THE CONNECTION

Fall Issue

October 19th, 2026

President's Message



By: Shannon Jongeward

Hello, fellow laboratorians!

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. I am Shannon Jongeward, your ASCLS-ND President for the 2026–2027 year. I am honored to serve as your state president and look forward to another great year for ASCLS-ND! I thought I would start by sharing a little about myself and then talk about advocating for our profession.

I have been a member of ASCLS since 2004 and have had the opportunity to serve the society in a variety of roles at the state, regional, and national levels. Within ASCLS-ND, I have served as Student Representative (now called Developing Professional), Board Member-at-Large, Newsletter Editor, Bylaws Chair, Nominations Chair, and President from 2013–2014. So, I guess you could say I am a recycled president! At the national level, I have also served on the ASCLS Patient Safety Committee, including as committee chair from 2022–2023.

Professionally, I currently work as an Associate Professor in the Medical Laboratory Science Department at the University of North Dakota. On a personal note, I have two kids who are now both in college, so my husband and I are adjusting to life as empty nesters!

Fall is typically a time when ASCLS focuses on membership, both recruiting new members and retaining current ones. If you are already an ASCLS member, thank you for your continued support! If you are not currently a member, I strongly encourage you to consider joining.

Two of the most common reasons I hear from laboratory professionals for not joining ASCLS are that membership is too expensive or that they don't see the value in belonging to a professional organization (or both!). I would like to offer a different perspective.

I cannot count the number of times I have seen posts on social media expressing frustration with salaries in our profession, staffing shortages, workload, work-life balance, and other challenges facing laboratory professionals. And these concerns are absolutely valid! These are real issues that affect our profession every day. But the question is, how do we change

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things? How do we make our voices heard and advocate for improvements?

You might be thinking that it would take an act of Congress to make some of these changes. Well, you are right! And that is exactly where ASCLS comes in.

Did you know that ASCLS has a legislative consultant and federal lobbyist who advocate on behalf of our profession? Did you know that ASCLS has a Political Action Committee? Or that there is legislation in Congress that could directly benefit laboratory professionals? Well, there is!

ASCLS works to ensure that our profession has a voice when decisions are being made that affect laboratory professionals, our workplaces, and the patients we serve. Advocacy is one of the most important things ASCLS does, and it is something that benefits all laboratory professionals, whether they are members or not.

Now, you might be thinking, "That sounds great, but I don't have the time (or interest!) to get involved in advocacy or serve on committees." And that's okay! You don't have to be an actively involved member to make a difference. Simply being a member helps support the work ASCLS does on behalf of our profession. The more members we have, the stronger our collective voice becomes.

Of course, that brings us back to the cost of membership. Professional membership in ASCLS is currently $155 to join and $140 annually to renew, with significantly lower rates for Ascending and Developing Professionals.

I understand that this can seem expensive. But consider this: membership in the American Nurses Association (ANA) is currently $183 per year. The ANA is a powerful professional organization that has successfully advocated for the nursing profession for many years. Nursing has demonstrated what a strong, unified professional voice can accomplish. If nurses can do it, why can't we?

Our profession faces significant challenges, and those challenges are not going to resolve themselves. If we want to see improvements in recognition, compensation, staffing, and the future of the laboratory profession, we need organizations like ASCLS advocating on our behalf. And for ASCLS to continue doing that work, it needs the support of its members.

Our current President-Elect, Alex, has provided some additional information and links to ASCLS advocacy resources, including the Labvocate website. I encourage you to take a few minutes to explore those resources and learn more about what ASCLS is doing for our profession.

I look forward to serving as your ASCLS-ND President this year and working together to support and strengthen our profession. **Thank you** for all that you do for your patients, your colleagues, and the laboratory profession!

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The President-Elect's Welcome

By Alexandra Vruno, MS, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}



ASCLS Mission Statement:

ASCLS is a collaborative, mutually supportive community empowering laboratory professionals to excel and advance our field by expanding and exchanging knowledge and advocating for medical laboratory professionals and the patients they serve.

I am Alexandra Vruno the new President Elect for ASCLS-ND. Over my 18-year career as a Medical Laboratory Scientist in Fargo, I have had the privilege of working with and learning from numerous talented professionals across local health care systems and educational institutions. These relationships give me access to a strong base of knowledge that have guided me through my career and allowed me to become the leader I am today. ASCLS's mission statement mirrors my belief that the success of our career relies on intentional interpersonal relationships, appreciation of each other's expertise and experiences, and using all available resources to provide high-quality patient care.

With minimal ASCLS experience, I decided to jump in with both feet and run for ASCLS-ND President Elect. Shortly after being elected, I attended the 2026 Joint Annual Meeting with Shannon Jongeward (President), Charlee Schenfisch (Developing Professional) and Samanatha Peterson (past President). This meeting gave me a broader appreciation for ASCLS's advocacy work and the impact it has on health care legislation. Check out the Labvocate website to review position papers explaining ASCLS's stance on the clinical laboratory workforce and clinical laboratory reimbursement.

North Dakota has a passionate and knowledgeable community of Medical Laboratory Science professionals. I look forward to continuing to learn from you and advocating on your behalf.

Alexandra Vruno, MS, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}

President Elect ASCLS-ND

Joint Annual Meeting Recap

The 2026 ASCLS Joint Annual Meeting took place over June 28th to July 3rd in St. Louis, Missouri. ASCLS-ND sent 4 voting members to the meeting which consisted of Samantha Peterson (past president), Shannon Jongeward (president), Alexandra Vruno (president-elect), and Charlee Schenfisch (developing professional). Charlee has wrote an article about her experience which you can read below!

Our previous president Samantha Peterson earn the Voice Under 40 Award! Per the ASCLS website this award is to highlight those under 40 who have displayed “exceptional commitment to ASCLS, the laboratory profession, and their community at large at a young age in their professional careers.” More information about that award can be found here https://ascls.org/voices-under-40/.



Samantha Peterson receiving her award from 2025-2026 ASCLS President Kyle Riding





ASCLS-ND members at the top of the St. Louis Arch and during their time at the conference!

My JAM Experience

By: Charlee Schenfisch
ASCLS-ND Developing Professional



My first true experience with being an ASCLS board member was attending the Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) in St. Louis, which was one of the greatest experiences of college so far! Before going, I had a very limited idea of what attending a national conference entailed, but whatever expectations I had were surpassed. I met other MLS students, new graduates from college programs, lab managers, those with their Doctor of Clinical Laboratory Science, and laboratorians who have been working in the field longer than I have been alive. Every single person that I met was so welcoming and just as excited to talk about our profession—work or advocacy related.

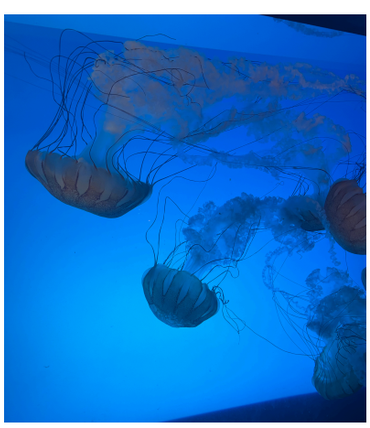
Not only did I meet amazing people, but I was able to hear and learn from them! This conference came at a perfect time. JAM was during the start of the UND MLS senior year program, which has already exposed me to the basic content and skills needed in each major area of the lab. While at JAM, I was able to learn about the practicalities of the testing principles, intricacies of lab departments, and some of the cool, or frustrating, parts of working in a hospital lab. I loved being able to connect my classes to these real lab case studies.

“I learned about what advocacy truly means to the laboratory profession.”

Another great aspect that I learned about is what advocacy truly means to the laboratory profession. I was able to listen to a talk from Damien Garza, the ASCLS Wisconsin President. It was so eye-opening to hear about how he has taken initiative in advocacy with Labvocate and trying to educate high school students by presenting what MLS is as a career.

Not only did I get to hear about this smaller community action, but I also got to hear about what this organization does at the national level. It was incredibly inspiring to hear how involved ASCLS is in the bills in the house or senate, and their efforts to educate our congress.

The trip to St. Louis had other great moments than just the conference. I attended JAM with Sam Peterson, Shannon Jongeward, and Alex Vruno. We were able to explore the city during some time off. Even though it was 90° F out and 90% humidity, we took a riverboat tour on the Mississippi River and went to the top of the St. Louis Arch! I also went bowling and to the St. Louis Aquarium with other developing professionals from around the country. There were so many new things that I got to experience. I am so grateful for this opportunity!



Get Involved with ASCLS-ND



ASCLS-ND has open positions and is looking for willing volunteers to step up! We have an 2 open chair positions and are looking for volunteers to help plan the 2027 ND State meeting.

Political Action Committee Chair

- Help fundraise and gain financial support for the education of our members of congress
- Contact Shannon (shannon.jongeward@und.edu) for more information or questions!

Professional Acknowledgment for Continuing Education Chair

- Help aid in the administrative side of continuing education credit opportunities for North Dakota MLS professionals.
- Contact Shannon (shannon.jongeward@und.edu) for more information or questions!

ASCLS-ND State Meeting Planning Volunteers

- Help plan and organize vendors and speakers for the 2027 state meeting in Minot
- Help plan other small details for the meeting
- Can be done virtually and you don’t need to live in Minot
- Contact Sharon (sreistad@srt.com) for more information or questions!

UPCOMING *Events*

ASCLS- ND State Meeting

- April 26th - 27th, 2027
- Minot, ND
- More info coming soon to asclsnd.org



ASCLS Region V Meeting

- Fall, 2027
- Wisconsin
- More info about city and dates to come at ascls.org



Joint Annual Meeting (JAM)

- June 13th - 17th, 2027
- Buffalo, New York
- More info at https://ascls.org/annual-meeting/



More From ASCLS-ND

Website	Social Media	Contact
asclsnd.org	facebook.com/ASCLSND	asclsnd@gmail.com

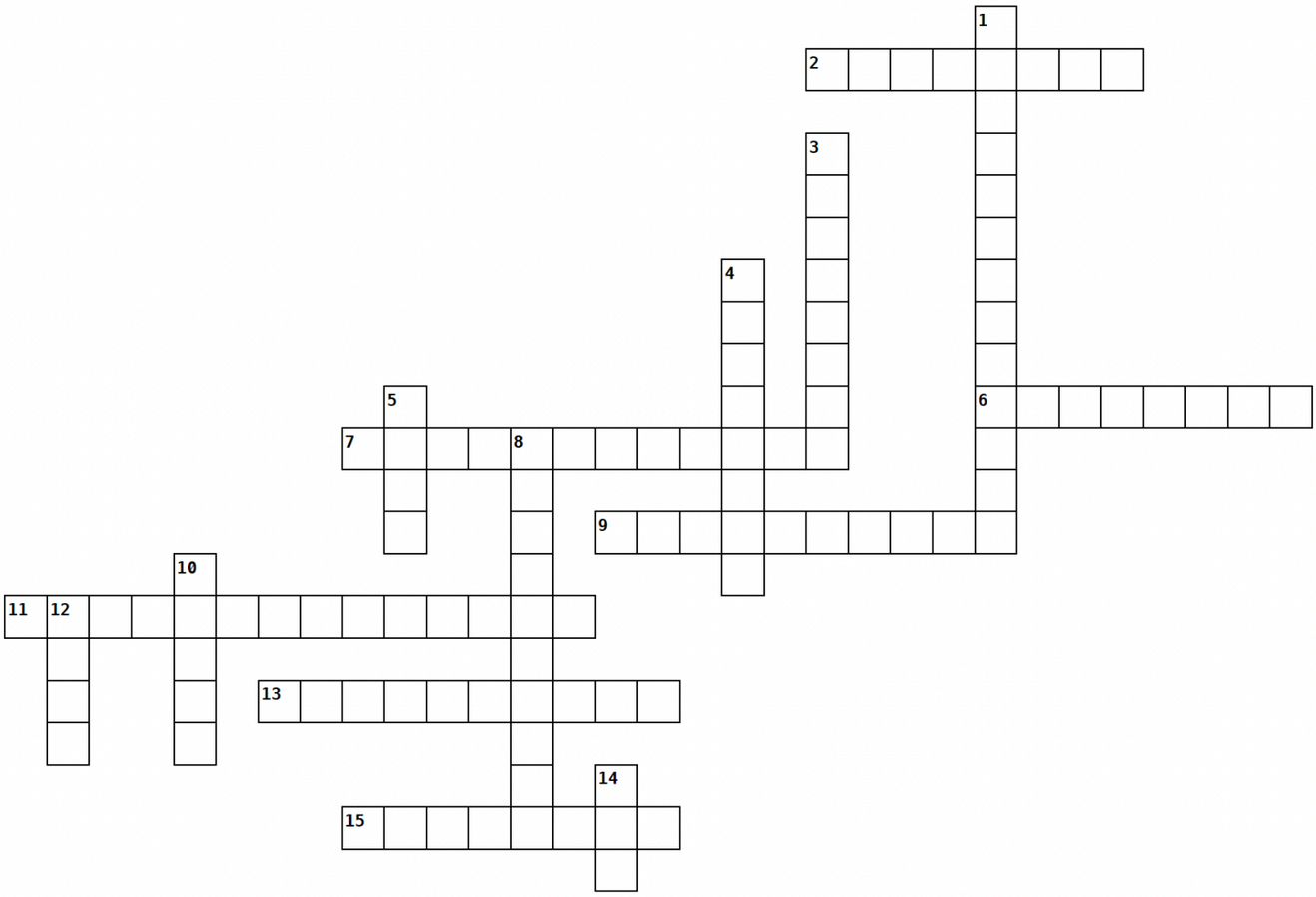
The Waiting Game

A quick game to play while your samples incubate!



IN THE MICRIOBOLOGY LAB

(Answer key can be found on the next page)



Across

2. The stain used to see capsules of yeast & bacteria (2 words; 5,3)

6. Enzyme that converts hydrogen peroxide to water and oxygen (8)

7. Common pinworm identified using the cellotape/Scotch tape prep test (12)

9. A method of disk diffusion antimicrobial susceptibility testing (2 words; 5,5)

11. Gram-positive cocci in grape-like clusters (14)

13. Streptococcus species always susceptible to Optochin (10)

15. Obligate intracellular bacterium that causes Q fever (8)

Down

1. A stool pathogen with gram-negative seagull wing shape (13)

3. Rapidly growing and "lid lifting" mucorales (8)

4. Bacteria that can replicate without oxygen (8)

5. Gene conferring resistance to methicillin in Staphylococcus aureus (4)

8. Haemophilus species requiring both X (hemin) and V (NAD) factors (10)

10. Toxin produced by Shigella dysenteriae (5)

12. Vector for Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (4)

14. Lowest concentration of an antimicrobial that inhibits visible growth (3)

The Waiting Game

Answer Key!



