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Triton College

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Surgical Technology Students Thrive Through Hands-On Experience at Triton College



RIVER GROVE, Ill. — When Triton College student Yadira Quintana walked into a local hospital last week to start her first day of clinicals, she was initially unsure of herself.

It was her first time working in a real hospital setting, treating actual patients. She saw it as a test — a chance to see whether she could apply what she had learned in Triton College's Surgical Technology program to a professional environment.

"It was a brand-new place for me, and I get nervous in situations like that," she said.

But it didn't take Quintana long to adapt. She leaned on the rigorous training she received at Triton and the lessons from her instructors.

On her first day, Quintana “scrubbed a vasectomy” — meaning she performed the role of a scrub tech during the procedure by maintaining a sterile environment and directly assisting the surgeon.

“I just followed the whole standardized setup like they teach us in class, and from there, I was like, ‘Oh, this is easy,’” she said.

Quintana credits her instructors, Dane Matthews and Dawn Marcotte, for her early success. She said their emphasis on repetition and performing the same tasks repeatedly gave her the confidence to step into the procedure with skill.

Matthews, chair of the Surgical Technology program, voiced his delight at Quintana’s progress and continued success.

“You don’t see that often on someone’s first day,” he said. “The person in the room trusted her enough to let her do that. That says a lot.”

Marcotte explained that they instill in their students a guiding principle that forms the foundation of the program.

“Obsessively, compulsively, exactly the same way every single time without fail,” she said, reciting the program’s motto. “You do it the exact same way every time so that if you veer off, you recognize it immediately, and if you’re not doing it intentionally, you fix it right away.”

The Triton College Surgical Technology program prepares students to work as part of a team providing surgical patient care. Surgical technologists most often serve in the scrub role, but their responsibilities may include a variety of tasks before, during and after surgery. At Triton, classroom learning is blended with hands-on instruction in a cutting-edge simulation lab that mimics a real operating room and prepares students for careers helping others.

The lab, located in Triton College’s H Building, features all the equipment, supplies and scenery students will encounter in a hospital operating room, such as operating tables, surgical lighting, surgical packs, medical instruments, scrub sinks and even an anesthesia machine.

“It’s as close to the OR as you can pretty much get,” Matthews said.

Students spend three semesters in the simulation lab before progressing to clinical rotations for two semesters, working with live patients and real doctors, he added.

Quintana said learning in Triton’s simulation lab made her more comfortable working in a hospital setting.

“It really did prepare me,” she said. “All the packs in the lab are pretty much accurate to what I see in the actual OR. And now I’m very confident every time I set up my table.”

From a young age, Quintana said she had always been fascinated by surgeries and shows that feature the health care world, like *Grey’s Anatomy*. Being from the area, she looked into Triton College’s program offerings and was immediately drawn to surgical technology.

“I read about it and I really liked everything I saw, and I really felt like this is something I could do,” she said.

Quintana will be entering a field that’s in high demand. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the need for surgical technologists will increase by approximately 9% between now

and 2030. A variety of employment opportunities exist in hospitals, surgical centers, birthing centers and other health care facilities.

Now well on her path to becoming a surgical tech, Quintana feels she's living the life she once saw play out on screen — minus all the drama.

For more information on the Surgical Technology program at Triton College, visit triton.edu.

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ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE

Triton College is an institution of higher education dedicated to student success. Triton offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs designed for students to realize their career aspirations and effectively compete in a global economy. The college campus spans 110 acres in River Grove, Illinois, holds classes at satellite locations and offers online learning opportunities. Triton's exemplary faculty and staff work to provide high-quality, convenient and affordable educational opportunities to more than 10,000 students each year. Triton College is a member of The Community Colleges of Illinois and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Learn more at triton.edu.