



Sonography Education: Academics and Training are Key for Rewarding Career

Tricia S.L. Turner, BS, RDMS, RVT, South Hills School of Business and Technology

Q. How did you become interested in the ultrasound field?

A. After I graduated from Penn State with a degree in Exercise and Sport Science, I worked for a few years as a personal trainer. Realizing I wanted more, I began researching different health care fields. Fortunately, I had a friend that worked at South Hills and began talking to me about a new program being implemented. I visited the school, spoke with the director, was accepted and the rest, what they say, is history.

Q. Describe what led you to your current role.

A. My first position out of sonography school was at a hospital in a general department that performed every sonography specialty except cardiac. I worked with approximately 10 Radiologists, assisting in biopsies, procedures and OR cases.

Paul Wagner, Director of the SHS Diagnostic Medical Sonography (DMS) program at the time, contacted me to learn if I would be interested in teaching. My response was an immediate, "ABSOLUTELY!" I loved the idea of sharing the world of sonography and being involved in the education of future sonographers. It has been more rewarding than I could have ever imagined.

After 13 years of teaching and nine years as Assistant Program Director, I began the 2015-2016 school year named Program Director. I am honored and excited to be in this new role.

Q. Describe your facility and the ultrasound programs.

A. South Hills School of Business and Technology Sonography programs are all Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accredited and offer three different pathways for those students interested in a profession in sonography. Each pathway depends on the background of the applicant.

Our DMS program is a three year program in which graduates earn an associate's in specialized technology. This program is for those individuals that either do not have any post-secondary education or those that have minimal college credits earned.



BACKGROUND	Sonographer: Tricia S.L. Turner, BS, RDMS, RVT
	Facility: South Hills School of Business & Technology State College, PA
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Two diploma programs are also available, which are shorter in length. The Diagnostic Medical Sonography Professional Plus (DPP) program is for those applicants that have a previous bachelor's degree. The Diagnostic Medical Sonography Professional (DMP) program is available for those applicants that have a background specific to medical imaging.

We offer three specialty areas in the field of sonography, including cardiac, vascular and general. Each program provides exposure to the other specialties offered. Any student enrolled in a sonography program has the option to choose the specialty focus.

Q. Throughout the United States, there are many types of ultrasound programs for applicants to consider. What differentiates an ultrasound education program?

A. Applicants want to do their research before enrolling into any sonography program. Some questions to consider include:

1. Is the program and school accredited? Programmatic accreditation ensures the applicant that the program has met standards to provide quality education in the field of sonography. Each sonography program along with each specialty is programmatically accredited at South Hills School.



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2. Does the school provide in-house equipment to practice skills and technique before and during clinical rotations? Our school provides multiple pieces of equipment from variety of manufacturers for students to practice. During their didactic time, we combine class and lab work so they are ready to scan the first day of their clinical rotation.

3. What is the ratio of student to faculty? South Hills School employs five full time and one three-quarter time employees. This offers each student the opportunity for one-on-one training throughout their didactic training.

Q. How competitive is acceptance into an Ultrasound Program in the United States?

A. Acceptance into a sonography program is definately an accomplishment. The field continues to grow and with that comes more interest. Applicants to South Hills are assessed on a variety of areas including but not limited to GPA, previous courses, skills assessment tests and three interviews. We want to make sure the applicants have an understanding of sonography and realistic expectations of the profession.

Q. What would you like to tell the next generation about choosing the field of sonography as a career?

A. Congratulations! You have chosen a rewarding career that offers variety, challenges and learning opportunities for a life time. You will work very hard, both physically and mentally, be challenged with difficult cases and situations but be rewarded in so many ways. A sonographer plays a key role in the diagnostic process, obtaining quality representative images which assist the reading physician in making a diagnosis.

Q. In your professional opinion, where do you think the future of ultrasound is headed?

A. With advancement in technology, the cost effectiveness of sonograms and ease of adminstering the exam, sonography has grown as the first line of imaging and will continue to do so moving forward.

Q. At your institution, how do you celebrate Ultrasound Awareness Month with your students?

A. We celebrate Ultrasound Awareness Month in a variety of ways. We invite several sonography professionals in different specialty areas to share their expertise with our students. The students also take a tour of a local company that engineers and manufactures ultrasound transducers. The students are able to see why transducers are so expensive. The upperclassmen demonstrate their skills with the underclassmen as they scan different areas they've been practicing. We conclude the month with a picnic celebrating the profession, bringing all the sonography students together with faculty.

Q. Is there anything you would like people to know about your affiliation with the Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers and their upcoming annual meeting?

A. My time in sonography has awarded me the opportunity to meet some phenomenal people. With the support of my administration and faculty, I continue to be involved in various professional societies and organizations such as the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonography and the Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers. What a wonderful feeling to be able to give back and continue to learn and grow in the field of sonography.

