Addendum to March 27, 2020, Statement
Graduation and Clinical Case Requirements
During COVID-19 Pandemic

The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 public health crisis has impacted every aspect of our society. The evolving nature of the crisis has challenged all of us in the education and accreditation communities to maintain a sense of normalcy and maintain Standards that have long been accepted as the minimum criteria to establish competency of program graduates. Like our programs and sponsoring institutions, the ARC/STSA continues to assess our community needs, weighing this extraordinary event as it has an evolving and ongoing impact on our programs, students, and graduates.

The ARC/STSA remains committed to be as responsive as possible to our community, while balancing what is so important to all of us; the preparation and education of competent entry-level surgical technologists and surgical assistants. In response to an increasing number of inquiries related to upcoming graduations, compliance with clinical case requirements and possible reduction of Standards criteria, the ARC/STSA has developed the following guidance for programs working to address the specific needs of their students, graduates and communities of interest.

ARC/STSA has determined to uphold the required 120 clinical case minimum as stated in the Surgical Technology Core Curriculum (6e) and 140 clinical case minimum as stated in the Surgical Assisting Core Curriculum (3e). We recognize that each accredited program may need to initiate different approaches and strategies that may be influenced by institutional policies and procedures, community needs, as well as local, state, and federal regulations. ARC/STSA provides the following guidance for CAAHEP-accredited programs.

Guidance:

Programs that graduate students with fewer cases than the required minimum as stated in the core curricula will be required to provide documentation to address non-compliance with **Standard III.C. – Curriculum** including documentation that demonstrates how the program determined the need for graduation prior to clinical completion. Items 1–4 below describe documentation and submission requirements:

1. Programs must make available to the ARC/STSA documentation regarding how the need for early graduation was determined, including the program's assessment of community need; how the program determined graduate competency; and, how the program incorporated the administrative team, program advisory committee, employers and community partners into the decision-making process.

2. The program must also provide documentation that consideration was given to student enrollment agreements; institutional policy and procedure; institutional accreditation requirements, in particular requirements for program length; Fair Practices as defined by **Standard V** of the CAAHEP Standards for Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting; and, the program's responsibilities to students, graduates, employers and surgical patients to assure that graduates are competent to practice as surgical technologists and surgical assistants.

3. The ARC/STSA strongly encourages the program to work with the subsequent employer of any graduate who, prior to graduation, did not meet the clinical case minimum to allow for continued clinical assessment of the graduate until such time the graduate completes the required clinical case thresholds.

4. The ARC/STSA anticipates evaluation of all documentation submitted under the above guidelines at the time of the 2021 Annual Report submission.

5. The above process is available to programs between now and June 30, 2020. *Note: this deadline may be extended at the discretion of ARC/STSA based upon the duration of the public health crisis.*

The ARC/STSA understands the extraordinary nature of the COVID-19 crisis and will take into account the challenges facing our program community when assessing submitted documentation related to clinical case non-compliance with the Standards.

The ARC/STSA will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on our institutions, programs, instructional staff, and students. Additional informational and support materials are under development and will be available to assist our community in addressing immediate concerns, as well as the inevitable transition back to normalcy in our community. The ARC/STSA is committed to working with each of our programs individually on their unique challenges as we share the common goal of the graduation of competent surgical technologists and surgical assistants.