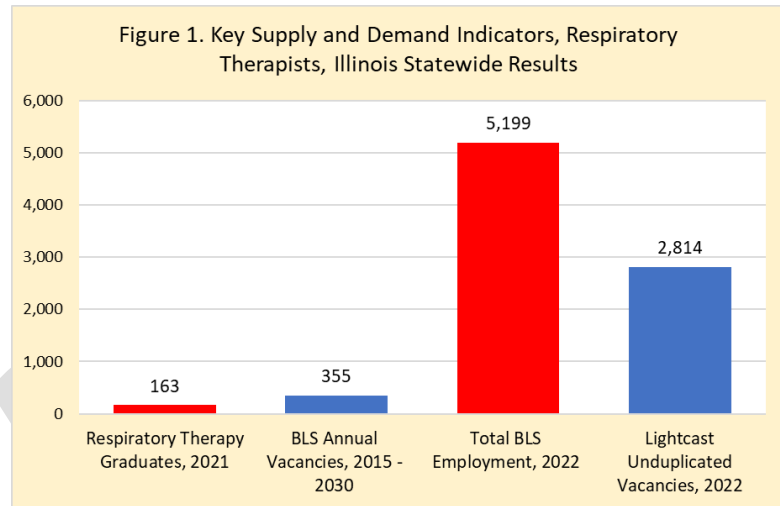


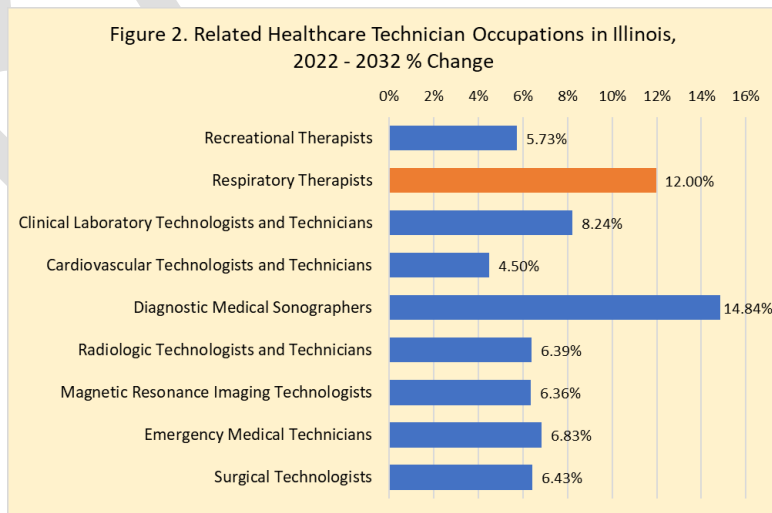
**Illinois Community College Baccalaureate: Occupational Brief
Respiratory Therapist/ Bachelor of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy**

In 24 states, community colleges offer bachelor's programs that provide local access and open economic and professional doors for students, but Illinois state law does not currently permit community colleges to do so. These occupational briefs provide information regarding career areas where these degrees may be needed in Illinois.¹

Respiratory Therapists Overview: Respiratory Therapists (SOC Code 29-1126) assess, treat, and care for patients with breathing disorders. They assume primary responsibility for all respiratory care modalities, including the supervision of respiratory therapy technicians. Respiratory therapists initiate and conduct therapeutic procedures; maintain patient records; and select, assemble, check, and operate equipment.ⁱ Robust employment growth is expected in this occupation over the next decade. Projected job vacancies in Illinois are expected to exceed the current capacity for completers of all credential types (Figure 1)ⁱⁱ. Jobs in this occupation are well-paid, with a median annual salary in Illinois of about \$66,000. Educational requirements for this occupation may be changing in the next few years, as the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) has recommended that new entrants to the occupation should possess a baccalaureate degree beginning in 2030.ⁱⁱⁱ



Demand Trends: Statewide employment of Respiratory Therapists is projected to grow by 12 percent between 2022 and 2032. This is the second most rapid projected growth among related healthcare technician occupations (Figure 2)^{iv}. The number of job vacancies projected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (which include net growth and replacements of those permanently leaving the occupation) is 355 per year over the next ten years. Lightcast unduplicated on-line

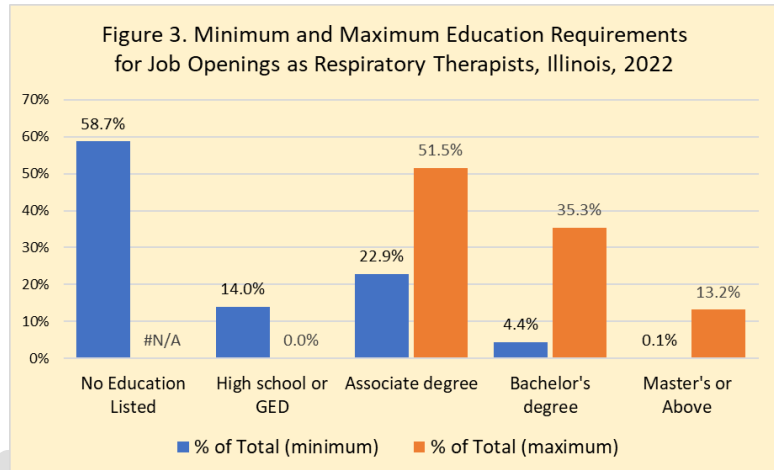


¹ This Occupational Brief was authored by Timothy Harmon, President, Workforce Enterprise Services (WES), and Debra Bragg, Bragg & Associates, Inc., with grant funding awarded to the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA) led by Jim Reed, Jr. J.D., Executive Director of ICCTA. We appreciate the generous funding and support that we have received from the Joyce Foundation and ICCTA to carry out this research.

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job vacancies in 2022 (which includes turnover as well as net change in jobs) was 2,814, which is many times the number of graduates from Illinois schools (163) (Figure 1).

Demand for Baccalaureate Graduates: Respiratory Therapist is a licensed occupation in Illinois which requires completion of at least an associate degree to take the Certified Respiratory Therapist or the Registered Respiratory Therapist examination. So, it is not surprising that most employers with job openings for this occupation do not include a specific educational requirement: it isn't necessary unless the employer is seeking therapists with a higher degree (Figure 3). In fact, only 4 percent of job openings include a bachelor's degree as a minimum requirement. But if we look at those job openings where the employer specified a maximum educational preference (i.e., two or more education levels were mentioned), 48 percent of those openings requested a baccalaureate degree or higher.^v This suggests that many employers prefer job applicants with a bachelor's degree.



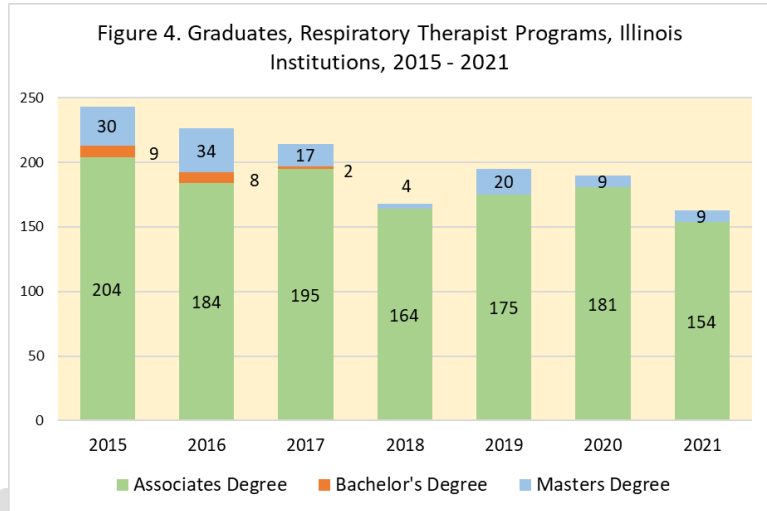
Shifting Credential Requirements: The educational requirements for entry into this occupation are in transition. The [American Association for Respiratory Care \(AARC\)](#) is the primary professional membership organization for respiratory therapists and allied health professionals. Since 2010, AARC conferences and related research have supported the baccalaureate degree as the minimum educational requirement for new entrants into the profession.^{vi} The [Commission on Accreditation of Respiratory Care \(CoARC\)](#) is the body that accredits respiratory care instructional programs throughout the United States. In January 2018, CoARC decided that, while it would continue to accredit existing associate degree programs, it would no longer accredit new programs at that level, limiting new program accreditation to those that led to a bachelor's degree or higher. However, in November of 2021 CoARC reversed its 2018 decision and agreed to continue accreditation of new associate degree programs in respiratory care. This was done in response to "...persistent decreases in the number of RT educational program graduates entering the workforce while demands for respiratory therapists continued to increase," along with "...the lack of empirical evidence supporting the need for an increase in the educational requirements for professional practice."^{vii}

AARC's latest issue paper on the topic concludes that "A coordinated initiative by stakeholders is needed to attain the proposed requirements of a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in respiratory therapy, or health sciences with a concentration in respiratory therapy, and the RRT [Registered Respiratory Therapist] credential for entry to practice as a Respiratory Therapist. These two requirements are needed to achieve consistency in practice and the provision of safe, efficient, and effective care to individuals with cardiopulmonary impairment or disease requiring respiratory therapy services." The issue paper further recommends that "The AARC Board of Directors intends these proposed requirements for entry to practice to be implemented for Respiratory Therapists newly entering active

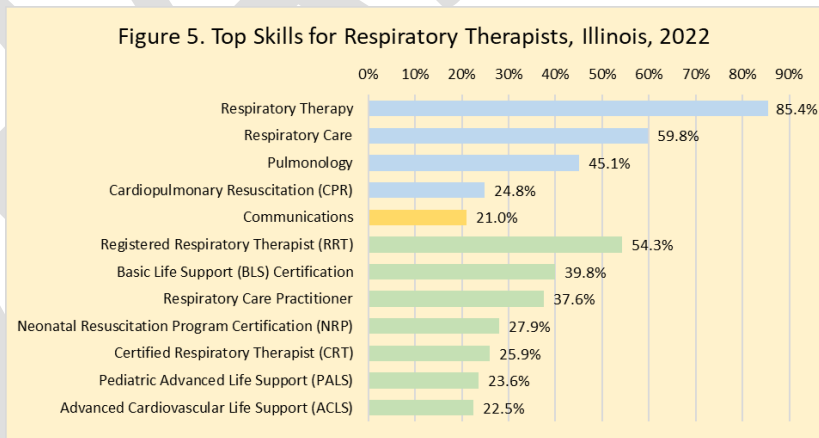
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practice beginning in 2030 and thereafter.”^{viii} For its part, CoARC has recognized that “...higher levels of education for those entering the profession may enhance their capacity to acquire the ever-changing skills required for patient care.” CoARC will undertake a comprehensive revision of the Accreditation Standards for Entry into Professional Respiratory Care Practice to be adopted in 2025.^{ix}

Supply Trends: In spite of the increased demand for respiratory therapists, and the potential transition to the baccaureate as the educational requirement for those entering this occupation, Illinois colleges and universities have seen a steady decline in the conferral of all degree types in Respiratory Care programs of study (CIP Code 51.0908, Figure 4).² While this decline paused during 2019 and 2020, it resumed in the most recent year. Associate degrees represented 94 percent of all completions, and no baccaureate degrees were conferred in Illinois in 2021. The 163 total degree conferrals in 2021 were far short of the number of graduates needed to fulfill even the most conservative estimate of demand for these positions (Figure 1).



Top Skills: Illinois employers with job openings for Respiratory Therapists seek specialized skills such as respiratory therapy and respiratory care, and specialized qualifications such as Registered Respiratory Therapist, Basic Life Support Certification, and Neonatal Resuscitation Program Certification. (Figure 5)^x. The skill requirements in Figure 5 are for all job openings, regardless of the educational levels included in the online posting.



Regional Overview: Table 1 shows the extent of job demand in each of the state’s official economic development regions. The strongest demand is in the Chicago metro region, which represents 70 percent of current employment, 65 percent of projected annual vacancies, and 64 percent of current Lightcast job openings. Median earnings across the regions vary from a low of \$58,000 to a high of \$72,000, with statewide median earnings of \$66,000. See Attachment 1 for a map of these regions.

² Data on graduates of postsecondary institutions are organized around program codes, using the Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) system. CIP 51.0908 is the program code for Respiratory Care, which is the instructional program that leads to qualification for licensure as either a Certified Respiratory Therapist or a Registered Respiratory Therapist.

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| Illinois Economic Development Regions ^{xii} | Base year employment total (2022) | Projected year employment total (2032) | Median annual earnings | Projected annual vacancies | Most recent period Lightcast job postings count (2022) |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Central Illinois Region 1 | 226 | 243 | \$61,970 | 14 | 138 |
| East Central Illinois Region 2 | 158 | 233 | \$63,801 | 18 | 78 |
| North Central Illinois Region 3 | 305 | 355 | \$64,159 | 23 | 121 |
| Northeast Illinois Region 4 | 3,664 | 4,006 | \$66,971 | 233 | 1,797 |
| Northern Illinois Stateline Region 5 | 168 | 198 | \$71,859 | 13 | 87 |
| Northwest Illinois Region 6 | 156 | 146 | \$62,417 | 9 | 147 |
| Southeastern Illinois Region 7 | 114 | 150 | \$68,665 | 11 | 76 |
| Southern Illinois Region 8 | 150 | 164 | \$61,197 | 11 | 209 |
| Southwestern Illinois Region 9 | 97 | 101 | \$57,969 | 6 | 113 |
| West Central Illinois Region 10 | 96 | 118 | \$65,217 | 8 | 12 |
| Statewide Estimate | 5,199 | 5,823 | \$66,331 | 355 | 2,814 |

Top Schools: Table 2 shows the schools with at least five graduates in this program area in 2021, along with the number of these graduates by type of credential and the cost for in-state tuition and fees for each institution. Students attending 10 public community colleges (highlighted in green) account for 85% of the total graduates in all respiratory therapy programs, with all these colleges awarding associate degrees.

| Institution | Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Master's Degree | Totals | In-District Avg. Tuition, Full-Time Undergrads. | State Region |
|--|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------|---|--------------|
| City Colleges of Chicago-Malcolm X College | 22 | * | * | 22 | \$4,380 | 4 |
| College of DuPage | 20 | * | * | 20 | \$3,240 | 4 |
| Illinois Central College | 19 | * | * | 19 | \$4,253 | 3 |
| Rock Valley College | 13 | * | * | 13 | \$3,600 | 5 |
| Kankakee Community College | 12 | * | * | 12 | \$4,380 | 4 |
| Kaskaskia College | 12 | * | * | 12 | \$4,080 | 9 |
| Moraine Valley Community College | 12 | * | * | 12 | \$3,144 | 4 |
| Lincoln Land Community College | 9 | * | * | 9 | \$3,228 | 1 |
| Parkland College | 9 | * | * | 9 | \$4,455 | 2 |
| Rush University | * | * | 9 | 9 | \$29,828 | 4 |
| Saint Augustine College | 9 | * | * | 9 | \$11,720 | 4 |
| Southwestern Illinois College | 9 | * | * | 9 | \$3,390 | 9 |
| Blessing Rieman College of Nursing and Health Sciences | 7 | * | * | 7 | \$26,930 | 10 |
| Totals | 154 | 0 | 9 | 163 | | |

*Not Offered. Zero values indicate the credential was available, but none were awarded in the academic year.

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Enrollment in three private universities (yellow) accounts for 15% of the total, with two of these institutions offering an associate degree and one offering a master’s degree. Average tuition varies greatly by institution type.

Equity Potential: Table 3 shows racial/ethnic percentages for Illinois schools with at least 50 graduates in Respiratory Therapy from 2017 to 2022. The highlighted cells are where the percentage exceeds the statewide percentage for that category. This table shows that there are substantial differences in the racial and ethnic distribution of graduates across institutions. For example, the percentage of Black graduates varies from 1.5 to 29.0 percent, and the percentage of Hispanic/Latinx graduates varies from zero to 47.2 percent. Community colleges and private colleges are represented among those schools reaching a diverse population. Having a mix of higher ed institutions may provide greater diversity in graduates and could help the state meet its equity goals for baccalaureate attainment in this field, particularly for Black and Latinx/Hispanic students.

| Table 3. Racial Diversity in Illinois Schools for Respiratory Therapy^{xiv} | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--|---------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Institution | Total Credentials Conferred | Percent Black | Percent Latinx/Hispanic | Percent Native Hawaii, Other Pacific Isle. | Percent Asian | Percent White | Percent 2+ races | Percent Intl. Students |
| CCC - Malcolm X College | 124 | 29.0 | 42.7 | 1.6 | 8.1 | 13.7 | 2.4 | 0.8 |
| College of DuPage | 144 | 8.3 | 18.1 | 0.0 | 20.1 | 47.2 | 2.8 | 1.4 |
| Illinois Central College | 88 | 17.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 72.7 | 2.3 | 0.0 |
| Kankakee Community College | 69 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 68.1 | 2.9 | 0.0 |
| Kaskaskia College | 68 | 1.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 97.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Lincoln Land Community College | 53 | 7.5 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 83.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Moraine Valley Community College* | 95 | 4.2 | 11.6 | 0.0 | 5.3 | 68.4 | 1.1 | 0.0 |
| Parkland College | 55 | 7.3 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 5.5 | 70.9 | 3.6 | 0.0 |
| Rock Valley College | 66 | 6.1 | 7.6 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 78.8 | 1.5 | 0.0 |
| Rush University* | 76 | 10.5 | 6.6 | 0.0 | 18.4 | 35.5 | 0.0 | 18.4 |
| Southwestern Illinois College | 86 | 14.0 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 75.6 | 3.5 | 0.0 |
| St. Augustine College | 89 | 7.9 | 38.2 | 0.0 | 32.6 | 9.0 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| Grand Total | 1062 | 11.1 | 14.4 | 0.2 | 9.5 | 57.1 | 1.7 | 2.0 |
| * Race/ethnicity data for these institutions may not be reliable, as “unknown race/ethnicity” was reported for about ten percent of graduates during the period. | | | | | | | | |

Top Employers: Table 4 shows the fourteen Illinois employers that had 40 or more unique job openings for Respiratory Therapists during 2022, along with the number of job postings in 2022.

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| Table 4. Top Illinois Employers for Respiratory Therapist Job Openings, Illinois 2022^{xv} | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Company | Unique Postings (Jan 2022 - Dec 2022) |
| Ascension (St. Louis, MO) | 213 |
| Southern Illinois Healthcare (Carbondale and other locations in Southern IL) | 123 |
| Healthcare Employment Network (Staffing agency for traveling healthcare workers) | 109 |
| Medical Staffing Options (Columbus, OH) | 106 |
| Advocate Aurora Health (Aurora) | 99 |
| Northwestern Memorial Healthcare (Chicago) | 76 |
| K&A Recruiting (Boston, MA) | 59 |
| SSM Health Care (St. Louis, MO and various) | 52 |
| Advent Health (Chicago metro) | 48 |
| TotalMed Staffing (Schaumburg) | 44 |
| Loyola (Chicago) | 44 |
| Symbria (Warrenville) | 44 |
| AMITA Health (Chicago metro) | 40 |
| Triage Staffing (Omaha, NE) | 40 |

Conclusion: Illinois should take steps now to expand baccalaureate capacity for the preparation of graduates for job openings as Respiratory Therapists. This recommendation is supported by the following findings:

- There is strong projected employment growth and solid earnings for Respiratory Therapists as measured by BLS.
- There is robust current job demand for this occupation as measured by Lightcast on-line job openings.
- Degree requirements for this occupation are in transition, with entry requirements likely to shift to the baccalaureate by 2030. If degree requirements are increased for entry into this occupation, Illinois will not have institutions positioned to respond to this requirement.
- Although most employers do not specify an educational preference in job openings, and few have a minimum requirement of baccalaureate degree, many employers who provide an educational range prefer those with a baccalaureate or above, based on current job openings.
- Nearly all graduates in respiratory therapy in Illinois are from associate programs at community colleges.
- There were no baccalaureate degree programs with degrees conferred by Illinois institutions in respiratory care in 2021, and only one Master’s degree program. Current graduate production from these programs is far below even the most conservative estimate of job demand.
- There are substantial differences in the racial and ethnic distribution of graduates across institutions in this program. Community colleges and private colleges are each represented among those schools reaching a diverse population.

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Several Illinois community colleges are well-positioned to help respond to the unmet need for baccalaureate-prepared employees, if state policy could be changed to allow this, as it has been in 24 other states.

DRAFT

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Attachment 1

Illinois Economic Development Regions



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Endnotes

ⁱ U.S. Department of Labor, ONET Online, *Respiratory Therapists*, at <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/29-1126.00> (visited September 15, 2023).

ⁱⁱ The data in Figure 1 are derived from three Lightcast reports: the Program Table, the Occupation Table, and the Job Posting Analytics report, each from Lightcast Q3 2023 Data Set, September 2023.

ⁱⁱⁱ American Association for Respiratory Care, *Entry to Respiratory Therapy Practice 2030*, 2019, at <https://www.aarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/issue-paper-entry-to-respiratory-therapy-practice-2030.pdf>

^{iv} Occupation Table, 10 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations in Illinois, Lightcast Q3 2023 Data Set, September 2023.

^v Occupation Table, Respiratory Therapists in Illinois, Lightcast Q3 2023 Data Set, September 2023.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, American Association for Respiratory Care.

^{vii} Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, *CoARC Communication to our Communities of Interest, November 3, 2021*. Found at: <https://coarc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CoARC-Communication-Standard-1.01-11-3-21.pdf>.

^{viii} *Ibid.*, American Association for Respiratory Care.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care.

^x Job Posting Analytics, Respiratory Therapists in Illinois, Lightcast Q3 2023 Data Set, September 2023.

^{xi} Occupation Table, Respiratory Therapists in each Illinois region, Lightcast Q3 2023 Data Set, September 2023.

^{xii} Illinois' Economic Development Regions were determined based on the following factors: Workforce: Demographics, Labor Force, Commuting Patterns. Geography: Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). Business & Industry: Employers & Major Industries. These regions were originally defined in 2003 and reaffirmed in 2017. Sources: Illinois WorkNet Local Workforce Innovation Area Realignment Briefing, September, 2018, and Illinois WIOA State Plan Two-Year Modification, PY 2018-2019, found at <https://wioaplans.ed.gov/node/196646>.

^{xiii} Program Table, Respiratory Therapy in Illinois, Lightcast Q3 2023 Data Set, September 2023. Displaying schools with at least five graduates for the sum of all credential types.

^{xiv} Illinois Board of Higher Education, Enrollment and Degree Data Tool. <https://www.ibhe.org/EnrollmentsDegrees/Search.aspx> Accessed 9/19/2023.

^{xv} Job Posting Analytics, Respiratory Therapists in Illinois, Lightcast Q3 2023 Data Set, September 2023.