

Montana Laboratory News

Fall - Winter 2007



Montana Delegates to the ASCLS 2007 National Meeting

The 75th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science was held in San Diego, CA from July 17 to July 21, 2007. In the photo above are some of the delegates, from the left: Connie Buchanan, ASCLS-MT Board of Directors; Joni Gilstrap, ASCLS-MT President-Elect; and Susan Keeney, MLN Editor. Other ASCLS Board Members who attended the meeting in San Diego were Linda Masin, ASCLS-MT President; Dorothy Ahler, ASCLS-MT Past President; Robert Senecal, ASCLS-MT Student Representative. Susie Zanto, Region VIII Director, was also in our contingent.

See inside this issue for more photos from the annual meeting, and hot topics facing our profession.

ASCLS-MT BOD Dedicates Funds to MUS CLS Program

In October the Board of Directors voted to set aside \$11,000 to be donated to the new Montana University System Clinical Laboratory Science Program in its third year of operation.

The MUS-CLS Program was approved by the legislature in July and will be selecting students for the first year of clinical rotations later this fall. The new program is a cooperative venture between three schools; MSU - Bozeman, MSU - Billings, and the U of M in Missoula.

Read more about this exciting development in the President's message beginning on page 3.

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ASCLS Region VIII Director's Message , J.R. Constance

Five Simple Words: Why should I join ASCLS?

For the average ASCLS member, these five words may make us take pause and struggle for an answer. How prepared are you, as a member of ASCLS, to answer that question? If one of your co-workers asked you that question today, how would you respond?

We all had our reasons for joining ASCLS, and once we joined many of us became more active in the organization, and we probably had different reasons for increasing our level of involvement. How well do you think that you can relate your reasons for joining ASCLS to a prospective member?

There are obviously many reasons for joining ASCLS, and many reasons for becoming and staying active in the organization.

Our greatest strength as a professional organization is that we are a grass roots organization. Our active members are our core! Because we have active members in a variety of fields and at different levels of practice, our members are well positioned to be our greatest marketing tool. It doesn't matter how many people we hire to market ASCLS, or how much money we pay for brochures or ads, the best people we have to market our organization, and our profession, are our members.

Unfortunately, being positioned well to market the profession isn't always enough. Your average clinical laboratory scientist is not a salesperson. Even though we believe passionately in what we do, and in what ASCLS does for us, we aren't able to easily answer the question when asked, "Why should I join ASCLS?" It's not that we don't want to answer the question. We just might not be prepared for it. We need the tools to be able answer the question, and get our message across naturally in a clear and concise manner.

One of the best strategies to help you answer the question is to spend some time preparing in advance and develop a brief (30 second) "elevator conversation." Also called an "elevator pitch" or "elevator speech" an elevator conversation is usually a brief overview of an idea for a product, service or project. It gets the elevator term because it can be delivered in the time span of an elevator ride of approximately 30 seconds. With a bit of preparation and practice, this same elevator speech concept can be used to provide a simple way for us to market ASCLS.

Now, if you know anything at all about ASCLS you know it would be impossible to touch on all of the benefits of membership in ASCLS into a 30 second elevator conversation. We provide continuing education via many different methods, in many different venues. ASCLS represents the clinical laboratory profession in Washington DC, working on issues such as competitive bidding and the laboratory workforce shortage. Then there are the less tangible benefits of membership, such as networking and professional development. How could you condense all of that down into a 30 second speech?

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President's Message, Linda Masin

The American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) is the preeminent organization for clinical laboratory science practitioners. ASCLS provides dynamic leadership and vigorously promotes all aspects of clinical laboratory science practice, education and management to ensure excellent, accessible cost-effective laboratory services for the consumers of health care. As a clinical laboratory scientist, this is your professional organization.

In Montana, ASCLS-Montana (ASCLS-MT) worked to move a few mountains recently, and as your president I want you to know about these "mountainous" accomplishments.

Clinical Laboratory Sciences Program for Montana:

In the spring of 2007, Benefis Health Care announced the closing of their clinical laboratory scientist training program after many years of operation. That closing left Montana with no in-state training for clinical laboratory scientists. Students are literally forced out of Montana to complete their CLS education. Many students ventured to North Dakota for the last portion of their training, while others went to Colorado, Washington, and other locations outside of Montana. The migration of students is a classic case of "brain drain" from Montana. Through the five years of work by Barbara Hudson of Montana State University and ASCLS-MT, the vision of an in-state medical laboratory sciences training program (MLS) was born. In spring 2007, a grant was submitted by Montana State University with alliances of the University of Montana, Montana State University-Billings and eight major Montana Hospitals to develop a clinical laboratory sciences training program that required funding from the state legislature and workforce development funds. This venture is unique because it involves three universities in Montana for an undergraduate curriculum. Everyone knew it was not going to be easy to get the funds, but the stakeholders knew the importance of persevering. To the credit of laboratories throughout the entire state, \$300,000 of in-kind contributions and \$63,000 in cash were made by hospitals as matching funds for the grant. Bad news was initially announced because the recommendations for funding did not include any funding for the MLS program. However, strong voices of concern were expressed by many including Dick Brown of the Montana Hospital Association and the Allied Healthcare Task Force. The distribution of the funds was reevaluated by the Commissioner for Higher Education and the MLS program was fully funded on August 6, 2007. Besides Barbara Hudson, several other people made funding possible and they include Kristianne Wilson, Dick Brown, Tim Ford, Linda Hyman, and Kristen Juliar of the Allied Healthcare Task Force. In addition, Senator Max Baucus issued a letter of support for the MLS program.

New Program and Shortage of CLS

What this program means for Montana is that our students are able to complete their CLS training in the state of Montana. Training in Montana is important for students because it reduces their expenses and it keeps Montana students in Montana for all of their schooling. Many hospitals with the students near the end of their training hire these graduating students to work as CLS at their hospitals. The presence of graduating students in hospitals gives Montana hospitals a pool of qualified applicants.

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Bylaws Changes (Proposed)

The following are proposed changes to the ASCLS-MT Bylaws that must be voted on by members-at-large. Proposed changes must be published at least 30 days prior to voting. Voting on these changes to the Bylaws will occur at the General Membership meeting in Helena in April.

Article IV.

1. Move from **Section 9 – Duties of the Secretary** to **Section 6 – Duties of the President** the following:
“send the names and addresses of those elected to office to the Executive Office of the **American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science** immediately following the election or appointment; send the names and addresses of those who are entitled to act as Delegates at the National Meeting as required by the Society.”
2. Under **Section 8 – Duties of the Past-President**, please change and add:
Section 8 – Duties of the Past-President/Leadership Development Chair
“The Past-President will also be the Leadership Development Chair for the one year term following term as president.”

Article VII.

Section 7 – The Nominations Committee

Under Duties of the committee include:

Change the second sentence from “**four (4) months to three (3) months**” . . .

Article X.

District Committees

2nd line – Insert “from that district” into “Each district shall have a Chairperson “**from that district**” appointed by the President.”

Article XIII.

Special Voting

3rd line – Insert word “voting” into “All mailings involved with such a vote must include the entire “**voting**” membership of the Society.”

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Report on the National Meeting in San Diego- July 17-21, 2007

Those who have attended an ASCLS National meeting know how exciting and busy it is. ASCLS and AACC National meetings are combined for two of the three dates of each society, so there are people there from all over the world. It seemed like the whole city was "booked" by scientists. There were busses providing free transportation from all the big hotels in the city to the convention center where the meetings were held the first two days.

If you have only been to one of our state spring meetings, the national meeting is quite different. The people I was there with told me the exhibit hall was huge, but you know how they say Noah's Ark was several football fields long? That's how big the exhibit hall is. There are numbers and letters hanging from the rafters above to let you know where the exhibit you are looking for is and where you are. There is no way to work in a look at the exhibits during a break between education sessions. And with all the cards I had been receiving since registering for the convention, I was really excited to see all the exhibits. My first advice for anyone who has a chance to go in the future: set aside a day, or at least an afternoon, for the exhibits you want to see.

Because we were delegates to the meeting, and traveled at society expense, we were expected to attend certain meetings. I went to the Continuing Education Advisory Committee Meeting, which is essentially the Program Committee of the National Meeting, arranging

speakers and topics for the next meeting. I learned that topic titles and speakers are finalized in early September for the next July's meeting. Even a first time attendee like me had the opportunity to name a topic and speaker for the meeting, but it would be helpful for next year to know of someone in the Washington D.C. area because the next meeting will be in that part of the country.

As with the state meeting, there were some social functions. Wednesday evening there was a Welcome Reception and Silent Auction to benefit the Education and Research Fund. Thursday evening the states of Texas and Tennessee sponsored the T'n T Bash (see the picture). Friday evening the delegates of Region VIII attended a dinner to honor Susie Zanto and welcome J.R. Constance as the past and present directors.

Saturday morning was the House of Delegates meeting. Rick Panning gave a memorable speech as the incoming President of ASCLS. I am in awe of the leadership and dedication of the national officers in this organization. And they can still dance the Electric Slide!



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Student News

Nine CLS students entered internships from Montana University System undergrad programs and the University of North Dakota CLS Program.

University of Montana (Go Griz):

Kelly Bryn, Community Medical Center in Missoula; **Jayne Lehman**, Holy Rosary Hospital in Miles City;
Ashley Rogers-Thompson, St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula; & **Cathryn Watt**, Billings Clinic.

MSU-Bozeman (Go Cats):

Kristen Glover, Providence-St. Vincent Hospital, Portland, OR;
Katie Jaynes, Livingston Memorial Hospital;
Sara Kephart, St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings; and
Cara Ryan, Billings Clinic.

MSU-Billings:

Melissa Siemsen, St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings.

Here are personal glimpses of some of these students.

Kristen Glover: I am originally from Southern California and moved to Montana when I was in high school. I attended Montana State University originally to become a Nurse, but wasn't happy with the classes. I took a class that explored different careers in the medical field and discovered CLS. I loved all of the classes I took for the major and I am enjoying my clinical rotations a lot. Some interests other than CLS are traveling, basketball, shopping, going to the beach, and dancing.

Kristen Glover (continued)

I am currently engaged; my fiancé is currently in the Army, serving his second tour in Iraq. He has been there since October of 2006 and will be returning home sometime in the next few months.

Katie Jaynes: I am originally from Lewistown, MT. I first discovered the CLS option while I was working on my bachelor's degree in microbiology. My advisor told me that a microbiology degree with a CLS option would provide a lot more career opportunities than a plain microbiology degree. At that point I was still undecided on what path I wanted to take, so I decided the program would be a good choice for me. I have really enjoyed the work I am doing in the clinical lab.

Cara Ryan: Well, my name is Cara Ryan, I'm 23. I grew up in Whitehall, MT and have been attending MSU-Bozeman in Microbiology (Go Cats!). I discovered this profession by accident and am proof that not everything in life is planned, but sometimes that's better. I will graduate this May and couldn't be more excited! I'm enjoying Billings and I can't wait to start working.



President's Message

(Continued from page 3)

Nationally, the shortage of CLS professionals is at a critical level. The U.S. Dept of Labor statistics projects that ~15,000 medical laboratory professionals will be needed each year through 2014. Academic institutions produce 4,200 graduates annually, and approximately 40% of laboratory workforce is within 10 years of retirement.

The shortage of CLS has occurred in all areas of Montana. Smaller facilities and large hospitals throughout the state are having trouble finding CLS staff, and many are engaging the temporary services to staff at minimum levels. The average age of a CLS is 47 years old, and a good portion of the work force, particularly in Montana, is nearing retirement age.

Patient Care is job one.

Quality Patient Care for the citizens of Montana is the number one reason for a CLS to practice their profession at hospitals and laboratories throughout Montana. A CLS's science and biology background enables them to be the most skilled professional performing clinical laboratory testing, quality assurance, and quality control related to patient testing. According to the Mayo Clinic, 70-80% of clinical decision making is based on laboratory test results. Clearly, patient testing completed by qualified professionals produces higher quality and reliable results that directly impacts patient care. Because of the MLS training program, Montana can add to the pool of available CLS by training up to 15 students each year once the program is developed. *Continued on page 8*

Region VIII Director's Message- (Continued from page 2)

The easy answer is that you don't have to. The objective of an elevator conversation is to provide relevant information in a short time frame that hooks the interest of the listener. An effective elevator speech will grab the attention of the person you're talking with so that they will have a sense of what you are talking about and will want to know more. Once that happens, you can end the conversation with an invitation or call to action, such as "Why don't you come to the next ASCLS Board meeting as my guest to see for yourself?" Then, follow up with a note or email confirming the date, time and location of the meeting.

So, what do we need to do to put together an elevator conversation? Let's remember, when talking to prospective members you have a very short time to make a connection. I recommend that you give a solid example of what ASCLS does for its members, and for the profession of clinical laboratory science. It is best to use actual examples of ASCLS success stories.

In addition, personalize the message and relate it to why you are a member of ASCLS. You can accomplish this by telling a story about something that you have been involved with in ASCLS.

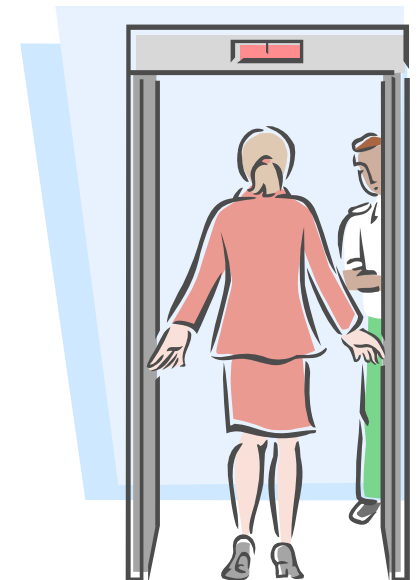
Here is an example of what ASCLS does related to the Government Affairs and Advocacy in Washington DC that might be helpful, and then an example of what you might do to personalize the message.

ASCLS is very active in representing the laboratory community in Washington, DC – through the activities of laboratory professionals at the annual Legislative Symposium in March, the ASCLS Government Affairs Committee, the collaborative activities of ASCLS with other laboratory organizations and the activities of ASCLS lobbyist and staff. This year 140 laboratorians went to Washington DC in March to visit their congressional representatives on Capitol Hill and educate them on the issues important to us.

To personalize this, I would add the following: *"This year I was able to attend the Legislative Symposium for the first time. Being a part of that, with so many of my friends and colleagues from around the country, and learning how the process works on Capitol Hill and visiting Colorado's representatives was very interesting. I actually had the opportunity to spend a few minutes with my local congresswoman, Dianna Degette."*

So, create an elevator conversation, make it personal and tell a story. Your story will be different, but if you can spend a little time preparing for the question, you will be ready the next time someone asks you those five simple words, "Why should I join ASCLS?"

If you would like more information on how to build elevator conversations please feel free to contact me via email at jrc@rodricon.com



President's Message – Linda Masin ASCLS-MT President 2007-2008

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ASCLS-MT Gives \$ to MLS program and Students

ASCLS-MT so strongly supports the MLS program that we have ear-marked over \$11,000 to be distributed to the program during the third year of operations. In addition to the funds which will be distributed to the MLS program in the third year, ASCLS-MT will award three \$1000 scholarships to students training in Montana during 2008. ASCLS-MT believes that support of the training program and the support of students are critical for our profession and Montana's health care system.

Competitive Bidding

Part of the MMA (Medicare Modernization Act of 2003) included a requirement to complete a competitive bidding demonstration project for clinical laboratory services. ASCLS and other laboratory groups are adamantly opposed to competitive bidding for laboratory services. ASCLS is part of a group called the Clinical Laboratory Coalition (CLC). The CLC has been actively communicating with Congress to stop this competitive bidding project. Last March Joni Gilstrap of Billings, Susie Zanto of Helena, and me (Linda Masin) of Billings traveled to Washington DC to participate in the CLC legislative days. We went to Denny Rehberg, Jon Tester and Max Baucus to tell them of our Montana opposition to competitive bidding and talked about the critical shortage of CLS in Montana and about our proposed MLS training program. The national office of ASCLS has been working on competitive bidding along with the state societies. On September 26, 2007, Senators Ken Salazar (D-CO) and Pat Roberts (R-KS) introduced legislation called *Protecting Access to Clinical Laboratory Services Act of 2007*. This act is in the Senate. I urge you to review this issue. After your review of the issue, please contact Senators Baucus and Tester to let them know of your support of this legislation and your hope that they will support your view as their constituent. You can review this legislation at <http://salazar.senate.gov/news/releases/070926medicare.htm>. A companion bill exists in the House as well. It is HB 3453. I urge you to review this legislation and then contact Representative Denny Rehberg to let him of your support of this legislation and your hope that they will support your view as his constituent.

Direct Access Testing

Last year in Montana, legislation was introduced by Representative Ernie Dutton of Billings that would allow patients to order any laboratory or radiology test without a physician's order as long as the payment for the service was made directly by the patient/customer to the performing facility. Montana law does not prohibit direct access testing (DAT) where customers are able to order their own laboratory test(s) without a physician order. Several laboratories across Montana already offer this service but in a very limited capacity. For many of the health-conscious baby boomers, they expect to manage their own health care and the convenience of being able to order their own testing without seeing their physician may make sense. The bill introduced by Representative Dutton would have expanded the menu of available testing to any laboratory test. Nationally, ASCLS is not opposed to DAT. ASCLS-MT representatives spoke in Helena at the Legislature in opposition of this particular bill because we felt that further discussions should take place and that a better bill could be written. Mr. Dutton is interested in dialogue and may be introducing a similar bill in 2009. Please watch as ASCLS-MT will be sending out a survey related to this topic and we would like to hear from our members related to your opinions on this matter.

April 9-12 Helena, Montana Spring Convention

As a final announcement, please make plans to join ASCLS-MT April 9-12, 2008 in Helena at the Park Plaza Hotel for the 2008 ASCLS-MT Spring Meeting and Convention. More information will be available soon so please watch the website for details. Please feel free to check out ASCLS at www.ascls.org. The ASCLS-MT address is <http://www.asclsmontana.asclsregionviii.org>. My best regards to all of you.

Late Breaking News Competitive Bidding & Direct Access Testing

Linda Masin, ASCLS-MT President

Competitive Bidding continues to be the #1 issue for clinical laboratories at this time. The fires are receding in California and CMS has a bidder's packet available on their website. Check it out if you like.

www.cms.hhs.gov

Please know that much work is being done by dedicated professionals of the Clinical Laboratory Coalition - which includes Don Lavanty and Elissa Passiment of ASCLS. Senate bill S2099 to repeal competitive bidding has been introduced, and is sponsored by Senators who are members of the Finance Committee. Our own Montana Senator, Max Baucus, is the chair of the Finance Committee. At this point, I believe the best idea is to hold on, and see what happens with the bill. I will keep you updated when I know what is happening or if we should be doing something active here in Montana. It is exciting to know that ASCLS is right on top of these important issues.

A small group of the ASCLS-MT Board of Directors will be meeting with Mr. Ernie Dutton to discuss Direct Access Testing on Dec 6th. Mr. Dutton is a great guy, and lives by me, and is my representative. He is the State Representative that introduced the DAT bill at last session.

Student Representative's View of the ASCLS National Meeting

By Robert Senecal CLS(NCA)
ASCLS First Year Professional

I joined ASCLS and became the student representative for Montana without knowing much about the society or what it was all about. I was invited to the national meeting this past summer to experience the society as a whole and to get a better understanding of how it functions on behalf of all of us in the profession. Due to the fact that this was my first experience being a part of something this big, it was a bit overwhelming to see so many people in one place united on a collective plane of ideals.

My main function at this meeting was to attend the student forum meetings and young professional meetings in order to learn and exchange thoughts with other students and other student leaders from around the United States. The student meeting content is very similar to other society meetings. The students all have similar concerns congruent with the society as a whole, with varying ideas on how to address them. The only difference is that these thoughts are stemming from a slightly different perspective coming mostly from a generation of people fresh out of school.

Some examples of issues discussed in the student meetings were: member/student recruitment, member retention, communication, monetary issues, member transition, technology, threats to the society,

society weaknesses/strengths, society opportunities, public awareness, and more.

Communication is a core issue that was discussed. The consensus decided that electronic means such as Facebook and a student forum blog will enhance long-distance communication abilities.

Student recruitment and transition to first-year-professional seemed to be the biggest topics in the student meetings. We discussed and exchanged ideas on how to recruit those new to the occupation, retain them in subsequent years, and how to better educate them about ASCLS and its relationship with the laboratory profession.

New national ASCLS student forum officers were elected for the upcoming year who by name and office are: John Whetstone (Chair), Chris Olson (Co-Chair), and Kate Cote (Secretary). I met and spoke with these individuals and I can tell you that they are a very ambitious bunch working hard at the national level to bring students' ideas through to reality.

The national conference was a great opportunity for me to learn more about ASCLS and to take my thoughts and ideas directly to the mother ship. We should find a way to make it possible for more students to attend these yearly meetings.

Thank you to Montana-ASCLS for giving me the opportunity to attend this meeting.



Calendar of Events

January 2008	ASCLS-MT Winter Board Meeting
February 21 – 23, 2008	CLEC – Savannah, Georgia
March 17 – 18, 2008	Legislative Symposium – Washington, D.C.
April 9, 2008	ASCLS-MT Board Meeting, Helena
April 9 – 12, 2008	ASCLS-MT Spring Meeting, Helena
April 20 – 26, 2008	National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week
July 29 – August 2, 2008	ASCLS 2008 National Meeting – Washington, D.C.

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***Save the Date: April 9 - 12, 2008
ASCLS-MT Spring Meeting in Helena***