

Proudly serving lab professionals at all stages of their careers

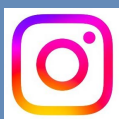
Fall 2024/
Winter 2025
Issue 1, Vol. 15

American Society for Clinical Laboratory
Sciences Oregon Chapter Newsletter

The Centrifuge



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Special Interest Article:

- Elevating
Laboratory
Excellence

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Visit our website
for more
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upcoming events
and ways to get
involved!



In the Spotlight

Elevating Laboratory Excellence: A Path to Professional Growth

by: Nancy Ross MS, MT(ASCP), CQIA, CMQ/OE, CLC



This year marks 24 years that I have been in this profession, and it's truly amazing when I reflect on how I first became aware of this as a career choice. Let me share how my journey as a laboratorian began. During Hospital Corpsman school in the Navy, you get a choice based on how many specialized schools are open that semester. Everyone anxiously anticipates the day when those schools are announced. The day arrived, and my chief—picture a 6ft tall sailor in full uniform with tattoos on his forearms—rounded up all of us who qualified and called us in one by one to disclose the options still available.

When it was my turn, he looked me in the eye and said, “You can either go to optometry school” (with his hand raised high and an optimistic voice), “or you can go smell urine in the lab” (with a sad voice). Those were my two options. I thought about it for a moment, and since my childhood dream was to become a physician, it was a no-brainer for me. I replied with a big smile, “Chief, I’d like to go check out what lab school is all about!” That

was my introduction to this incredible field. And 24 years later, I’m incredibly grateful to be one of your colleagues and to be writing about professional development.

I’m sure we’ve all seen considerable change in the lab over the years. As we navigate the continuous evolution of our profession, the focus on growth—both personal and collective—has never been more critical.

The Evolving Landscape of Laboratory Science

The field of laboratory science is in a constant state of change. From the rise of automation and artificial intelligence to the integration of advanced IT platforms, it’s clear that laboratory professionals need more than just technical expertise to succeed. The landscape is evolving, and so too are the skills required to navigate it.

In addition to the foundational technical knowledge, effective communication is now a vital skill in the lab. The way we interact with other departments, external partners, and each other can significantly impact not only our efficiency but also the quality of care we provide. It’s about creating an environment where communication flows, and everyone understands their role in the bigger picture.

Professional Development: More Than Just Education

When we think about professional development, we often imagine formal certifications or additional degrees. While these can be valuable, true growth comes from embracing opportunities that extend beyond our job titles. (Continued on Pg. 2)

Volunteering for special projects, taking on new responsibilities, or stepping outside of our comfort zones—these are the moments where we truly build our skills.

Sometimes, we have to step outside of the lab environment to hone certain skills. Personally, I've found that some of my most valuable growth came from unexpected places. For example, I took a risk teaching dance classes in the community, which helped me build confidence and leadership skills that have directly impacted my work. It's these types of experiences that shape us—not just as professionals but as people who are adaptable, resilient, and eager to learn.

Facing Challenges and Creating Opportunities

We can all agree that the challenges in our field, from staffing shortages to the constant pressure of ensuring accurate, timely results, are significant. These obstacles can be overwhelming at times, but they also present opportunities for growth. The key is learning to navigate them with resilience, creativity, and determination.

One challenge we've all felt acutely is the staffing crisis. As experienced professionals retire and fewer people enter the field, the demand for skilled lab professionals is outpacing the supply. Yet, this challenge has pushed us to think outside the box—looking at new ways to recruit, retain, and support talent. I know firsthand that it's not always easy. Laboratories across the nation have had to get creative with recruitment strategies, automate certain processes, and make workflow changes.

Beyond staffing, we've also witnessed how moments of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, offer unique lessons. The pandemic showcased the value we bring to healthcare. It put a spotlight on the critical role we play in diagnostics, patient care, and disease management. It reminded us—and the world—that laboratory professionals are an integral part of the healthcare team.

Re-imagining Laboratory Excellence

As we move forward, it's time to re-imagine what excellence in our field looks like. Just as a dancer embraces new movements and evolves with time, we too must incorporate new skills into our professional dance. The world around us is changing, and so must we.

This isn't just about adopting new technologies or staying updated on the latest lab practices. It's about looking at our work through a fresh lens and asking: What can we do better? What skills can we develop that will elevate us from good to exceptional? Whether it's mastering new automation tools, improving our leadership and communication skills, or embracing a journey of continuous learning, the pursuit of excellence requires an active and ongoing commitment.

Focusing on Non-Technical Skills

In my experience, focusing on non-technical skills is what truly accelerates a scientist's career growth. These skills go beyond the technical knowledge we acquire in school and are essential for becoming more effective at managing processes and leading people. Key areas such as leadership, effective decision-making, communication, and laboratory quality concepts should be prioritized throughout a laboratorian's career journey.

If I had to choose one skill to focus on first, it would be communication. I've seen firsthand how refining communication skills can significantly transform a professional's impact. I remember, as a young scientist, witnessing a colleague who had mastered her communication style. While others got caught up in heated discussions, she remained calm, respectful, and always resolved conflicts with a win-win mentality, leaving everyone feeling respected. I became a student of hers, seeking out books on assertiveness to improve my own skills. (Continued on Pg. 3)



One way to learn these skills is through self-directed learning, but another highly effective approach is finding a mentor who can guide us in the right direction. Today, finding a mentor is easier than ever. Attending in-person or virtual events, as well as engaging on social media, offers great opportunities to meet professionals who are already where you want to be. Engage them in conversation, ask questions, and learn from those willing to share their success strategies.

Keep Growing, Keep Learning

Professional development is more than just a career strategy—it's a mindset. The willingness to grow, learn, and adapt is what ultimately sets apart those who thrive from those who don't. So, let's continue to invest in ourselves and our profession, be sure to embrace every opportunity to build the skills needed to succeed, both today and in the future.

I look forward to seeing all of us continue to elevate laboratory excellence and shape the future of our field.

Please click the link for more information about Improov's upcoming professional development course: Accelerating Career Growth: Essential Non-Technical Skills for Laboratory Professionals.

CLICK HERE



Oregon's Voice at the 2024 Labvocate Symposium

By: Susan Runyan, Oregon Representative

This year, I had the honor of representing Oregon as a virtual participant in the 2024 Labvocate Symposium, held September 30 in Alexandria, Virginia. Hosted by ASCLS and its partner organizations, the event brought together over 100 medical laboratory professionals to address the legislative challenges impacting our field.

One of the most pressing topics was the Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Relief Act of 2024, introduced by Congresswoman Deborah Ross just days before the symposium. This important legislation aims to tackle the severe workforce shortages affecting laboratories

across the nation, including here in Oregon. The bill proposes expanding the National Health Service Corps to include laboratory professionals and offering grants to accredited institutions to bolster training programs. Advocating for this bill felt particularly meaningful, as it represents a much-needed step toward ensuring our labs are fully staffed to meet patient needs.

Another critical focus was the Saving Access to Laboratory Services Act (SALSA), which seeks to address the reimbursement cuts caused by PAMA. Many Oregon laboratories, especially those in rural areas, are struggling to stay afloat under these cuts. During the symposium, we discussed the urgency of passing SALSA to stabilize reimbursement rates and safeguard access to vital diagnostic testing for all patients.

As a virtual participant, I joined sessions that provided advocacy training, including strategies for communicating effectively with lawmakers. These skills were invaluable as we prepared to meet with our respective members of Congress on October 1. The Labvocate Symposium reminded me how powerful our collective voices can be. By advocating for better workforce support and fairer reimbursement policies, we're not only strengthening our profession but also improving patient care nationwide. It's inspiring to see how our efforts are shaping the future of laboratory medicine.

Thank you to ASCLS for making this opportunity possible. I'm proud to have represented Oregon and look forward to continuing these advocacy efforts for our state and profession.

ASCLS Upcoming Events

ASCLS-OR

- Virtual Monthly ASCLS-OR Board Meetings
-Sundays, 7pm, more info posted on ASCLS-OR website/social media
- Virtual Book Club, TBD
- Networking Night, TBD

ASCLS Regional

- ASCLS-OR, WA, AK Joint Spring Seminar April 3rd-4th
Virtual

ASCLS National

- CLEC Conference, March 6th-8th
Atlanta, GA & Virtual
- Joint Annual Meeting, June 8th-12th
Sacramento, CA & Virtual



REMINDER TIMER

2025

JOINT SPRING SEMINAR

APRIL 3RD-4TH, 2025

Hosted by the **Alaska, Oregon, and Washington**
ASCLS State Societies

ENJOY TWO DAYS OF THIS EDUCATIONAL
CONFERENCE PACKED FULL OF SOME GREAT
CONTENT. JOIN US FOR **FUN, LEARNING, AND**
COLLABORATION! PROGRAM ON WEBSITE LISTED
BELOW.

CURRENT RATES:

ASCLS/AMT PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL	\$40
NON-MEMBER	\$60
STUDENT	\$10

REGISTER
Now!



Conference will be held on a virtual platform.
No in-person attendance required.

More Info: www.asclswa.org/SpringSeminar



BETSY BAPTIST SCHOLARSHIP

ASCLS-OR is looking for students interested in:
Leadership, Volunteering, and Advocacy

Oregon MLT and MLS Students
Apply Now!!

Application Deadline 3/31/25



<https://connect.ascls.org/oregon/scholars/hips/betsy-baptist-scholarship>



Presented by ASCLS

APRIL 20-26TH, 2025

**5K RUN DURING MEDICAL LABORATORY
PROFESSIONALS WEEK. STEP INTO
NATURE AND ADVOCATE FOR THE
LABORATORY! ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT
ASCLS NEW PROFESSIONALS AND
STUDENTS!**



**10TH
ANNIVERSARY
FINISHER
MEDAL**



Registration Rates

EARLY BIRD RATE (BY FEB. 15): \$35
REGULAR RATE (FEB 16-APRIL OR WHEN SOLD OUT): \$40
**GROUP RATE: RECEIVE \$5 DISCOUNT PER MEDAL FOR
QUANTITIES OF 5 OR MORE**

HAVE YOU REGISTERED FOR CLEC?



**IT'S NOT TOO LATE!
REGISTER BY FEB 14TH**



CURRENT REGISTRATION RATES

ASCLS PROFESSIONAL MEMBER	ASCLS ASCENDING & DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
\$825 IN-PERSON \$725 VIRTUAL	\$725 IN-PERSON \$625 VIRTUAL	\$1025 IN-PERSON \$925 VIRTUAL

2024 NWMLS Symposium Reflection By: Mariah Alanis, MLS (ASCP)CM

The Oregon and Washington constituent societies for The American Society of Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) have taken great pride in organizing The Northwest Medical Laboratory Symposium (NWMLS) for many years. The NWMLS provides a virtual platform giving ample opportunity for professionals to earn continuing education credits. The organizing committee is solely comprised of volunteers whom are currently working and/or retired laboratory professionals. We, as volunteers, take great pride in creating a diverse learning environment for our colleagues to expand their knowledge.

Since 2020, the committee has hosted the symposium using a digital platform. Speakers provide lectures live to those that are able to attend and recordings are made available to registrants that are unable to attend the live sessions. While we are no longer including industry presentations, we were able to include 12 speakers throughout two days. The topics included advancements in microbiology and hematology; as well as, ways to address work force shortages and effective management techniques. Our speakers did an amazing job and we are immensely grateful that they volunteered their time to speak at our event.

Thanks to our incredible volunteer team and speakers, the 2024 NWMLS was a complete success with 76 registrants in attendance. Moving forward the NWMLS will continue to be a virtually based event. We know that this does not allow for the same level of inclusion and socialization compared with meeting other professionals in person. With this in mind, ASCLS-Oregon does plan to implement some in-person educational events where individuals may come together to network.

We hope that you will join us at our next event October of 2025. See you there!



ARE YOU EMERITUS?

Did you know about
ASCLS's Emeritus
membership category?

Are you a retired or
long-time ASCLS
member?

There is a special membership category that could be available to you for only \$30 (+\$5 state dues) a year! That's a quarter of the cost of the Professional renewal rate of \$120 (+ \$20 state dues)

The Emeritus membership category is open to any individual whose age plus years of professional membership are equal to or greater than 90.

If you think you qualify, email ascls@ascls.org.

For more information on all the different membership categories and rates (Professional, Community, Ascending Professional, Developing Professional, Emeritus), visit <https://ascls.org/join>.



Top Left; Graduates moving their tassels to the left, Top Right; ASCLS-OR Representatives (From left to right) Jessie VanBlaricum, Laura Sage, and Katrina Holcomb attending graduation, Middle; Program Director and Professor, Caroline Doty, addressing students, Middle Right; Students lining up, Bottom Left; ASCLS-OR gift bags for each of the graduates



On December 14th, 2024, The OIT/OHSU MLS Program celebrated its 91st graduating class. Established in 1933, the MLS program has welcomed another thirty-four graduates to the field of Medical Laboratory Science. The OIT/OHSU MLS program is the only bachelor's degree program of its kind in Oregon and the largest in the Pacific Northwest. The 15 month program offers hands-on experience both in student labs and a three month internship working in an affiliated laboratory. Among other opportunities, there is rigorous coursework to ensure that students are well prepared for their board exams and entering the field as Medical Laboratory Scientists.

This program is essential in providing new techs and supplemental workforce to the surrounding Portland-Metro area and beyond. Many recent graduates have also already received offers of employment from externship locations. OIT boasts a 97% average pass rate on the national accreditation board examination and we wish the graduates luck on this daunting next step.

The commencement address was given by Dr. Michelle Preston, Oregon Tech's new Associate Dean of the college of Health, Arts, and Sciences. Dr. Preston is an academic leader with 20 years of experience in higher education for health care professions as well as a background in medical laboratory sciences. She had some wonderful facts and insight from throughout the years in the medical laboratory science profession.

For more information about the OIT/OHSU MLS program, please click the Apply Online link. Be sure to also check out Oregon's MLT program at the Portland Community College.

Congratulations again to our new grads! Welcome to the field!



Graduates of the OIT/OHSU MLS Class of 2024

Speaker Dr. Michelle Preston sends the students off with an important reminder.

"It's really amazing how quickly it [the medical laboratory science field] changes, all to benefit our patients. You're going to see a lot of changes in your time as a medical laboratory scientist. It's exciting to think about the future of our professional. Embrace the change"

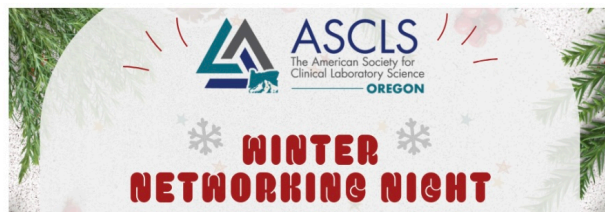


ASCLS-OR Developing Professional Representative, Kylie Mons, wins the OIT MLS Outstanding Scholar Award

APPLY ONLINE

ASCLS-OR Networking Night Look Back

Our most recent ASCLS-OR Networking Night was a success. We had a bit of a hiccup with the venue, but everyone was very adaptable to the change as we often have to be as medical laboratory professionals. It was so great to see new faces and have students join in on the fun. It is always great to meet lab professionals that they may be working with in the near future! We want to have many more networking nights in the future, not just in the Portland-Metro area, but all around Oregon to engage with and meet more of our members. Please follow us on our Facebook and Instagram for the most up-to-date information on upcoming events and we hope to see you at the next Networking Night!



Registration for JAM 2025
Opens in March



Early bird Registration Rates
(Available until 4/8/25)

Professional Member	Ascending or Emeritus Professional Member	Developing Professional (Student) Member
\$655 In Person \$555 Virtual	\$545 In Person \$445 Virtual	\$325 In Person \$250 Virtual





If you are interested in becoming more involved in ASCLS-OR, have an announcement, article or essay you would like to contribute to The Centrifuge, please click the photo above to contact us at the ASCLS-OR website



The Centrifuge is published quarterly by

ASCLS-OR for the Oregon Clinical Laboratory Science Community. Editor-in-Chiefs:

Jessie VanBlaricum & Susan Runyan

Associate Editor: Katrina Holcomb

ASCLS #LABTOBER COOK BOOK

SNEAK PEAK RECIPE

Apple Crimble by Alexandra Adams from Orlando Health

"This is a sweet fall dish that will leave you feeling all warm and fuzzy inside. A wonderful way to get rid of any leftover apples."



Ingredients

Apple Filling:

- 8 apples (can adjust to size of pan) cubed or sliced
- 1/4 cup white granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 cup water

Crimble topping:

- 1+1/4 cup rolled oats
- 1+1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup white granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 cup unsalted butter (Melted)

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Mix the apples, sugars, flour, and cinnamon. Pour the water and mix everything till evenly coated.
3. Arrange the mixture at the bottom a baking dish.
4. In a bowl, combine the oats, flour, sugars, cinnamon, salt, baking powder and melted butter. Mix well using a spoon or your fingertips. Sprinkle over apple filling.
5. Bake for 40-45 minutes, or until the crimble is golden and crisp and the apples are cooked to your liking.

Notes:

- Can substitute apples with any fruit of your choice.
- A crimble is a partway between a crumble and a crisp



Scan QR Code for your free copy of the cookbook!



Centrifuge Newsletter Reader Survey

As the start of a new editorial year approaches, the newsletter team at Centrifuge is excited to hear your thoughts on modifications and upgrades to the ASCLS Oregon newsletter. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey by clicking the icon below. The results of this poll will be examined and included in subsequent issues of the Centrifuge.

▶ **CLICK HERE** ◀