

L&C's Pharmacy Tech Program Puts Students on Fast Track to State Certification

by Jan Dona
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GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College puts Pharmacy Technician students on the fast track to state certification.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Illinois is among the top five states nationwide in its demand for pharmacy technicians, joining Texas, California, Florida and New York, with continuous growth projected over the next decade.

On Jan. 1, 2024, Illinois law was amended to state that prospective pharmacy technicians can take an accredited program in order to qualify to take the certification exam, or work a minimum 500 hours in a pharmacy before qualifying to take the exam.

Although pharmacy techs can qualify for the state licensing exam while on the job, employers want techs who are already certified.

“When a potential employer is choosing between two applicants and only one of them is certified, the one who is certified is going to have a huge advantage,” Pharmacy Technician Assistant Professor Kaycilee Sackmann said. “It’s the first question I’m asked when employers reach out to me about students who have graduated.”

According to Executive Director of the Illinois Pharmacists Association Garth Reynolds, most accredited Pharmacy Technician programs in Illinois did not survive the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We lost a significant number of accredited programs during the pandemic,” he said. “I believe we went from 15 to two during 2020 and 2021.”

L&C’s Pharmacy Technician program has been awarded dual accreditation by the American Society of Health System Pharmacists (ASHP) and the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE)

New pharmacy techs can expect a starting wage around \$28,886, with experienced and licensed workers averaging \$37,693 annually. Highly experienced technicians can earn up to \$52,079.

L&C’s Pharmacy Technician program is a single semester program that specifically prepares students with the skillset and knowledge needed to pass the state certification exam.

“It prepares you to work in a variety of pharmacy environments and makes you a more viable candidate when the times comes to apply for positions,” Sackmann said. “There is a huge demand for pharmacy technicians in our area, and taking this program makes you much more competitive and well-rounded to apply for those positions.”

Many classes in the 17-credit-hour program are available in a Blendflex format, which allows students to attend courses in person or virtually, and in some cases, work through the courses on their own.

Students who complete the program will earn a certificate of completion, which will qualify them to take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board exam.

Classes are enrolling now. For more information, contact Sackmann at (618) 468-4933 or ksackmann@lc.edu.