colleges.
- A copy of ACT with minimum composite score of 19 (National or Residual). Degree Works will be accepted for Wallace State–Hanceville students.
- Copy of State Birth Certificate - Applicants must be at least 18 years of age.
- Completed Essential Functions and Ranking Form

**Am I required to complete observation hours?**

No. It is suggested that students take the time to observe the day-to-day duties of a radiation therapist. Obtaining observation hours is not considered in the ranking process.

**Is it necessary to get letters of recommendation in order to increase my chances of being accepted into the program?**

No. Letters of recommendation are not required and will not increase anyone's chances of being accepted into the program.

**Do you require any special entrance exams in order to be admitted into the program?**

Yes. A minimum composite of 19 on the ACT is required in order for a student to be qualified for acceptance into the DI program, regardless of previous education or experiences. Individuals who have completed higher degrees are not exempt from this expectation. The ACT is one of the factors considered for admission, thus the higher the score the better your chances of being admitted. Generally, ACT scores improve after college level work, especially math and science courses. If you are planning to retake the ACT, you might consider the ACT Residual Exam offered by WSCC. This exam is the same as the national exam but is offered on-campus, allowing for a quicker release of scores. However, a residual ACT score may not transfer to another institution. We will accept ACT Superscores from ACT, but not manually calculated ACT Superscores.

**But I already have a bachelor's or master's degree. Do I need to go back and take a basic college entrance exam like the ACT?**

Yes. The ACT is one of the scores that is considered for program admission. Without an ACT score your application will not be considered. However, the good news is that if you already have a degree (or even taken your general required courses) you should be "over" prepared for the ACT.

**What general required courses do I need to satisfy the Radiation Therapy degree plan?**

Applicants must have a "C" or better in each of the general education courses:

- Orientation 101 (a WSCC requirement. You are exempt from ORI if you transfer at least 12 credit hours from another institution),
- English 101 – English Comp I
- Humanities/Art elective (Literature, Area/Ethnic studies, Art, Music, Philosophy, Ethics, Religious Studies, and Theatre will satisfy this elective)
- Psychology 200 – General Psychology
- Biology 201 and 202 – Human Anatomy and Physiology 1 & II (BIO 103 must be taken prior to these at WSCC)
- Math 100 – Intermediate College Algebra
- Math 112 – Precalculus Algebra

**Are there any exceptions to the general education courses?**

Students who transfer in at least 12 credit hours from another regionally accredited institution are exempt from the Orientation (ORI) requirement. Although WSCC requires BIO 103 to be taken prior to BIO 201 and 202, other institutions may not have this same requirement. If you are attending one of those institutions and plan to transfer in both BIO 201 and 202, the DI program does not expect nor require you to complete BIO 103. Students must complete all general education courses before applying to the program with the exception of BIO 202. It must be completed during the summer semester before entering the program.

**Can the general required courses be taken at any other college?**

Yes. Wallace State Community College in Hanceville has linkage programs with many other colleges in the state. This linkage relationship guarantees the transfer of certain specified courses. Even if your college is not part of our linkage program or may be out of state, courses are still transferable as long as they are equivalent to our courses. Information on course equivalency may be obtained by contacting the Admissions office at 256-352-8238. A course description from the catalog may be required.

### **Can I still apply to the program if I have not completed all of my general education courses?**

Yes. The only class that does not have to be completed before submitting an application is BIO 202 – Human Anatomy and Physiology II. However, this course must be completed during the summer semester that the application is submitted.

### **What is the minimum GPA required for program admission?**

A minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA for all previous college work is required. Keep in mind this is a minimal requirement – currently those being admitted have a significantly higher average GPA than this score.

### **How do I improve my GPA?**

Although a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA is required for admission, the DI program uses only the highest grade achieved from the general required courses for ranking purposes. Because of the highly competitive nature of the DI application process, your chance of being admitted into the program can be improved by retaking any course in which you achieved less than an “A”. Every general required course in which you score an “A” puts you that much closer to the highest possible score in this category.

### **How many students apply to the program and how many are accepted each year?**

The number of applications submitted varies from year to year. The program accepts 24 students each year. There is no waiting list and every qualified applicant is considered. Applications are not returned nor any information released from application packets.

### **Are CPR certifications, physical exams, background checks, drug testing or any other medical testing required in order to complete an application?**

No. The required physical exam, drug testing, background checks, drug testing, CPR certification are completed after beginning the program so that each will be current and valid throughout the clinical rotations. Do not complete any of the items until formally accepted into the program and instructed to do so by the program director.

### **What is the timeline for the admission process?**

The DI program begins accepting applications March 1 of each year. The final deadline by which all applications must be received is June 1. Each applicant will receive a reply by email within approximately 2 weeks from the deadline regardless of the decision made. No information will be given over the phone. Please do not call Admissions or the DI program for information regarding your application packet.

### **What is the length of the program?**

It takes 3 consecutive semesters (12 months) to complete the radiation therapy option. If progression is interrupted, it should be noted that the program must be completed within 33 months from initial admission.

### **If accepted into the Radiation Therapy program, what type of class schedule can I expect in a typical week?**

A radiation therapy student should prepare for classes/clinic to meet 4 days a week throughout the entire program. The DI program is not a part-time program and requires an intensive amount of studying when not in class. A typical class schedule for the program follows:

- Semester 1 – Class/lab will meet 2 days a week (8:00 – 3:30); 12-day clinical rotation last weeks of semester
- Semester 2 – Class/lab will meet 2 days (8:00 – 3:30); clinical rotation 2 days each week (hours may vary)
- Semester 3 – Class/lab will meet 1 day (8:00 – 3:30); clinical rotations 4 days each week (hours may vary)

**When does clinical education begin and where does it take place?**

Clinical rotations begin the first semester. Students can expect to rotate through hospitals and cancer centers. The program has a clinical network ranging from Birmingham, Cullman, Decatur, Huntsville, The Shoals, Tuscaloosa, and Arab/Boaz. All clinical travel expenses are the responsibility of the student.

**Will I be able to choose where I go for clinical?**

No. The clinical coordinator will assign each student to a clinical site based on educational need and availability. Efforts will be made to meet reasonable requests regarding having to travel great distances from their homes, but students may be scheduled at any clinical site. Variety in clinical experiences strengthens the students' skills and for that reason, students need to travel to different clinical sites.

**Will I be able to find a job after completing the Radiation Therapy program?**

Upon graduation, the student is eligible to apply to take the registry examination of the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT). Following successful completion of the exam, a registered radiation therapist will find jobs nationwide. Naturally, employment opportunities fluctuate within geographic regions and practice locations. A new graduate can expect a starting salary of \$70,000.

**Do I need to meet with a Radiation Therapy program advisor at WSCC?**

Advisors are happy to provide program information and individualized recommendations to help you successfully pursue your goal of becoming a radiologic technologist. It is strongly recommended that you correspond with a WSCC program advisor at least once before making application for admission. Having a copy of your transcripts will help the advisor provide the most accurate information.