



Program Overview

The South Plains College Respiratory Care Program is a 21-month Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree offered at the Reese Center. The program begins each August and combines classroom instruction with clinical experiences every semester. Our program prepares students to become skilled members of the healthcare team through comprehensive instruction in Cardiopulmonary anatomy and physiology, therapeutic and diagnostic procedures, critical care medicine, clinical judgment, and patient care competencies.

Upon graduation, students earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in Respiratory Care and are then eligible to sit for the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) examination leading to the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) and Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credentials.

Our program's high standards for academic excellence, clinical competency, and critical thinking support graduates in building the knowledge and skills necessary for long-term success in the respiratory care profession and beyond.

Program Schedule

Classes and clinical rotations are held throughout the program, and most semesters follow a Monday-Thursday schedule. Assigned clinical rotations may begin as early as 6:00 a.m. and extend until 6:30 p.m. Although rare, Fridays may occasionally be used for clinical rotations or volunteer activities. There are also opportunities for students to work in the respiratory care field while enrolled in the program.

Program Resources

We recognize that students learn in different ways and are committed to providing resources that support their success throughout the program. In addition to a traditional classroom environment, students have access to a variety of supplemental learning tools at no additional cost. These include supplemental video instruction, online quizzing and review platforms, skills workshops, review sessions, and individualized support from instructors. Many courses utilize, or are transitioning to, Open Educational Resources (OER), reducing textbook costs while providing convenient access to learning materials across multiple devices.

To enhance hands-on learning, we employ practicing respiratory therapists as clinical instructors who provide individualized guidance in the skills lab, high-fidelity simulation lab, and supplemental instruction sessions. SPC Respiratory also invests in updated equipment, including modern ventilators and simulation manikins, ensuring students train with technology commonly used in today's healthcare environments, preparing them for a seamless transition to bedside care after graduation.

Admission Requirements:

- All TSI (Texas Success Initiative) requirements.
- Prerequisite courses with a grade of C or better before acceptance into the program. Those courses include:
 - MATH 1314 College Algebra
 - BIOL 2401 Anatomy and Physiology I
 - BIOL 2402 Anatomy and Physiology II

Background of Respiratory Care

Respiratory therapists specialize in the care of patients with heart and lung diseases, primarily in acute care hospital settings. They are trained to provide care across all patient populations, from neonates to geriatrics, and work in areas such as:



- Medical/surgical units
- Critical care units
- Emergency departments
- Trauma and burn care
- Code Blue and resuscitation teams

Career opportunities also extend beyond traditional hospital settings, including:

- Ground, fixed-wing, and helicopter transport
- Sleep laboratories
- Pulmonary and cardiac rehabilitation
- Pulmonary function laboratories
- Physician offices
- Long-term care facilities
- Home healthcare

Additionally, respiratory therapists are frequently employed in nontraditional roles such as:

- Patient education and smoking cessation programs
- Medical device and pharmaceutical sales
- Clinical consulting
- Respiratory product development and support

The knowledge and expertise of respiratory therapists provide valuable career opportunities across a wide range of healthcare and industry settings.

Workforce Requirements & Credential Advancement Opportunities as a Respiratory Therapist

A state license is required to practice respiratory care. A permanent license is conferred upon successful completion of the NBRC Respiratory Therapy Examination. Credentials are defined based upon examination score, and therapists earn a Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) or Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential.

For those interested in advancing their careers, additional specialty exams are available through NBRC for neonatal/pediatrics, adult critical care, asthma education, sleep disorders, and pulmonary functions. The Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist (APRT) is an emerging advanced healthcare provider role for experienced respiratory therapists who complete graduate-level education. APRTs work alongside physicians to diagnose, manage, and treat patients with cardiopulmonary disorders in settings such as critical care, pulmonology, and outpatient clinics.

Respiratory Therapists Salary and Career Earnings

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median pay for respiratory therapists is \$39.56/hour and \$82,280/year. In the West Texas region, new graduates earn approximately \$29-32/hour base pay. Many employers offer \$3,000 - \$15,000 sign-on bonuses and relocation compensation.

The employment of respiratory therapists is projected to grow 9 percent in the next 10 years, much faster than the average for all occupations (3%). About 8,600 job openings for respiratory therapists are projected each year. These two statistics indicate respiratory therapists are a valuable and needed role in healthcare for many years to come.



Our program has a strong relationship with many facilities in this region such as Covenant Medical, UMC, Midland Memorial, Odessa Medical, and nationally known specialty facilities such as Cook Children's, Children's Medical Center Dallas, and the Mayo Clinic. We partner with these and many other facilities to provide recruiting events for our students before graduation to empower them to explore and secure opportunities before graduation.

Degree Advancement Opportunities

South Plains College's Respiratory Care Program has a strong working relationship with Midwestern State University, Texas State University, and the University of Texas at San Antonio. This allows our students to pursue the top programs in the state of Texas for a Bachelor of Science in Respiratory Care.

Additionally, our program has articulation agreements with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, School of Allied Sciences, and Wayland Baptist University to allow students the opportunity to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Clinical Service Management, Health Sciences – Respiratory Care, or Occupational Education.

Next Steps and Application Requirements

Persons interested in the Respiratory Care Program are encouraged to start the application process early. Applicants must complete the following entrance requirements:

1. Schedule a Program Overview Meeting with the Program Director, Kristal Jones.
Complete the inquiry form provided on the SPC Respiratory Care Program Webpage or email kjones@southplainscollege.edu to schedule this meeting in person or virtually.
2. Complete the requirements for admission to South Plains College.
Provide **official** high school and college transcripts to the Office of Admissions.
3. Complete TSI (Texas Success Initiative) requirements.
4. Candidates for entry into the Program must complete the following prerequisite courses with a grade of "C" or better prior to admission.
 - MATH 1314 College Algebra
 - BIOL 2401 Anatomy and Physiology I
 - BIOL 2402 Anatomy and Physiology II
5. Complete the Respiratory Care Program Application. Applications open in mid-January and will be available on our SPC Respiratory Care Program Webpage. Please note: You can submit the application while completing prerequisite courses. However, **we must receive the application and all official transcripts provided to SPC Admissions by June 1st**. All application requirements must be met by the application due date for priority review.
 - If any requirements are outstanding on/after the deadline, the item will be deemed "pending," and the applicant will automatically be "waitlisted."
 - Applications received after the due date will automatically be "waitlisted."
 - Dependent on availability, exceptions may be made by the Respiratory Care Program Director to accommodate students who are in the process of completing the prerequisites of the program. Details on this process are listed below.

Evaluation & Acceptance Process

Once the application deadline has passed, the evaluation process begins. First priority is given to students who have completed the application in its entirety, all prerequisites are complete with a “C” or better, and prerequisites are evidenced on the official transcripts provided to SPC Admissions.

If a student is still in the process of completing the prerequisites of the program, official transcripts are deemed outstanding with SPC, or the application is incomplete, the student will be “waitlisted.”

Admission to the Program may be limited, so applicants will be ranked. The first consideration is given to those students who have completed the application process in its entirety and with the highest grade point average in the prerequisite courses: MATH 1314, BIOL 2401, & BIOL 2402.

Applicants will be notified by July 1st, and the student will be required to provide documented acceptance by a date to be determined.

During this time, waitlisted applicants will be notified of their status as well. Waitlisted students will not be considered until all requirements have been fulfilled and verified on official transcripts provided to SPC Admissions. Additionally, waitlisted students can only be accepted as program seat availability occurs.

Preparing for Program Entry

Upon acceptance into the Respiratory Care Program, students receive the Program Packet to review that includes the requirements of entering a Health Professions program. Those items typically include evidence of immunization records, AHA BLS Certification, and New Student Orientation attendance. The documentation of student immunization records, background checks, etc. will be housed and verified by a third-party provider called CastleBranch. Details regarding the purchase of this service are provided in the Program Packet. The immunization requirements are:

- TDAP, (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis), also known as Adacel or Boostrix vaccine within the last 10 years
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR): 2 injections, with one since 1980
- Mantoux Tuberculin Skin Test (TB skin test). Test must have been within the last 12 months and be negative. If test shows positive, students must furnish documentation that a physician examined the heart and lungs and found no infection. Students are required to repeat the TB skin test every 12 months while in the program.
- Hepatitis B series. 2-dose or 3-dose series. The student must have either both doses or two out of the three completed no later than the date listed in the Program Packet. Note: The first two doses are typically 30 days apart.
- BLS (CPR) Certification: THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION’S “HEALTHCARE PROVIDER” IS THE ONLY CPR CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING THAT WILL BE ACCEPTED. Red Cross CPR Certification will not be accepted. The program will provide a AHA BLS course within the two weeks of Fall semester should students require this item. If a student has AHA BLS Certification and it expires while in the program, renewal is required. Our program has AHA BLS instructors on staff and typically offers the initial and renewal BLS sessions throughout the program at a nominal fee.

All South Plains College Health Professions students will have a criminal background check through the Texas Department of Public Safety before program admission or before beginning clinical and/or practicum rotations. This background check will be conducted by a third-party provider, CastleBranch, and housed for Program Director verification. Upon request, a clinical/practicum facility or program faculty may conduct a subsequent criminal background check for reasonable cause. Should any prior or current convictions be



reported, the Dean of Health Professions and the Director of the Respiratory Care Program will conduct a further review. Based on this review, the student may not be permitted to continue in the program. Please ensure you denote any prior convictions appropriately on the program application to ensure no further delay in the Evaluation & Acceptance process.

Licensing requirements vary from state to state; however, most states require a respiratory therapist to obtain a respiratory care practitioner license. The State of Texas does not automatically refuse to grant licensure because of previous misdemeanor or felony convictions. They will consider many factors regarding your criminal history before making their decision. Should this be a concern, a student should communicate this to the Program Director. Additionally, the student should be prepared to provide documentation to the Texas Medical Board when completing the licensure process.

The following are general physical requirements of a Respiratory Therapist:

- Ability to read and carry out written orders, and to make and report visual observations normally, or with corrective lenses.
- Ability to hear blood pressure, verbal commands, alarms, and/or distress calls normally, or with corrective hearing devices.
- Ability and stamina to endure 8-to-12-hour periods of standing and walking; ability to move and/or help lift or support patients who may be of a greater weight and size, using proper body mechanics.

Once the applicant begins in the Respiratory Care Program, their schedule is defined based on the program degree plan. Students need to be aware that the program is predominantly a Monday through Thursday daytime schedule. Fridays are potentially utilized for open lab and specialty clinical rotations if the need arises. Classroom courses generally meet two to four days per week and are scheduled in conjunction with clinical rotations. Attendance is required and crucial for a student to be successful in the program.

A career in respiratory care combines purpose with opportunity, offering the chance to positively impact patients' lives while pursuing a profession with strong workforce demand, competitive salaries, and multiple career pathways. At South Plains College Respiratory Care, our experienced faculty, hands-on clinical training, and strong partnerships with healthcare facilities prepare graduates to enter the workforce with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to succeed.

If you are passionate about healthcare and ready to commit to a challenging and rewarding profession, we encourage you to begin the application process and take the next step toward becoming a Respiratory Therapist. Our team is available to answer questions, review program requirements, and help you navigate the admissions process.

We look forward to helping you achieve your educational and career goals as a future member of the South Plains College Respiratory Care Program.

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

Kristal Jones, MSRC, RRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS
Program Director, Respiratory Care
South Plains College
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DEGREE PLAN
ACADEMIC YEARS: 2026-2028

<u>Prerequisite Courses</u>		<u>Credit Hours</u>
MATH 1314	College Algebra	3
BIOL 2401	Anatomy & Physiology I	4
BIOL 2402	Anatomy & Physiology II	4

1st Year Fall Semester

RSPT 1160	Clinical – Respiratory Care	1
RSPT 1201	Introduction to Respiratory Care	2
RSPT 1410	Resp. Care Procedures I	4
RSPT 2317	Respiratory Care Pharmacology	3
ENGL 1301	Composition I	3

1st Year Spring Semester

RSPT 1240	Advanced Cardiopulmonary A & P	2
RSPT 1266	Practicum-Respiratory Care Therapy	2
RSPT 1311	Respiratory Care Procedures II	3
RSPT 1325	Respiratory Care Sciences	3
RSPT 2210	Cardiopulmonary Disease	2

1st Year Summer Semester

RSPT 1167	Practicum–Respiratory Care Therapy	1
RSPT 2414	Mechanical Ventilation	4

2nd Year Fall Semester

RSPT 2247	Specialties in Respiratory Care	2
RSPT 2266	Practicum–Respiratory Care Therapy	2
RSPT 2453	Neonatal/Pediatric Cardiopulmonary Care	4
Huma/Fine Arts†		3
PSYC 2301	General Psychology	3

2nd Year Spring Semester

RSPT 2130	Examination Preparation	1
RSPT 2231	Simulations in Respiratory Care	2
RSPT 2239	Advanced Cardiac Life Support	2
RSPT 2267	Practicum – Respiratory Care	2
RSPT 2325	Cardiopulmonary Diagnostics	3

Total Hours	65
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Bold denotes general education courses

Overall Estimate for SPC Respiratory Care Program	
Compliance & Clinical Tracking Subscriptions	\$250 - \$300
Immunizations, BLS Certification & Drug Screening	\$90 - \$300
Clinical Supplies	\$120 - \$250
Tuition & Fees	\$11,000 - \$13,000
Textbooks	\$600 - \$800
Texas Medical Board Licensure Application Requirements	\$210

*Tuition estimate is based on credit hours, residency classification, and is subject to change upon approval by the South Plains College Board of Regents. Most of our students reside outside of Hockley County, and our program is located on the Reese Campus, so that is taken into consideration when providing this cost estimate

ESTIMATED COST BREAKDOWN BY SEMESTER

BEFORE PROGRAM ENTRY

CastleBranch: Clinical Compliance & Background Screening	\$95
Drug Screening *If applicable	\$65
Immunizations	\$\$, depends on insurance coverage
AHA/BLS Certification *Offered upon entry into program	\$15-\$25

SEMESTER 1 - FALL

Tuition & Fees: 10 Credit Hours	\$3,100
Textbooks	\$600
Clinical Tracking System	\$190
Clinical Supplies: Scrubs, Stethoscope, etc.	\$150 - \$250

SEMESTER 2 - SPRING

Tuition & Fees: 12 Credit Hours	\$3,150
Textbooks	\$150

SEMESTER 3 - SUMMER

Tuition & Fees: 10 Credit Hours	\$1,550
Textbooks	\$125

SEMESTER 4 - FALL

Tuition & Fees: 8 Credit Hours	\$1,100
Textbooks	\$225

SEMESTER 5 - SPRING

Tuition & Fees: 10 Credit Hours	\$3,250
Textbooks	\$120
TMB Application Requirements	\$210

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if respiratory care is right for me?

- A future RT...
 - Wants to be directly involved in lifesaving interventions
 - Enjoys critical care and emergency medicine
 - Interested in heart and lung physiology
 - Wants to play a crucial role in managing airways and ventilators for critically ill patients
- If this interests you, we recommend completing the inquiry form and visiting with program faculty about the role of a respiratory therapist and the SPC Respiratory Care program.

How long is the Respiratory Care Program?

- The program is a 21-month, full-time program that begins each August and leads to an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Respiratory Care.

What makes the SPC Respiratory Care Program unique?

- Experienced respiratory care faculty
- Extensive hands-on clinical training
- Strong employer partnerships
- Regional recruitment opportunities
- Preparation for credentialing examinations and workforce entry

These features help our graduates enter practice with strong clinical and professional skills for long-term success.

What prerequisites do I need before I can apply?

- Applicants must complete the following with a "C" or higher:
 - MATH 1314 College Algebra
 - BIOL 2401 Anatomy & Physiology I
 - BIOL 2402 Anatomy & Physiology II

Can I apply while finishing my prerequisite courses?

- Yes. Students may apply while completing prerequisite coursework, provided all prerequisites are successfully completed before the program begins. However, because admission rankings are based heavily on prerequisite grades, completing these courses with strong grades can strengthen your application. Be sure to discuss your individual academic plan with an academic advisor or program faculty.

What GPA is required for admission?

- South Plains College has no minimum GPA requirement for general admission. However, program admission is based on availability and ranking of required prerequisite courses' GPA.

How are students selected for admission?

- Admission to the Program may be limited, so applicants will be ranked. The first consideration is given to those students who have completed the application process in its entirety and with the highest grade point average in the prerequisite courses: MATH 1314, BIOL 2401, & BIOL 2402.

How competitive is admission?

- Admission to the Respiratory Care Program is competitive because the number of qualified applicants may exceed the number of available seats. Applicants are ranked primarily based on their prerequisite GPA, so strong academic performance in Anatomy & Physiology I, Anatomy & Physiology II, and College Algebra can improve an applicant's competitiveness. Students are encouraged to apply early and submit all required materials before the application deadline.

When is the application period?

- Applications open in January, and the deadline to complete all application requirements is June 1st.

What does the selection criteria consist of?

- The evaluation process will begin after the application deadline. First priority is given to students who have completed the application in its entirety, completed all prerequisite courses with a grade of C or better, and have those prerequisites documented on official transcripts received by SPC Admissions.

What would deem an applicant as “waitlisted”?

- A waitlisted application means one or more admission requirements were incomplete, pending, or unable to be verified by the application deadline. Common reasons include prerequisite courses still in progress, missing official transcripts, or an incomplete application. Waitlisted applicants may still be considered for admission once all requirements have been completed and verified; however, admission is dependent on available program seats after qualified applicants have been reviewed.

Will I have to complete a background check?

- All South Plains College Health Professions students will have a criminal background check through the Texas Department of Public Safety before program admission or before beginning clinical and/or practicum rotations. This background check will be conducted by a third-party provider, CastleBranch, and housed for Program Director verification.

What physical abilities are required for respiratory therapists?

- Students should be able to:
 - Lift and assist patients safely
 - Walk and stand for extended periods
 - Read monitors and written orders
 - Hear alarms and verbal communication in clinical settings
 - Reasonable accommodations are considered as appropriate.

What is the class and clinical schedule like?

- Students attend classes and clinicals Monday through Thursday. Most clinicals may begin as early as 6:00 a.m., and some classes may extend until 4:00 p.m. Although rare, Fridays may occasionally be used for clinical rotations or volunteer activities. Clinical and classroom attendance is essential for success

Can students work while attending the program?

- Yes. Students may be employed while enrolled. However, the program demands increase, both classroom and clinical requirements, as the student progresses in the program. It is common for our students to be employed part-time for the duration of the program.

What credentials will I be eligible for after graduation?

- Graduates are eligible to take the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) examinations leading to the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) and Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credentials.

Can I continue my education after earning the AAS degree?

- Yes. SPC has articulation agreements and relationships with several universities that allow graduates to pursue bachelor's degrees and other advanced educational opportunities.

What is the difference between a nurse and a respiratory therapist?

- Respiratory Therapists (RTs) specialize in the assessment, treatment, and management of patients with heart and lung disorders. RTs manage oxygen therapy, aerosol medications, ventilators, artificial airways, pulmonary diagnostics, and other respiratory treatments. They often work closely with critically ill patients in intensive care units, emergency departments, neonatal ICUs, and pediatric ICUs.
- Nurses (RNs) provide comprehensive patient care across all body systems. They administer medications, monitor overall patient status, coordinate care, provide patient education, and manage a wide variety of medical and surgical conditions.
- A simple way to think about it is: Nurses focus on the whole patient, while respiratory therapists are the specialists in breathing and cardiopulmonary care. Both professions collaborate closely to provide safe, effective patient care and are highly respected healthcare careers with excellent employment opportunities.

What is the difference between a radiology technologist and a respiratory therapist?

- Respiratory therapists specialize in cardiopulmonary care and breathing support. They assess, treat, and manage patients with heart and lung disorders. Our primary focus is helping patients breathe and managing respiratory and cardiopulmonary disorders. Typical responsibilities include:
 - Administering oxygen therapy
 - Managing ventilators and artificial airways
 - Providing breathing treatments
 - Responding to medical emergencies and codes
 - Performing pulmonary function testing
 - Caring for critically ill patients in the ICU, NICU, and emergency department
- Radiology technologists specialize in medical imaging. They perform diagnostic procedures that help physicians see inside the body and diagnose injuries or diseases. The primary focus is obtaining diagnostic images to help physicians identify medical conditions. Typical responsibilities include:
 - Taking X-rays
 - Performing CT scans (with additional training)
 - Assisting with MRI procedures (with additional training)
 - Positioning patients for imaging exams
 - Operating imaging equipment
 - Ensuring radiation safety