

# Respiratory Therapy

## Associate of Applied Science Degree

**Program Director: Melissa Wells**

Program Website (<https://gfcmsu.edu/academic-program/respiratory-therapy/>)

Program Application ([https://gfcmsu.edu/respiratory\\_therapy\\_application/](https://gfcmsu.edu/respiratory_therapy_application/)) (Fall 2026 Application available February 13, 2026)

### The Respiratory Therapy degree is offered online with limited onsite.

Most people take breathing for granted. It's second nature, an involuntary reflex. But for the thousands who suffer from breathing problems, each breath is a major accomplishment. Those people include patients with chronic lung problems such as asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema; heart attack and accident victims; premature infants; and people with cystic fibrosis, lung cancer, and AIDS.

In each case the patient will likely receive treatment from a Respiratory Therapist (RT) under the direction of a physician. RTs work to evaluate, treat, and care for patients with breathing disorders. They are a vital part of a hospital's lifesaving response team that answers patient emergencies.

While most RTs work in hospitals, an increasing number have branched out into alternative care sites, such as nursing homes, physicians' offices, home health agencies, specialized care hospitals, medical equipment supply companies, and patients' homes.

RTs perform both diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, such as:

- Obtaining and analyzing sputum and breath specimens;
- Taking blood specimens and analyzing them to determine levels of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and other gases;
- Interpreting data obtained from specimens;
- Measuring the capacity of patients' lungs to determine if there is impaired function;
- Performing studies on the cardiopulmonary system;
- Studying disorders of people with disruptive sleep patterns;
- Operating mechanical ventilators for patients who cannot breathe adequately;
- Delivering inhaled medications and medical gases;
- Teaching patients with lung disorders to maintain meaningful and active life systems.

RTs work collaboratively with other healthcare practitioners. Critical thinking and problem solving skills are mandatory for success in this environment. Strong verbal and written communication skills are necessary when interacting with other members of the multidisciplinary health care team as well as the patients and families. Such a role also requires a broad educational background in English composition, communication, and interpersonal relations. Computer literacy is especially important in today's health care environment.

The RT Program is a two-year program designed to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and professional attitude necessary for a successful career in RT. Upon completion of the AAS degree in RT, graduates will be prepared to begin a career as an Advanced Practitioner RT. Graduates are

eligible to take the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) Entry Level and the Advanced Practitioner examinations.

The RT program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care.

Information about Great Falls College MSU's Respiratory Therapy Program is posted on the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) web site (<https://www.coarc.com/>). You can see information about our program by selecting the interactive map of CoARC program data and then Great Falls from the map. Graduate job placement and credentialing success as well as program attrition data for all CoARC accredited program is also posted at this site. Click on Outcomes data from the Annual Report of Current Status. Programs are listed by state.

## Outcomes

### Graduates are prepared to:

- Practice as a registered RT in the healthcare delivery system.
- Comply with the standards-of-practice and ethical code of the American Association for Respiratory Care.
- Apply critical thinking and problem solving skills to patient care.
- Demonstrate effective verbal and written communication as well as good interpersonal skills.
- Safely and correctly utilize current technology and equipment in the practice of Respiratory Care.

## Estimated Cost

### Estimated Resident Program Cost \*

Tuition and Fees	\$10,070
Lab/Course Fees	\$285
Program Fee	\$224
Books/Supplies	\$2,610
Total	\$13,189

\* **Fall 2025 MUS Student Health Insurance Premiums may be changing. Please check the Health Insurance website (<https://gfcmsu.edu/home/current-students/studentengagement/wellness/student-insurance/>) and/or Student Central for confirmed premium rates.**

## Program Requirements

Many students need preliminary math, science, and writing courses before enrolling in the program requirements. These courses may increase the total number of program credits. Students should review their math and writing placement before planning out their full program schedules.

The Great Falls College Respiratory Therapy Program is a limited enrollment program, accepting a restricted number of students each year. Interested students are urged to contact the Respiratory Therapy Program Director or Advising and Career Center Advisors for student advising specific to admission requirements and criteria for program acceptance.

## Prerequisite Courses

Background in basic science and math is essential to prepare applicants to succeed in the RT Program.

Recommended (not required) courses:

Course	Title	Credits	Grade/Sem
BIOM 250	Microbiology for Health Sciences w/ Lab *	4	_____
AHMS 144	Medical Terminology	3	_____
CHMY 121	Intro to General Chem w/Lab **	4	_____

Science courses with labs must be completed within five (5) years of application to the program, and other courses must be completed within 15 years of applying to the program.

Prior to formal program acceptance, the applicant must successfully complete all of the program prerequisites with a minimum grade of C-.

Prerequisite Courses

Course	Title	Credits	Grade/Sem
BIOH 201	Human Anatomy Phys I w/ Lab (= 301) **,+	4	_____
BIOH 211	Human Anatomy Phys II w/ Lab (=311) **,+	4	_____

NOTE: UM Western students may substitute BIOB 160, BIOH 365 & BIOH 370 for GFC MSU BIOH 201 & BIOH 211. All 3 classes are required and must have a grade of C or higher (not C-) within the last 5 years of application.

WRIT 101	College Writing I **,+	3	_____
Select one of the following:			
M 121	College Algebra **,+	3	_____
M 140	College Math for Healthcare **,+	3	_____
M 151	Precalculus **,+	4	_____
M 171	Calculus I **,+	4	_____
STAT 216	Introduction to Statistics **,+	4	_____

NOTE: For transfer students, M 115 Probability and Linear Math will be accepted.

Subtotal		14-15	_____
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- + A grade of C- or above is required for graduation.  
\* Indicates prerequisites needed.  
\*\* Placement in course(s) is determined by placement assessment.

Program Course Requirements After Formal Acceptance

The courses below are to be taken in the order that they are listed. Admission into the RT Program and completion of the previous semester are required.

A grade of C- or above must be earned in all required courses to continue in and graduate from the program. CPR certification is a prerequisite for entrance into clinical courses. Each student is required to sign a clinical contract defining their professional responsibilities and behavior.

Course	Title	Credits	Grade/Sem
First Year			
Fall			
AHRC 150	Respiratory Care Laboratory I **,+	1	_____
AHRC 152	Respiratory Care **,+	3	_____
AHRC 155	Respiratory Physiology **,+	3	_____

AHRC 170	Respiratory Care Techniques and Procedures I **,+	5	_____
AHRC 254	Pulmonary Assessment **,+	3	_____
Credits		15	

Spring			
AHRC 140	Respiratory Care Clinic I **,+	4	_____
AHRC 160	Pharmacology for Respiratory Diseases **,+	2	_____
AHRC 171	Respiratory Care Techniques and Procedures II **,+	5	_____
AHRC 180	Ventilator Management **,+	3	_____
AHRC 250	Respiratory Care Laboratory II **,+	1	_____
Credits		15	

Second Year			
Fall			
AHRC 240	Respiratory Care Clinic III **,+	5	_____
AHRC 245	Respiratory Care Clinical Seminar I **,+	1	_____
AHRC 251	Hemodynamic Monitoring **,+	4	_____
AHRC 262	Neonatal Respiratory Care **,+	3	_____
Credits		13	

Spring			
AHRC 241	Respiratory Care Clinic IV **,+	5	_____
AHRC 246	Respiratory Care Clinical Seminar II **,+	1	_____
AHRC 264	Alternate Sites for Respiratory Care **,+	2	_____
AHRC 281	Respiratory Law and Ethics **,+	3	_____
Select one of the following:			
COMX 115	Introduction to Interpersonal Communication +	3	_____
PSYX 100	Introduction to Psychology +	3	_____
PSYX 230	Developmental Psychology +	3	_____
Credits		14	
Total Credits		57	

TOTAL PROGRAM CREDITS: 71-72

Suggested Electives:

Course	Title	Credits	Grade/Sem
ACLS/PALS/NRP Certifications are highly recommended prior to graduation			
AHRC 291	Special Topics: Community Outreach *	1	_____

- + A grade of C- or above is required for graduation.  
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