

The Coalition Chronicle

Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education

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Spotlight Article

University of Mary/CHI St. Alexius Health



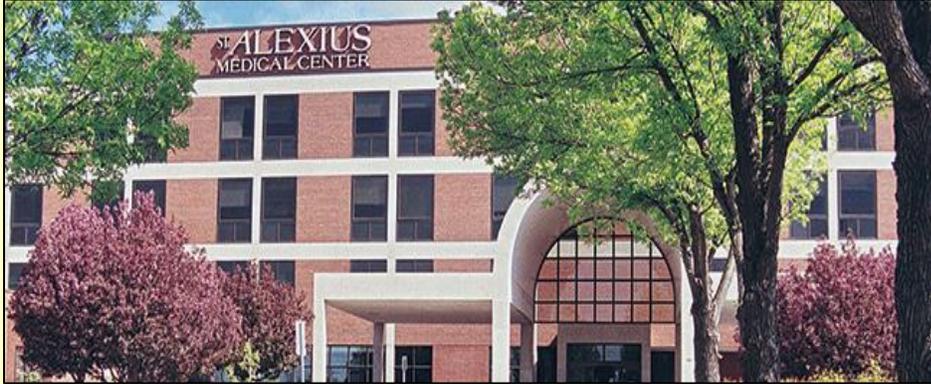
By Chris Sperle, RRT, PhD

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Overview

The University of Mary/CHI St Alexius Health Respiratory Therapy Department in Bismarck, North Dakota prepares students with the professional competencies and leadership skills needed to function as registered respiratory therapists upon graduation who not only provide therapy, but who are ready to consult on the provision of respiratory care. We offer multiple degrees in respiratory therapy to meet students wherever they are in their education and career. The on-campus programs are for students new to the field and provide hands-on classroom education, laboratory instruction and clinical experiences at local hospitals. These entry-level programs are offered at the baccalaureate and master's degrees. Students in the baccalaureate degree entry-level program complete two academic years of pre-professional coursework and

two full years of professional respiratory therapy courses, including a summer term. Students with baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines who have completed specific prerequisite courses can enroll in the professional program at the graduate level and earn an entry-level Master of Science degree instead of a second baccalaureate degree.



The entry-level programs are sponsored by a hospital/university consortium consisting of CHI St. Alexius Health and the University of Mary. The pre-professional baccalaureate

curriculum (freshman and sophomore years) is offered on the University campus and the professional program (two years plus a summer term) is offered on the CHI St. Alexius campus. Students may also complete pre-professional courses at other universities or colleges and transfer to the University of Mary for the professional phase. The master's program requires applicants to have a baccalaureate degree from any regionally accredited college or university in the United States.

In addition to our entry-level programs, we also offer a degree advancement program (RRT to BSRT curriculum) for students with their RRT and an AS or AAS degree in respiratory therapy. The RRT to BSRT completion program is designed to assist registered respiratory



therapists in completing the bachelor of science degree. The RRT to BSRT program prepares students to provide enhanced patient care, to understand the diverse disciplines of the respiratory care profession, strengthen their understanding of the health care industry as a whole, and to understand the framework of ethical and informed decision-making. By its very nature, this

program is designed to address the University of Mary mission by serving the profession of respiratory therapy in the mid-west region and beyond.

Our RRT to BSRT completion program accepts both the AS and AAS degrees upon transfer to our institution. Students must pass the NBRC Registered Respiratory Therapy (RRT) examination prior to the conferral of their BSRT degree. The University of Mary offers up to 40

semester hours of prior learning credit for the RRT credential that can be used towards the BSRT degree. All students must meet the University of Mary upper division requirement of 44 hours of 300-400 level course work for the BS degree.

The University of Mary now offers Year-Round Campus as a one-of-a-kind college career option that lets students achieve a bachelor's degree in as little as 2.6 years and a master's in four years. By adding a full summer semester to the school year, our innovative Year-Round Campus gives students the opportunity to study throughout the year so they can graduate sooner and get a head start on their life and career. There are also study-abroad options available in the summer.

The University of Mary also cosponsors a radiology technology program with CHI St. Alexius Health. In addition, the University has its own healthcare programs on its campus in nursing (LPN-BSN, RN-BSN, BSN, AND-MSN, BSN-MSN, MSN, DNP), physical therapy (DPT), occupational therapy (DOT), and speech therapy (MS). Other health related programs include exercise science (BS, MS), biomechanics (BS) kinesiology (MS), and athletic training (MS), communication sciences and disorders (BS), medical laboratory science (BS), bioethics (MS) and healthcare administration (MSB/MBA).

Program History

The respiratory therapy program began in 1971 at St. Alexius Medical Center as a hospital-based program with no formal ties to a college or university; nevertheless, prerequisite college courses in math and the sciences were required for admission to the program. The program was started by a physician husband-and-wife team with specialties in anesthesia, pulmonology, and critical care. As a result, a legacy of physician involvement in the education of respiratory therapists was started, which persists today.

In 1982, St. Alexius Medical Center formalized a co-sponsorship agreement with its sister institution, the University of Mary. At that time both institutions operated under the auspices of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Annunciation Monastery. Under this agreement, St. Alexius maintained fiscal control of the program and its physical facilities, and the University granted formal academic credit for respiratory therapy courses. Respiratory therapy faculty members remained St. Alexius employees, but were granted regular faculty status with rank by the University. The University assumes quality control of the respiratory therapy curriculum through its standard academic review process. The University also provides student services for respiratory therapy students, including academic counseling and financial aid. This arrangement continues to the present day.

Originally, the University awarded program graduates the associate of science degree. In 1991, the University of Mary approved a Bachelor of Science degree entry level curriculum, eliminating the A.S. degree. This change reflected the belief of the advisory committee members and the faculty that preparation for registry level competencies could not be satisfactorily achieved at the A.S. level.

In 2012, the University of Mary approved a Master of Science entry level curriculum designed for individuals with baccalaureate degrees in other fields. Before the master's option was implemented the program could only offer a second BS degree to such applicants. In 2017, the University of Mary approved a Bachelor of Science (RRT to BSRT) curriculum designed for individuals with an associate degree in respiratory therapy. This program serves and assists the respiratory care profession in degree advancement.

Mission

To prepare students at the baccalaureate and graduate levels to become competent registered respiratory therapists who think critically, engage in evidence-based practice, function as expert resources to physicians and other healthcare professionals, assume leadership roles, and interact respectfully and compassionately with others regardless of cultural background, values, and lifestyles.

Vision

To be recognized as a premier respiratory therapy educational program in the United States, known for the quality and professional competence of its graduates.

Bachelor of Science Curriculum

The BSRT curriculum provides students with the professional competencies needed to function as registered respiratory therapists upon graduation, who coordinate and provide expert respiratory care and serve as consultants on its provision. The curriculum emphasizes a deep understanding of normal and deranged physiology and its connection to treatment, diagnostic procedures, and disease management. In addition, the curriculum emphasizes the human interaction component of patient care and patient education. Healthcare reimbursement, community health promotion, bioethics, research, and evidence-based care are also components of the curriculum.

Admission Requirements

To qualify for admission to the professional program, students must complete all pre-professional requirements with a minimum grade of "C" in each course and an overall grade point average of 2.5 or higher. Students who successfully complete these requirements must submit a separate application to the Respiratory Therapy Department to be considered for admission to the professional program.

Prerequisite Courses

Before entry into the professional program, students must complete approximately 62 semester hours of prerequisite courses, including anatomy & physiology, microbiology, college algebra, chemistry,



physics, psychology, ethics, communication and other general education courses in the humanities and social sciences. The professional program consists of 71 semester hours, for a total minimum of 133 credits for the BSRT.

The first semester of the professional program (junior year) consists of classroom and laboratory courses as well as observations in the clinical setting; clinical patient care courses begin in the second semester and gradually increase in intensity to the end of the program for a



total of over 1000 hours. Clinical experience includes medical teaching rounds with pulmonologists, intensivists, cardiothoracic surgeons, and anesthesiologists. Each semester consists of both clinical and classroom components. In the senior year fall and spring semesters, regular classes occur during the first seven weeks, and clinical practicums occupy the remaining 8 weeks (40 hours/week). In the final semester, seniors write their own clinical learning contracts,

which allow them to focus on several areas of special interest to them; students are responsible for scheduling their own clinical hours and contacting their own clinical instructors and physicians.

<u>Respiratory Therapy Professional Phase</u>		
<u>Junior</u>		
<i>Fall Semester</i>		
	RTH 301 Introduction to Respiratory Care	3
	RTH 305 Basic Procedures	6
	RTH 307 Basic Procedures Lab	1
	RTH 335 Clinical Cardiopulmonary Physiology	6
	Total Credits	16
<i>Spring Semester</i>		
	RTH 320 Clinical Practicum I	3
	RTH 422 Clinical Cardiopulmonary Assessment	5
	RTH 426 Human Diseases I	4
	RTH 436 Critical Respiratory Care	5
	RTH 437 Ventilator/Critical Care Laboratory	1
	Total Credits	18

Summer Semester		
	RTH 416 Pediatric/Neonatal Respiratory Care	3
	RTH 427 Human Diseases II	2
	RTH 430 Clinical Practicum II	5
	Total Credits	10
Senior Fall Semester		
	RTH 411 Respiratory Care in Alternate Sites	2
	RTH 418 Department Leadership	2
	RTH 450 Research in Respiratory Care	2
	RTH 441 Clinical Practicum III	8
	IPE 401 Interprofessional Health Care	1
	Total Credits	15
Spring Semester		
	RTH 420 Professional Seminar	2
	RTH 452 Health Promotion	2
	RTH 428 Respiratory Care Specialty	8
	Total Credits	12
	Professional Phase Total Credits	71
	BSRT Degree Total Credits	133

Master of Science Curriculum

The MSRT curriculum is an entry level curriculum; that is, like the BSRT curriculum its completion confers eligibility to the graduate to sit for the NBRC credentialing exams. It is designed for students who already possess a non-respiratory therapy baccalaureate degree. Thirty-eight semester hours (ten courses) of the 71 credit BSRT curricula can be taken for graduate level credit, which entails additional academic coursework requirements, such as papers, presentations, and projects. A major capstone clinical research project is required in the second year, culminating in a paper suitable for submission to a scientific journal for publication.

There is a great demand for RRTs with master's degrees in respiratory care to serve as faculty members, program directors, and directors of clinical education respiratory therapy programs located throughout the United States. Additional opportunities such as leadership and research are available for graduates of the master's in respiratory therapy programs.

Admission Policy

- Baccalaureate degree (non-respiratory therapy) from any regionally accredited college or university in the United States.
- Cumulative GPA of 3.00

Prerequisite Courses

Chemistry (6 credits)

Physics (3 credits)

Microbiology (3 credits)

College Algebra (3 credits)

Anatomy and Physiology (6 credits)

Ethics (3 credits)

*Grade of "C" or higher for all math/science courses

Admitted graduate students enroll in all professional courses with their undergraduate counterparts; 500 and 600-level courses are dual-numbered for undergraduate/graduate credit.

<u>MASTER OF SCIENCE CURRICULUM</u>		
<u>Junior</u>		
<i>Fall Semester</i>	RTH 301 Introduction to Respiratory Care	3
	RTH 305 Basic Procedures	6
	RTH 307 Basic Procedures Lab	1
	RTH 535 Clinical Cardiopulmonary Physiology	6
	Total Credits	16
<i>Spring Semester</i>	RTH 320 Clinical Practicum I	3
	RTH 622 Clinical Cardiopulmonary Assessment	5
	RTH 526 Human Diseases I	4
	RTH 536 Critical Respiratory Care	5
	RTH 437 Ventilator/Critical Care Laboratory	1
	Total Credits	18
<i>Summer Semester</i>	RTH 616 Pediatric/Neonatal Respiratory Care	3
	RTH 427 Human Diseases II	2
	RTH 430 Clinical Practicum II	5
	Total Credits	10

Senior		
Fall Semester		
	RTH 411 Respiratory Care in Alternate Sites	2
	RTH 618 Department Leadership	2
	RTH 650 Research in Respiratory Care	2
	RTH 441 Clinical Practicum III	8
	IPE 701 Interprofessional Health Care	1
	Total Credits	15
Spring Semester		
	RTH 420 Professional Seminar	2
	RTH 652 Health Promotion	2
	RTH 628 Respiratory Care Specialty	8
	Total Credits	12
	Professional Phase Total Credits	71
	Total Graduate Credits	38

RRT- BSRT Curriculum

Students can advance their career as a registered respiratory therapist by earning a bachelor's degree in respiratory therapy. Health care organizations continue to set higher standards for respiratory therapists. Our flexible respiratory therapy bachelor's degree program will help respiratory therapists acquire the credentials they need to work with more independence in patient care settings, while providing safe and effective respiratory care. Multiple start dates are available every semester, and there is no deadline to apply.

Admission Policy

Requirements for acceptance into the RRT to BSRT program are:

- Associate of Science (or equivalent) in respiratory therapy from a CoARC accredited institution of higher education.
- Cumulative GPA of 2.50
- GPA of 2.75 or higher in the respiratory therapy courses transferred in.

Graduation Required Courses

- *Grade of "C" or higher in each of the following prerequisite courses*
 Introduction to Psychology
 Cultural Anthropology **or** General Sociology
 Composition II
 Microbiology
 College Algebra **or** Statistics
 Anatomy and Physiology I

Anatomy and Physiology II
Theology (3 credits)
Ethics (3 credits)

RRT to BSRT Curriculum

RTH 330 Advanced Cardiopulmonary Pharmacology	3
RTH 340 Advanced Cardiopulmonary Physiology	3
RTH 421 Leadership and Management	3
RTH 435 Advanced Critical Care	3
RTH 440 Advanced Clinical Cardiopulmonary Assessment	3
RTH 455 Health Promotion	3
RTH 470 Research and Evidence Based Practice	3
RTH 480 Respiratory Therapy Seminar	3
RTH 490 Respiratory Therapy Specialty Capstone	3
BUS 351 The American Healthcare System	3
BUS 407 Healthcare Law & Regulatory Environment	3
Total Credits	33

*RTH 497 RRT to BSRT Prior Learning (1-40) credits: These credits are granted at no charge to the student. These credits can be utilized towards to 124 credit requirements for conferral, or upper division credits if the student should need them.

Total in the program = 33 credits

Total credits required for graduation = 124 credits

Upper division requirements = 44 credits

Liberal art requirements = 52 credits

Allowed for transfer = 62 credits

Total credits required for graduation = 124 credits

Student and Program Activities and Achievements

The final year of all programs, students are required to plan, design, and implement a community health/wellness promotion project. Examples of projects include COPD education clinics, CPAP clinics, tobacco cessation presentations to legislators and high school students,

sleep apnea education presentations to truckers, inhaled medication education to caretakers at local nursing homes, etc.

The CHI St. Alexius Health/ University of Mary respiratory therapy program is a premier and nationally recognized program. The national accrediting body, Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC), recently bestowed its Distinguished RRT Credentialing Success Award to the University of Mary program for the sixth time in eight years. One hundred forty nine out of 430 programs received the RRT Credentialing Success Award in 2019, only 26 programs have received the award six or more times.

Program Highlights

- Our program is nationally recognized for graduate credentialing success and offers a 100 percent graduation rate, graduate employment rate, and graduate pass rate on the licensing exam.
- Our students gain valuable respiratory therapy experience through classroom, laboratory, and clinical practicum courses at CHI St. Alexius Health in Bismarck.
- Our students receive over 1,000 hours of supervised experience in direct patient interaction.
- Our students may opt to take the respiratory therapy pre-med track, which allows completion of all courses required for admission to most medical schools while completing requirements for the Bachelor of Science degree in respiratory therapy.
- Our students develop professional leadership skills in a collaborative learning environment grounded in Christian, Catholic, Benedictine values.
- Our faculty work with students to create a plan of study that works for any student.
- We offer small classes with supportive and caring faculty who are there for our students every step of the way.



Faculty



Christine Sperle, PhD, RRT, is an associate professor, program director and chair of the Respiratory Therapy Department at the University of Mary School of Health Sciences. She has been a respiratory therapy educator for 17 years. She received her Bachelor of Science in respiratory therapy and Master of Education in college teaching from the University of Mary and her PhD in higher education from the University of North Dakota. Dr. Sperle co-authored a chapter on fetal and neonatal cardiopulmonary physiology in *Respiratory Care Anatomy and Physiology; Foundations for Clinical Practice* published by Elsevier-Mosby, St. Louis, soon to be in its fifth edition. She also co-authored a companion workbook for the physiology textbook in 2013. She is active in the North Dakota Society for Respiratory Care, having served as a member of its board of directors as treasurer and director at large. She currently is serving her second term as a North Dakota delegate to the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC). She is also a member of the Bismarck Tobacco Free Coalition. She is a basic life support (BLS) instructor, and advanced cardiovascular life support (ACLS) instructor.



Jessica J. Arndt, M.Ed., RRT, RRT-ACCS is an assistant professor and director of clinical education. She has been a respiratory therapy faculty member for seven years and a practicing therapist for twelve years. She received her Bachelor of Science in respiratory therapy and Master of Education in college teaching from the University of Mary. She is currently in the dissertation phase of her PhD from the University of North Dakota; she expects to defend her dissertation in the summer of 2021. Jessica is an active member of the North Dakota Society for Respiratory Care currently serving her second term as director at large and chair of the Membership Committee. She has been a member of the executive board for the Bismarck Tobacco Free Coalition for nine years where she is currently serving as president. She is an AARC certified COPD educator, basic life support (BLS) instructor, and advanced cardiovascular life support (ACLS) instructor.



Shawn Small, MSB, RRT is an instructor in the classroom, lab and clinical setting. He received his Bachelor of Science in respiratory therapy from the University of Mary in 2015. After graduation, he worked at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. During his time at Mayo Clinic, he worked in the Cardiovascular-surgery ICU with adult and pediatric cardiovascular surgery patients and specialized in extra-corporeal membrane oxygenation. In the summer of 2017, he began his career in academia at the University of Mary in the RT program. During that time, Shawn completed a Master of Science in business through the University of Mary. He is an advanced cardiovascular life support (ACLS) instructor and pediatric advanced life support (PALS) instructor.



Megan Schneider, MSB, RRT is the coordinator and instructor for the University of Mary's RRT-BSRT online program. Megan graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in respiratory therapy from the University of Mary in 2015. Given her passion for healthcare, she continued to earn her Master of Science degree in business with a concentration in healthcare, also from the University of Mary. As a respiratory therapist, Megan experienced areas of the adult ICU, NICU, PICU, and long-term acute care. Her love for the long-term acute care hospital setting led her to accept a position as an RT clinical liaison. In this capacity, Megan screened patients for transfer and provided education to patients and their families on the continuum of care. Megan takes great pride in her career as a respiratory therapist and is a strong advocate for continued education. Megan began her dissertation journey in 2019 in University of Mary's Ed.D. program for educational leadership. Megan is currently serving the North Dakota Society for Respiratory Care (NDSRC) as treasurer for the 2018-2020 term. Additionally, Megan has been named president-elect of the NDSRC for the new term beginning in 2020. Megan is a proud member of the University of Mary community, where she can continue to serve the Christian, Catholic and Benedictine Mission.



Julie Nuss, M.Ed., RRT is an adjunct instructor for the RRT-BSRT Program. Julie is currently the clinical coordinator for respiratory therapy at CHI St. Alexius Health in Bismarck, ND. Julie graduated from the North Dakota School of Respiratory Care in 1987 and the University of Mary in April 1988 with a BSRT degree. Julie began her career in an acute care hospital working in the NICU, ICU, and regular floor therapy. She was a key player in the team that developed and implemented therapist driven protocols in the facility for which she worked in 1989-1990. Additionally,

Julie spent 15 years working for a Durable Medical Equipment company where she grew her passion for patient education. Julie completed her COPD Educator course through the AARC and currently works as an asthma educator at a regional children's asthma clinic. Julie has a real passion for education and has served as a clinical instructor for respiratory therapy students and holds a master's degree in education from the University of Mary. Julie has been an adjunct instructor for the University of Mary's RRT to BSRT online program since 2018. She finds this position keeps her on her toes and keeps her learning!



Mike Wahl, MSRT, RRT is an adjunct instructor for the RRT-BSRT Program. In addition to teaching, Mike is the lead ICU Respiratory Therapist at Sanford Health in Bismarck, ND. Mike graduated from the University of Mary/CHI. St. Alexius Health Respiratory Therapy program in 2015 with a Master of Science in respiratory therapy. Mike has a true calling for intensive care; in addition to his duties in the adult ICU, he also works in the NICU, PICU, and neonatal/pediatric transport team. Mike serves his fellow clinicians as an NRP instructor. Mike shares his passion for intensive care with his students as he teaches the Advanced Critical Care course.



Gretchen Trebas, MSRT, RRT is an adjunct instructor for the RRT-BSRT program, she is also employed as an RRT at Sanford Health in Bismarck, ND. Gretchen earned her Bachelor of Science degree in exercise science from the University of Mary in 2013. She continued her education in the University of Mary's Master of Science program in respiratory therapy and earned her MSRT in 2015. Gretchen began her career in rural North Dakota, where she wore many hats. A rural community offered experience in a variety of outpatient and in-patient areas, including pediatrics, home care, performing EEGs and stress tests, and patient education and disease management. Upon leaving the rural community, Gretchen spent some time as an RT at a local long-term acute care hospital where she enjoyed learning about trach weaning and rehabilitation. Gretchen currently specializes in tobacco education, where she is a certified tobacco treatment specialist (C-TTS). Additionally, she is a Baby and Me Tobacco Free certified program facilitator, and pulmonary function lab technician. Gretchen expanded her practice by accepting a position with the University of Mary in 2018 as an adjunct instructor for the RRT to BSRT online program.

2020 BSRT Graduates



BSRT Class of 2021



Contact Information

Request Information: <https://www.umary.edu/admissions/>

BSRT Entry-Level Program: <https://www.umary.edu/academics/programs/respiratory-therapy.php>

RRT-BSRT Online Program: <https://online.umary.edu/academics/bachelors-programs/respiratory-therapy-rrt-to-bsrt.php> **Send email to Megan Schneider:** mlschneider@umary.edu

MSRT Entry-Level Program: <https://online.umary.edu/academics/masters-doctoral-programs/respiratory-therapy-ms.php>

For more information contact Dr. Chris Sperle: cksperle@umary.edu