

CENTER KEEPS SURGERY STUDENTS ON THE CUTTING EDGE *By Bill Kaluza*

New surgical technology means that “mid-career surgeons need to update their skills.”

To television viewers, “CSI” means investigators meticulously parsing crime scene evidence to identify the culprit.

But at the University of Colorado Denver’s School of Medicine, CSI – the Center for Surgical Innovation – is the latest episode in providing a range of students, from technicians to mid-career surgeons, the most up-to-date surgical education and training.

Big on minimally invasive techniques. CSI training helps students keep pace with technological advances – in imaging, precision instruments, and prosthetics – that have dramatically expanded the use of minimally invasive surgical techniques.

Minimally invasive surgeries are popular with patients because they often mean less pain, quicker recoveries, smaller scars and, in many cases, much shorter hospital stays than would be typical after a traditional, “open” surgery.

But these techniques require specialized training, even for experienced surgeons.

“Mid-career surgeons understand the traditional ‘open’ techniques,” says Thomas Robinson, MD, medical director of CSI.



CSI offers surgical training in well-equipped laboratories.

This popular CSI course takes place in the auditorium.



Continued

“But when new technologies [such as] image-guided techniques and microscopic techniques come around, they need to update their skills.”

Surgeons get this training at CSI for a broad range of specialties.

Faculty and facilities. More than 30 hospital physicians – faculty members of the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine – teach at CSI. Among them are specialists in general surgery, neurosurgery, cardiothoracic surgery, vascular surgery, gynecology, urology, otolaryngology, and orthopedics.

Students at the Center get hands-on training in two labs on the fifth floor of the Education 1 building. Each lab can be configured for 10 separate workstations, and both are equipped with surgical equipment and instrumentation, including endoscopic systems.

In addition, CSI offers courses in Education 1’s lecture auditoriums and breakout rooms, both of which feature audiovisual and web streaming capabilities.

Positioning itself for growth. In 2008, the Center offered a total of 26 courses, including cadaver lab, animal lab, and didactic with dry lab, to more than 800 students, some of whom traveled to the Anschutz campus from neighboring states.

That CSI is the lone surgical training center at an academic institution in this part of the country remains a strong selling point. Only recently, however, has the Center moved beyond “word of mouth” to make that fact known, says Executive Director Sarah Massena.

Massena is leading a number of efforts to boost the Center’s profile, among them gaining certification by the American College of Surgeons, expanding a print campaign, and launching a CSI web site. She’s optimistic that CSI’s mix of expert faculty, state-of-the-art training facilities, and geographic location will fuel its growth.

“Our main mission is to educate,” she concludes.

For more information on the Center for Surgical Innovation, contact Sarah Massena at (303) 724-2756 or sarah.massena@ucdenver.edu

In 2008, CSI offered 26 courses to more than 800 students.