Health Information Technology
Associate in Applied Science Degree

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Career Definition
Professionals in health information technology are prepared to step into a career that places them in a dynamic arena where healthcare and information technology intersect. Health information technicians ensure the quality of medical records by verifying their completeness, accuracy and proper entry into computer systems. They may also use computer applications to assemble and analyze patient data for the purpose of improving patient care or controlling costs.

Health information technicians often specialize in coding diagnosis and procedures in patient records for reimbursement and research.

Registered health information technologists (RHIT) may serve as cancer registrars, compiling and maintaining data on cancer patients. Although most RHITs work in hospitals, they find employment in other healthcare settings, such as office-based physician practices, home health agencies, hospices, mental health facilities and public health agencies.

Employment opportunities exist for RHITs in any organization that uses patient data or health information, such as pharmaceutical companies, law and insurance firms and health product vendors.

Program Overview
The Health Information Technology (HIT) program prepares students for a career in health information technology at the certificate and associate degree levels. The Health Information Technology program integrates biological sciences, medical record coding systems, computer technology and healthcare management.

The associate degree program is designed to meet the accreditation criteria required by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). The Health Information Technology program is in candidacy status, pending accreditation review by CAHIIM. Graduates of the Health Information Technology program will be eligible to apply for the AHIMA Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) certification examination when the program is CAHIIM accredited. With experience, the RHIT credential has potential for advancement to management positions when combined with a bachelor’s degree.

Associate degree graduates are also eligible to transfer to four-year institutions offering bachelor’s degrees in health information technology. Graduates of four-year accredited programs have the opportunity to take the qualifying exam for designation as a Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA).

The certificate program is designed as an entry level program for students who want a career in health information technology. Courses in the certificate program will apply toward the associate degree for those students who wish to extend their education in the field and qualify for the Registered Health Information Technician credential.

The certificate program will appeal to individuals employed in the medical records field who wish to extend their skills and to those students entering the field who wish to take the first steps in a career path in health information technology. It is anticipated that many students in the program will have a background in either information technology or healthcare and seek to improve their employability by earning a health information technology certificate.

Program Outcomes
Graduates of the Health Information Technology program are prepared to succeed in entry level positions in both ambulatory and acute care settings. Program outcomes include:

- ensure the quality of medical records by verifying their completeness, accuracy and proper entry into computer systems.
- utilize a variety of electronic health record (EHR) software applications to record, transmit and store patient data.
- use computer applications to assemble and analyze patient data for the purpose of improving patient care or controlling costs.
- specialize in coding diagnoses and procedures in patient records for reimbursement and research.

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Opportunities for Employment

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment growth for health information technicians is expected to increase by 20 percent, much faster than average for all occupations through 2018. The job outlook should be exceptionally strong for technicians with a strong understanding of technology and computer software.

Opportunities for Advancement

Students who graduate from an accredited program with an associate in applied science degree may take the qualifying exam for Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) certification.

- RHITs may serve as cancer registrars, compiling and maintaining data on cancer patients.
- RHITs may advance to management level positions by earning a bachelor’s degree.
- RHITs who earn a bachelor’s degree in health information technology may take the qualifying exam for RHIA (Registered Health Information Administrator) certification.
- RHITs with experience may secure employment with computer software vendors, health insurance providers, healthcare office workflow management and/or training.

Helpful Academic Skills

- High school chemistry, biology, algebra and statistics courses
- Education or experience in working with computer applications
- Education or experience in working with computer database management
- College level coursework in anatomy and physiology, English, statistics, health sciences and computer information systems
- Prior employment or volunteer experience in the healthcare field

Professional Organization Web Sites

- American Health Information Management Association: www.ahima.org
- Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education: www.cahiim.org
- Health Care Information Management and Systems Society: www.himss.org

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is the HIT program accredited?

A: No, the HIT degree program is not accredited. The Health Information Technology degree program is in candidacy status, pending accreditation review by CAHIIM. Graduates of the Health Information Technology program will be eligible to apply for the AHIMA Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) certification examination when the program is CAHIIM accredited.

The Health Information Technology certificate program is not eligible for accreditation.

Q: Is enrollment in the HIT program limited?

A: Enrollment in the HIT program is not limited. Students are encouraged to work with a counselor to assure that the proper coursework is taken for degree completion.

Important Note

Students who are seeking the associate in applied science degree in HIT must complete the form attached to this document and submit it to the program coordinator when they enroll in an HIT 200 level course. This information is needed to ensure that adequate externship spaces are available during the second year of the program. Placement in an externship cannot be guaranteed to any student who does not complete and submit this form.

Q: Can the program be taken on a part-time basis?

A: Yes. Students are encouraged to speak to the HIT program coordinator and counselor to map out a plan to complete their certificate or degree program.

Externship hours are available during the day only and will be assigned in blocks of time. Flexible hours for the externship are not available.