

Workforce Action Alliance

Moving forward to address the needs of tomorrow's laboratories

Kathy Nucifora, MPH, MLS (ASCP), Chief Operating Officer
Tammy Zinsmeister, Chief Innovation Officer



How Did We Get Here?

- Imminent shortage known for years
- COVID accelerated burn out in all of health care
- Workforce has been topic of discussion in numerous conferences

What We Know

- In the last decade there have been modest increases in accredited programs and graduates of most program types
- Between 2013 and 2022, the total number of accredited programs grew from 595 to 609
- Q: Will the number of programs and future increases be sufficient to meet the demands in the future?

Ref: <https://naacslnews.org/2023/08/16/ceos-corner-findings-from-the-2022-annual-survey/>; (Visited September 18, 2023)

What We Know

- Employment of “clinical laboratory technologists and technicians”* is projected to grow 5 percent from 2022 to 2032 (faster than the average for all occupations)
- About 24,000 openings for “clinical laboratory technologists and technicians” are projected each year, on average, over the next decade
- Many openings are expected to result from the need to replace professionals who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force (e.g., retire)

*Currently, the Bureau of Labor Statistics uses the title clinical laboratory technologists and technicians, and data for the two professionals is combined. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/clinical-laboratory-technologists-and-technicians.htm> (Visited September 19, 2023).

What We Know about the Impact of COVID

- Over 80% of respondents indicate that their laboratory experienced issues with recruiting staff in the past 12 months
- 69.7% reported current testing demands (COVID and other tests) increased the amount of overtime provided by staff in past 12 months
- Contract staffing grew to 66.6% in 2022 in contrast to 51.2% in 2020

Garcia E, Kundu I., Impact of COVID-19 on Staffing Survey 2022, American Society for Clinical Pathology, Data Presented at the Workforce Action Alliance Summit, May 2, 2023

What We Know – Impact of COVID on the Profession

- As a result of feeling burned out:
 - 30.5% reported changing careers completely
 - 25.8% changing employment into a related field
 - 13.1% retiring

Garcia E, Kundu I., Impact of COVID-19 on Staffing Survey 2022, American Society for Clinical Pathology, Data Presented at the Workforce Action Alliance Summit, May 2, 2023

What We Know – Impact of COVID on Public Health

- 72% of the public health workforce participated in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Nearly one third of the public health workforce reported they are considering leaving their organization in the next year
- Of those considering leaving, 39% stated that the pandemic made them more likely to leave

Ref: 2021 Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey; (*Visited September 18, 2023*)

During COLA's 2022 Laboratory Enrichment Forum, we asked:

“What can we do to address the laboratory workforce shortage?”

The reply:

“Bring us all together...”



2022 Laboratory Enrichment Forum Workforce Shortage Panel From left to right: Shawn Wierzbowski CEO of Intro, Jennifer Dalton, PMP, LabCorp Site Director, Martina Larkin, student at Central Piedmont Community College, Kathy Nucifora, MPH, MT(ASCP), COO of COLA, Quinn Riggs, student at Central Piedmont Community College; Nattasha Counta, MA, MLS(ASCP)CM, Program Chair of Medical Laboratory Technology, Central Piedmont Community College and Jesse Greenberg, MBA, Talent Acquisition Manager LabCorp

Took On The Challenge

- Amazing organizations have developed initiatives
- Thought was to collaborate – bring ALL together
- Planning Committee was formed
- Meetings began
- Invitations sent out

2024 Summit Planning Committee

Christine Bean, Ph.D., MBA, MLS (ASCP), Chief Learning Officer, Association of Public Health Laboratories

Mark Birenbaum, PhD., Administrator, American Association of Bioanalysts and the National Independent Laboratory Association

Jim Flanigan, CAE, EVP, American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science

Edna Garcia, MPH, Senior Director, Scientific Engagement & Research, American Society for Clinical Pathology

Melanie Sloan, MS, MLS (ASCP), SBB, Senior Director of Accreditation and Quality, Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies

Amy L. Leber, PhD., D (ABMM), Director, Clinical Microbiology and Immunoserology Nationwide Children's Hospital, American Society for Microbiology

Kathy Nucifora, MPH, MLS (ASCP), Chair, COO for COLA Inc.

Michelle Bell, HT (ASCP), QIHC-cm, Clinical Pathology Support Manager, Clinical Pathology Associates, National Society for Histotechnology

Kelly Winter, PhD., Chief of Training & Workforce Development Branch, Centers for Disease Control

MPHL Coalition

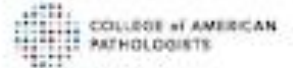
The delivery of **QUALITY HEALTHCARE** needs to be secured.

The number of qualified medical and public health laboratory professionals is rapidly declining. Increased job demands due to the pandemic, an aging workforce, and a slowing pipeline have led to vacancy rates of up to 13% and worsening.

With approximately 14 billion tests performed in the U.S. annually and a majority of medical diagnoses dependent on their work, medical laboratory professionals are essential to quality patient care.

Big challenges require big solutions.

That's why a coalition of 23 associations have now joined forces to create **The Medical and Public Health Laboratory Workforce Coalition**, working to identify and implement strategies to grow and strengthen the laboratory workforce.



Moving forward to meet the needs of tomorrow's laboratories

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OneLab Network

Welcome to CDC OneLab Network, a collaborative community of public health and clinical laboratory professionals and CDC. OneLab Network connects laboratory professionals and CDC through live events and provides access to customized laboratory training resources.

Purpose of the Day

To inspire an alliance and community of practice to accelerate and replicate existing initiatives and to explore new initiatives to address the laboratory workforce shortage.



Key Topics at the Summit

- Salary
- Workplace Culture
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Recognition and Career Opportunities
- Licensing and Certification
- Number of Educational Programs
- Number of available sites for Clinical Rotations

Workforce Action Alliance (WAA) Summit

- 65 attendees, diverse backgrounds and experiences
- 3 priorities chosen

1. Strengthen “the data” to understand the laboratory workforce
2. All of us working together to communicate career paths...
3. Standardize laboratory professional title language to support unity and to educate the public



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#1 Strengthen the data to understand the laboratory workforce

Leader: James Crawford, MD

Key Workgroup Action - Update NAACLS Survey

- Added questions to annual NAACLS survey disseminated to program directors of all NAACLS accredited programs
- New data will assist the profession's understanding of the current national capacity and geographic distribution of educational slots and graduates
- Strengthening the data, strengthens advocacy and evaluating the effectiveness of investments

#2 Communicate career pathways for new and transitioning professionals

Leader: Christine Bean, PhD, MBA, MLS (ASCP)

Raise the awareness of the laboratory science profession to high school students

Priorities:

- Targeting key conferences to create greater visibility of the profession with high school counselors, science teachers and administrators
- Creation of a virtual toolkit which will empower individuals or organizations to launch new initiatives with local high schools and key stakeholders
- Exploring innovative ways of reaching high school students including ways to promote the profession on popular career readiness platforms
- Seeking better ways to reach underserved communities

Academic Partnerships

Priorities:

- Connect with career counselor center professionals and survey either informally or formally
- Develop and modify existing one-page documents for target audience with an emphasis on career ladder/opportunities for growth
- Identify professional meetings to co-present or attend to enhance connections between laboratory science professionals and academic advisors/career counselors

Funding- inventory scholarships and resources for program directors and students

Priorities:

- Generate a list of national, state-funded and local scholarship/loan repayment programs for students
- Generate list of national and state-based funding resources for educational programs
- Explore how to support educational programs and their key stakeholders to successfully apply for a future HRSA grant or current funding opportunity

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Career Pathways and Employee Retention

Priorities:

- Generate a list of career pathways materials and tools in public health and clinical laboratory science careers
 - Understand the education, training, certifications and experience to move through the career path
- Develop 1 webinar to highlight career pathways in laboratory science and target audience such as STEM leads at colleges and universities
- Research and inventory existing employee retention strategies across generations

What can I become?



EXPLORE APHL'S PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

This recently expanded program supports a wide spectrum of areas, such as bioinformatics, biorisk management, environmental health, infectious disease, informatics, food safety, newborn screening and quality management.

[EXPLORE FELLOWSHIPS](#)



APPLY TO APHL'S PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

This new APHL-CDC initiative offers paid internships to train and prepare students for careers in public health laboratories.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY](#)

#3 Standardize professional title

Leader: Kathy Nucifora, MPH, MLS (ASCP)

What are we trying to accomplish?

- Strengthen our professions' standing to recruit more people to the field
- Adopt a broad designation for our professional identity that includes all the diverse academic, certification and career pathways e.g. “nurses”
- Elevate public awareness of our overarching profession through consistent use to become more recognizable

Laboratory Science Careers

- Medical Laboratory Scientist
- Histotechnologist
- Pathology Assistant
- Public Health Laboratory Scientist
- Medical Laboratory Technician
- Clinical Chemist
- Molecular Biologist
- Cytologist
- Pathology Assistant
- Microbiologist
- Doctor of Clinical Laboratory Science
- Clinical Chemist
-to name a few!

Laboratory Science

- This “umbrella” term for our profession, “laboratory science” is inclusive of the various laboratory science career options available to students or transitioning professionals.
- The term “laboratory science” describing our profession can be used similarly to the umbrella term “nursing.” A high school student, if asked what their plans are, could respond “I am going into laboratory science” or “I am going into nursing.”
- “Laboratory science” as an umbrella term for our profession is inclusive of credentialling and licensing terms that are well established by credentialling agencies and some states, such as “Medical Laboratory Scientist” or “Clinical Laboratory Scientist.”



Standardizing the Professional Title of Medical Laboratory Professionals

A Position Paper of

American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) and the American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification (ASCP BOC)

The following sponsoring and participating societies of the ASCP BOC Board of Governors (BOG) support this position paper: AABB, American Association of Pathologists' Assistants (AAPA); Association of Genetic Technologists (AGT); American Society of Cytopathology (ASC); American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS); American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), American Society for Microbiology (ASM); Clinical Laboratory Management Association (CLMA); National Society for Histotechnology (NSH).

Proceedings Document

- Available at <https://www.cola.org/workforce-action-alliance/>
- For more information write WAA@cola.org

2023 Workforce Action Alliance Summit

Proceedings Document



May 2, 2023

Worthington Renaissance Hotel
Fort Worth, Texas

2024 WAA Summit

- May 7, 2024, 9:00 – 5:00 p.m.
- Emerald Coast of Florida
- Venue: Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center
- Gathering of Executives





Medical Laboratory Science: The Hidden Gem of Healthcare
Destin/Fort Walton Beach on Florida's Emerald Coast

- Summit will be followed by COLA's Laboratory Enrichment Forum
 - Venue: Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center
 - For more information contact learn@cola.org