

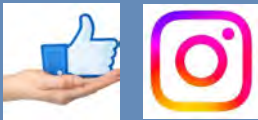


Fall 2023
Issue 2, Vol. 12

American Society for Clinical
Laboratory Sciences Oregon Chapter
Newsletter

The Centrifuge

Facebook and Instagram
are great ways to connect
with ASCLS Oregon.
Click the images.



Special Interest Articles:

- Doctorate of Clinical
Laboratory Science:
A Career Path to the
Future

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In the Spotlight: Brenda Kochis

by: Maja Chloupkova, PhD, MLS(ASCP), SC^{CM}
ASCLS-OR Secretary and Bylaws Chair

Several people within ASCLS-Region IX (Alaska, Oregon, and Washington) have contributed to our success over the years, and thus it is hard to choose one over another. So, when I was asked to write a tribute to Brenda, I had to go back to 2011. This was when I first met her. As the ASCLS-OR Student Representative (now Developing Professional) I was immediately involved with organizing both the Oregon Spring Seminar (OSS) and Northwest Medical Laboratory Symposium (NWMLS). I only helped with small tasks as everything that needed to happen was over my head.

But even as a greenhorn I could recognize there was this one person who made it possible for us to hold educational events – Brenda Kochis from ASCLS-WA. What was her true contribution to these events I could not comprehend at the time, however. When I became the General Chair for both the OSS and NWMLS in later years, I finally understood the scope and complexity of tasks that Brenda performed. Her knowledge of information systems (IS), communication skills, systematic approach to tasks, consistency, availability, and dedication made her the essential link between many sections of the General Committee – registration, exhibits, communication, audio/video, and webmaster.

Continued on page 2



While assisting at the Library, Brenda stands in the middle while wearing a charcoal Grey sweater. Her dedication to fostering the success of others is outstanding!

I saw Brenda introducing new technologies to our events including electronic databases, web-based registration forms, Paypal electronic payments, as well as the Zoom platform for our virtual events. Every time there has been an advancement to run our events smoother, Brenda has been the first person to point to that. Brenda's contribution to ASCLS spans over several decades and goes well beyond what I have described in the above paragraphs. She constantly educates herself about new advances and contributes to ASCLS discussions through ASCLS Connect. Her valuable opinions are always well organized and presented in a clear but comprehensive way, with the goal of sharing and educating others. I feel very fortunate to work with Brenda and "steal some of her brain" – of course, with her permission to do so. Brenda in person is a little, energetic, and extremely modest lady with bright eyes. You would never guess that she is the true power behind our Region IX educational events. If someone asked me what I would say to Brenda on behalf of younger ASCLS generations, this could be it:

Thank you, Brenda, for your hard work and patience with all of us who still have lots to learn from you! We wish you only the best and thank you for being our ASCLS Region-IX Technology Guru. You are our ASCLS-Region IX Hero!

Congrats Betsy Baptist Recipients



Top Photo OIT MLS Visit
From left to right: Mariah Alanis, Kristie Anderson, Jordan Holdaway, Karissa Goodwin, Katrina Holcomb, and Izzy Rodriguez-Snowden

Right photo MLT online student visit from left to right Laura Sage, Audrey Stapleton and Mariah Alanis



Award recipients are underlined

2023



Doctorate of Clinical Laboratory Science: A Career Path to the Future by: **Hannah (Ruplinger) Baker,** **Doctor of Laboratory Science Candidate**



You've graduated as a Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS) successfully passing 4 years of college courses and an internship. After several years of "working the bench" you still have the desire to learn and grow your career. For many, the next step is management, however if management doesn't seem to be your calling do not fret! The opportunity to continue your education and career growth, while pursuing the interests that brought you to this field, is right around the corner. The Doctorate of Clinical Laboratory Science program (DCLS) may be the path for you!

Many laboratory scientists see the struggles providers face day to day with the plethora of laboratory testing options available at their fingertips. In most health systems there is not a key point of contact or member of the diagnostic management team who is visible to the providers to help guide laboratory testing decisions and interpretation of the complex results.¹ The DCLS is a valued expert in laboratory testing who carefully reviews medical records and provides patient-specific recommendations for test selections and result interpretation.¹

Diagnostic errors can be reduced through the implementation of diagnostic management teams (DMTs) that include physicians, pathologists, pharmacists, and now DCLS's. There are 3 institutions in the United States that have a DCLS program, Rutgers School of Health Professions, University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), and the University of Kansas (KU). Most programs are available in either a full-time (minimum of 3 years) or part-time (four to five years) time frame for degree completion.

Each program has slight differences but prepares the DCLS to provide valuable support to the pathologists and providers they work with. Most laboratory professionals are working while continuing this education.² Course work for this program involves advanced courses in clinical chemistry, disease pathophysiology, advanced immunology, molecular diagnostics, immunohematology, and coagulation.

This classroom education culminates in a final doctoral project containing publishable data that is completed during the residency year.¹ The future is bright for laboratory professionals to expand their career through continuing education. "The bench" is no longer the only home for laboratory scientists as there are now a growing number of career paths that still play a highly important role in patient care.

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1. Salazar JH, Zahner CJ, Freeman VS, Laposata M. The Doctorate in Clinical Laboratory Sciences: A New Curriculum to Enhance the Connection of the Laboratory to Health Care Providers. *Academic Pathology*. 2021 Aug 6;8:23742895211034121.

2. Golab, Kathryn MLS(ASCP). *Clinical Lab Trends*. (Oct 25, 2022) <https://www.clinicallab.com/trends/career-development/the-doctor-of-clinical-laboratory-science-dcls-26815>

ASCLS – OR

- **Virtual Monthly ASCLS-OR Board Meetings**
 - Saturdays, 7pm monthly or bimonthly, more info posted on ASCLS-OR website.
- **Laboratory Legislative Symposium -**
 - Oct 23-24 (in-person/virtual hybrid)
- **Fall Networking Night, TBD**
- **Virtual Book Club, TBD**
- **Visit to MLS OIT and PCC MLT Programs**

ASCLS – Region (AK, WA, OR)

- **Virtual NWMLS 2023 10/26/23 – 10/27/23**



ASCLS-OR
Upcoming
Events

What is The American Society of Clinical Laboratory Science Organization Doing for Medical Laboratory Professionals?

by Mariah Alanis, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}, ASCLS-OR President



Every year, the American Society of Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) works with other organizations like the American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP) to draft legislation. This legislation is aimed at the current hurdles currently facing the medical laboratory field. Current issues facing the field today include work force shortages, closures to educational programs, and continuous decreases to reimbursements. To battle these struggles, the SALSA (Saving Access to Lab Services HR8188/S4199) Act, the Bio-Preparedness (HR5602/S3799) Act, the PREVENT Pandemics (S3799) Act, and the Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Relief Act have been drafted and submitted to the House for review. SALSA was created as a long-term pathway for sustainable laboratory reimbursement services. By establishing proper statistical sampling, reliable data can be collected to adequately represent current testing volumes for services being provided. This bill is supported by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (Medpac) as it could end the need to constantly ask for budget adjustments each year. As the foundation of quality healthcare, laboratories would find stability in the implementation of SALSA allowing for greater infrastructure linked with better diagnostic testing methodologies.

The Bio-Preparedness and PREVENT Pandemics Acts go hand in hand with creating new treatments and therapies as well as facing workforce shortages. Unfortunately, these bills only allow for workforce provisions every 5 years and the last revamp was completed just 2 years ago. The Acts do push for student loan forgiveness specific to clinical laboratory graduates. The House is still reviewing this provision to the Bio-Preparedness Act and has not decided. While these bills may not address workforce provisions this year, ASCLS is optimistic that opportunities under these bills will be present in the future. The Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Relief Act is our most promising bill for addressing workforce shortages. This bill provides grant programs to assist educational facilities in recruiting necessary faculty and clinical training opportunities for clinical laboratory programs. Under this bill, loan repayment for clinical laboratory professionals could be awarded to individuals willing to work in medically underserved communities.

Teamed with other workforce provisions, this act could help bolster current efforts to address the shortages currently facing the laboratory profession. While getting involved with legislation provides the greatest impact on laboratories nationwide, advocacy can take many forms. Getting involved can be as easy as giving a presentation at your local high school, community college, or job fair. Even sharing a post about the current legislation helps spread awareness. Every act of advocacy increases awareness and helps shape the future of the medical laboratory science field. Without advocates, there would be no change. For those looking to get more involved, the Legislative Symposium held every fall will not only give you the tools to approach legislative representatives but guide you in that process. Each voice gives strength to the mission of creating a better work environment for laboratory professionals, nationwide.

ASCLS-OR Scholarships

ASCLS Alpha Mu Tau Scholarships
Due in Spring 2024

ASCLS-OR Betsy Baptist Scholarship
Due in Spring 2024

Tackling Externship—The First Step As A Medical Laboratory Scientist

by **Jessie VanBlaricum, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}**

It's five in the morning as the alarm sounds on your first day of externship. The air is crisp, you grab your coffee and make your way out the door to head to the hospital. You already know where to park—you scoped it out the day before in an attempt to calm your nerves. You walk in to wait for the lab supervisor as the nerves start to build back up inside. Is it going to be intimidating? Are you going to feel prepared? As the supervisor approaches, you introduce yourself and make your way to the lab. As you enter, the immediate hustle and bustle of the people and analyzers humming pique your curiosity and you immediately want to dive in.

You walk around the lab meeting the various techs and lab assistants and you can't wait to apply the knowledge you have gained.

My name is Jessie VanBlaricum, I graduated from the 2022 OIT/OHSU MLS program and also serve as the new Ascending Professional Representative for ASCLS-OR. For three months before graduation, I was placed on an externship along with my other classmates to gain valuable hands-on experience within a laboratory before starting our careers.

The inaugural ASCLS-OR Networking Night was hosted at Happy Valley Station Food Carts in Portland, Oregon. The group members are enjoying themselves immensely!

From left to right: Katrina Holcomb, Laura Sage, Jessie VanBlaricum & Izzy Rodriguez-Snowden

I remember having intense anxiety before externship started, not knowing exactly what to expect and what the dynamic of being a student within a complex stat laboratory would be. I didn't want to make mistakes or ask dumb questions and it made me very nervous for the coming months. Let's just say that those fears quickly vanished as I started making my way through the rotations. I took so much from the experience because the techs were caring and passionate about what they do. I learned that there are no dumb questions because everyone deserves to fully understand a concept, even if that means asking a couple of silly questions every now and then. If you are anything like me, you might think that it will be scary to ask questions but the laboratory brings out a fascinating curiosity. From shadowing bone marrow collections, phlebotomists, and laboratory managers to unraveling the puzzles of interesting patient scenarios. Going on extern solidified my passion for the career path that I chose.

Here are a few little tidbits of advice that I wanted to share:



Externship can be a fantastic opportunity to shadow other departments (pathology, lead positions, technical supervisors) which allows you to ask someone about their career path and their day-to-day tasks. It may be something that interests you and could work towards in the future. Really get as much out of the experience as you can—there are so many different departments and roles within the laboratory that you can find a niche that suits you. It may get very busy within the lab especially with staffing shortages, so be flexible and willing to help where you can—cleaning, stocking, or loading samples if you've been shown how. It made the learning experience even better because you can get a feel for the tasks needed to be done when you are in the field.

Externship is what you make of it. I was fortunate enough to have a wonderful experience; however, I would take advantage of the learning opportunity, first and foremost, even if that means figuring out what kind of environment you do not want to work in.

I had the opportunity to be placed with Legacy Laboratory Services throughout the Portland/Vancouver area, which allowed me to see how different laboratories function and decide for myself what kind of lab I could see myself working in. It helped immensely when applying and eventually deciding where to work after graduation. Knowing the right environment of people that will support you and where you feel you would be a valuable employee is extremely important when applying for jobs. **Continued on pp 6.**

Tackling Externship Continued from pp 5.

That brings me to ASCLS. As a student, I underestimated how helpful it is to have a community of professionals cheering you on and working alongside you. Being a part of ASCLS as the developing/ascending professional representative and as a new tech has been an incredible experience to both grow my knowledge and connections within the field. The mentorship and opportunities that can come from being a member of ASCLS is invaluable when finding your way. The hum of the laboratory is like a beehive that effectively produces patient results quickly and efficiently; being a part of that has been extremely rewarding.

Contributing to the results that care teams rely on to treat patients can be scary at first, especially if this is your first avenue into healthcare and have yet to experience working in a hospital or laboratory before. It can be overwhelming and feel like a lot of responsibility is on your shoulders. Take it one day at a time and remember that within the laboratory you will always have a team. Whether that be one other person or hundreds, we are all working towards the same goal—the well-being of the patients and dedication to quality results. The amount of knowledge gained just six months post-graduation is immense and I know I have chosen the right path in my search for life-long learning.

**ASCLS Clinical Laboratory Educators Conference Update
by Dawn Taylor, EdM, MLS(ASCP), Program Director of
OIT/OHSU Medical Laboratory Science Program**

The Clinical Laboratory Educator's Conference (CLEC) was held March 2-4, 2023, in New Orleans. CLEC is the largest annual gathering of medical laboratory educators. There were over 40 educational sessions that could be attended either in person or virtually. Sessions focused on innovative teaching techniques and strategies, program management, meeting the needs of students, and the constant changes and challenges that programs and faculty encounter.

It is great to network with others that are all in the same boat. There were many industry partners in the exhibit hall that were available to share resources and introduce available technology and support. The best thing about this conference is the real-life examples shared that spur creativity and ideas. If you are involved with educating laboratory professionals either in a program or on the bench, this is a great opportunity to learn and receive support from your peers.

CLEC 2024 is February 22-24 in Las Vegas.



**Here, Dawn Taylor is acquiring
information that will inspire future
MLS students.**

THANK YOU
Volunteers



2023 Virtual Joint Spring Seminar Update **Leonard Kargacin, ASCLS-WA, Chair 2023 Virtual Joint Spring Seminar**

The 2023 Virtual Joint Spring Seminar (JSS) was held on April 20-21, 2023. The meeting provided 10 one-hour continuing education sessions for participants covering all laboratory disciplines. P.A.C.E. credits were available to help laboratorians meet their CE requirements. The live presentations were recorded so that seminar registrants would have access to view the presentation for a period of 30 days (extended to 60 days) after the live presentations. We started offering the virtual JSS during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It was a way for the ASCLS Alaska, Oregon, and Washington state societies to continue to offer continuing education to its members when the individual in-person Spring Seminars were not possible. The COVID-19 Pandemic has officially ended, but that does not mean that everything is back to the “pre-COVID normal” in the clinical laboratory and the healthcare industry in general. The clinical laboratory as a whole is under a great deal of economic stress and many facilities are facing staffing shortages. The personnel staffing the clinical laboratory are still under a great deal of stress because of the staffing shortages. The COVID Pandemic also taught us that many things, one of which is that people have realized the importance of having “me-time” for themselves and their families. Because of this, the three states have continued to offer the virtual JSS in lieu of in-person events. We would like to start offering in-person continuing education sessions at some point in the future so that laboratorians have a place when they can meet outside of work and interact with their peers, but we are not there yet.

Kudos to the ASCLS-WA, ASCLS-OR, and CLSA committee members that helped plan the meeting. Working together reduced the amount of time commitment required for any one person on the planning committee and made for a great meeting. THANK YOU!!!

Note: If any laboratorians reading this article are interested in helping to plan future continuing education events or would like to volunteer to help your state societies in another capacity, feel free to reach out to your state organization.

Your help is needed!
Volunteering does NOT require a tremendous time commitment!
You will receive personal satisfaction knowing that you are helping to advance the clinical laboratory science profession now and for the future!!!





If you are interested in becoming more involved in ASCLS-OR, please contact president Mariah Alanis at: ascls.oregon@gmail.com

If you have an announcement, article or essay you would like to contribute to The Centrifuge, please submit it for publication. Please send ideas and submissions to Co-Editor in Chief Jessie VanBlaricum at: ascls.oregon@gmail.com



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lab week 2023

LAB WEEK 2023 WAS A FUN-FILLED WEEK OF ACTIVITIES, TREATS, AND PRIZES! IT IS ALWAYS A BLAST WORKING TOGETHER TO SHOW APPRECIATION FOR EACHOTHER AND THE WORK THAT WE DO

