Respiratory therapists care for patients who have trouble breathing; for example, from a chronic respiratory disease, such as asthma or emphysema. Their patients range from premature infants with undeveloped lungs to elderly patients who have diseased lungs. They also provide emergency care to patients suffering from heart attacks, drowning, or shock. Respiratory therapists typically do the following:

- Interview and examine patients with breathing or cardiopulmonary disorders
- Consult with physicians to develop patient treatment plans
- Perform diagnostic tests such as measuring lung capacity
- Treat patients, using a variety of methods, including chest physiotherapy and aerosol medications
- Monitor and record the progress of treatment
- Supervise respiratory therapy technicians during tests and evaluate the findings of the tests
- Teach patients how to use treatments

Respiratory therapists use various tests to evaluate patients. For example, therapists test lung capacity by having patients breathe into an instrument that measures the volume and flow of oxygen when they inhale and exhale. Respiratory therapists may also take blood samples and use a blood gas analyzer to test the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels present.

Respiratory therapists perform chest physiotherapy on patients to remove mucus from their lungs and make it easier for them to breathe. Removing mucus is necessary for patients suffering from lung diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, and involves the therapist vibrating the patient’s rib cage, often by tapping the patient’s chest and encouraging him or her to cough.

Respiratory therapists may connect patients who cannot breathe on their own to ventilators to deliver oxygen to the lungs. Therapists insert a tube in the patient’s windpipe (trachea), and connect the tube to ventilator equipment. They set and monitor the equipment to ensure that the patient is receiving the correct amount of oxygen at the correct rate.

Respiratory therapists who work in home care teach patients and their families to use ventilators and other life-support systems in their homes. During these visits, they may inspect and clean equipment, check the home for environmental hazards, and ensure that patients know how to use their medications.

Therapists also make emergency home visits when necessary. In some hospitals, respiratory therapists are involved in related areas, such as counseling people on how to stop smoking and diagnosing breathing problems for people with sleep apnea. (Occupational Outlook Handbook)

Students may receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Respiratory Therapy Technology from the University of Nebraska at Kearney after satisfactory completion of a program consisting of 85 semester hours of pre-respiratory therapy and a fourth (12 month) clinical year at an affiliated School of Respiratory Therapy.

Gaining acceptance into a respiratory therapy clinicals is a very competitive process. Completion of the pre-requisite courses does not automatically guarantee admission. The following courses are required prior to application for the clinical training portion of the program:

**A. Required Courses**

**Take all of the following:**

- BIOL 103GS General Biology 4
- BIOL 211GS Human Microbiology 4
- BIOL 225 Anatomy and Physiology 4
- BIOL 226 Anatomy and Physiology 4
- BIOL 325 Medical Terminology 1
- CHEM 160GS General Chemistry 4
- CHEM 161GS General Chemistry 4
- CSIT 108GS Computers in Society 3
- ENG 102GS Academic Writing and Research 3
- MATH 102GS College Algebra 2
- PHYS 205GS General Physics 5
- PSY 203GS General Psychology 3
- PSY 230GS Human Development 3

**B. Take 12 hours of Respiratory Therapy Comp. Electives: Minimum of 6 hours must be upper division (300-400).**

- BIOL 110 Introduction to Epidemiology 3
- BIOL 461 Human Genetics 3
- BSAD 295 Business Communications 3
- CSP 417 Counseling Skills 3
- ECON 410 Health Care Economics 3
- FSID 110GS Nutrition 3
- HSCI 125GS Orientation to Respiratory Therapy 1
- HSCI 140GS Introduction to Public Health 3
- MGT 380 Human Resource Management 3
- MGT 440 Healthcare Management I – Managing People Effectively 3
- MGT 441 Healthcare Management II – Managing Processes Effectively 3
- PE 329 Intro to Health Promotion 3
- PE 461 Exercise Physiology 3
- PHL 120GS Introduction to Ethics 3
- PSY 231GS Abnormal Behavior 3
- PSY 313 Physiological Psychology 3
- PSY 462 Adult Development and Aging 3
- PSY 465 Psychopharmacology 3
- SPCH 300 Interpersonal and Rational Communications 3
- SPCH 332** Logic Argumentation and Reasoning 3
- STAT 241GS Elementary Statistics 3

May take one of the following:

- SOC 225 Global Cultures and Diversity 3
- SOC 420 Race and Minority Relations 3

**These courses are recommended by NE Methodist College.**

Complete clinical year at approved Hospital/School of Respiratory Therapy. The clinical program is worth 35 credit hours. There are numerous clinical training programs, both in-state and out-of-state, to which students can apply. The University of Nebraska is currently affiliated with the clinical programs at CHI Health in Omaha and Nebraska Methodist College in Omaha.

**Notes On Attending a Hospital-Based Professional Respiratory Therapy Training Program**

- **Required Course: HSCI 430:** If attending one of the affiliated hospital-based professional programs and planning to receive a degree from UNK, students are required to register each semester (fall and spring semester) for one credit hour course titled “Special Topics in Respiratory Therapy” (HSCI 430). This course is required in order to track students and allow students to receive financial aid from UNK if necessary. The course is a credit/no credit course and students are given credit each semester as long as they are passing their professional program. In order to graduate, students are required to register for the course 2 times – fall and spring semesters of the professional training program. Students will be reminded each semester to register for HSCI 430. If all requirements are complete, students should apply for spring or summer graduation during their final year of the professional program to receive the Bachelor of Science in Applied Health Sciences Degree from UNK.
Cost of Attendance: The cost of attending an affiliated respiratory therapy program varies by program and can range anywhere from approximately $20,000 – 30,000 including the program’s tuition, books, fees and uniforms. Housing costs are not included. The UNK tuition for HSCI 430 has been waived, but students will be charged the fees associated with one credit hour.

Mode of Delivery: A professional program in respiratory therapy includes both didactic coursework and hands-on training in a clinical setting. The didactic coursework will occur in a classroom setting, however, some of the content may be delivered electronically or via distance education. The hands-on training will occur in person in the clinical setting.

Academic Guidelines
While no minimum GPA is required for most clinical training programs in respiratory therapy, students who are successful in gaining admission to a clinical training program typically have at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA. A higher GPA is preferred and will result in the student being a more competitive applicant. Each required course must be passed with a grade of “C” or better. A grade of “C-” will not be accepted at most programs.

This program leads to a Bachelor of Science Degree in Respiratory Therapy from UNK. Therefore, students must complete the General Studies courses required by UNK.

Students searching for electives outside their major requirements should consider courses from the following areas: biology, chemistry, mathematics, sociology, psychology, business administration, healthcare management, and healthcare economics. See your advisor for suggestions. Students should be aware of prerequisites on all courses and plan their coursework accordingly.

Non-Academic Guidelines
There is no magic formula for acceptance into clinical training. Admission is based on GPA, test scores if required, shadowing and medical experiences, community involvement and volunteerism, leadership qualities, the interview, the essay, and letters of recommendation. Respiratory therapy students are recommended to shadow a minimum of 40 hours and may do so through enrollment in HSCI 125G: Orientation to Respiratory Therapy. Health Sciences offers opportunities to meet these non-academic guidelines through the Shadowing Program, the Health Science Club, and volunteer experiences. Students should plan to be involved in these types of activities and experiences throughout their undergraduate career.

Other important non-academic factors include good moral character, excellent interpersonal skills, a deep commitment to healthcare, evidence of leadership potential and service to others.

The Application Process
The applications to the clinical training programs are available directly from each program. Most can be accessed through the program’s website or can be obtained by calling the program director. The applications should be completed during the fall semester of the student’s last year of coursework at UNK.

Letters of Evaluation/Recommendation
Letters of evaluation will be required of applicants. Letters from a faculty member, respiratory therapist, academic advisor, or employer would be appropriate. Information about the non-academic character of a student would be most useful as academic information is already in the application.

Interviews
Most schools screen applicants with some form of personal interview. The format of the interview may vary depending on the schools to which the student is applying.

Criminal Background Checks
Prerequisite for enrollment into any health science professional program or clinical training is consent for an external background check. This check includes, but is not limited to, past criminal offenses and registry information. If there is evidence of arrest for a crime(s), conviction for a crime(s), presence on an abuse registry, or other information which reasonably suggests that patient safety might be compromised, the student will be asked to provide additional information.

Citizenship/International Students
Professional schools in the health sciences vary as to whether they accept non-U.S. citizens. Some schools that do accept non-citizens require a substantial financial commitment up front. Since not all schools accept non-citizens and since the financial commitment of those that do may be substantial, students should thoroughly research and carefully consider such a decision and discuss it with their pre-health advisors early in their undergraduate years.

Websites
Respiratory Therapy – Nebraska Methodist College http://www.methodistcollege.edu/respiratory-care
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• Students should be aware of prerequisites for courses and plan accordingly.
• A MATH ACT score of 20 is a prerequisite for College Algebra (MATH 102).
• A MATH ACT score of 22 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) or higher is a prerequisite for CHEM 160.
• A minimum MATH ACT score of 22 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) (Grade of B+ or better) or higher is required for entry into PHYS 205.
• Completion of one semester of chemistry is required for entry into BIOL 225