

# Recruitment and Retention through ASCP BOC Professional Credentials

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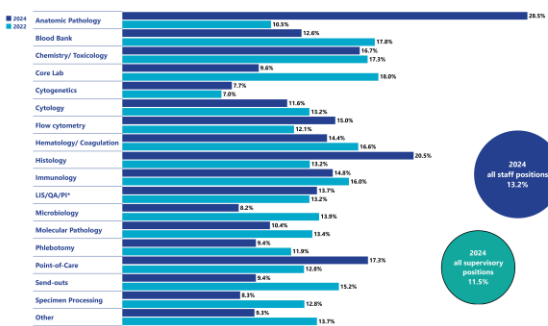
## Objective/Hypothesis

Student recruitment into medical laboratory education programs remains a pressing challenge for the profession. This study examines recruitment and retention strategies and demonstrates that pairing early outreach with clear education about the long-term value of professional credentials, particularly American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification (ASCP BOC) credentials, can strengthen student enrollment, persistence, and sustainable workforce development aligned with future patient care needs.

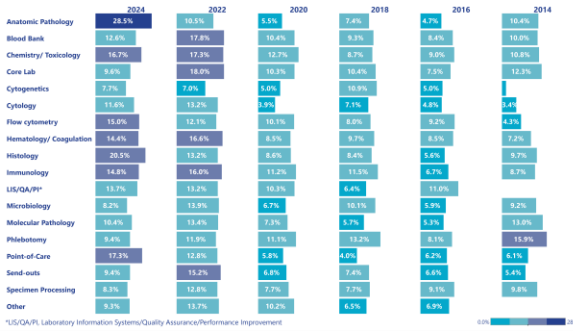
## Description of Methods

Research was conducted via a mixed-source approach that synthesized national workforce and education data with program-level examples and credentialing research. Methods included analysis of secondary data from the ASCP Vacancy Survey, National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences' (NAACLS) capacity and applicant data, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) workforce projections, and ASCP/ASCP BOC Wage and Value of Certification studies. These data are contextualized with illustrative recruitment and retention practices from university-based, hospital-based, and community-college medical laboratory education programs. Comparative examination of outreach models, retention supports, and credential-linked career outcomes is used to identify patterns and promising strategies for strengthening student recruitment, persistence, and long-term workforce sustainability.

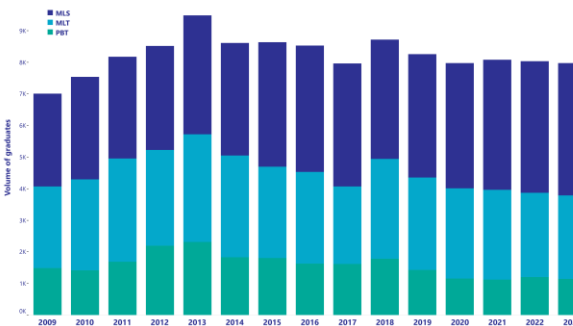
**Figure A: Vacancy Rates by Department (2022 & 2024)**



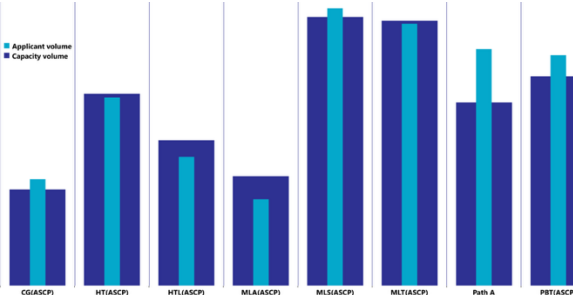
**Figure B: Overall Vacancy Rates by Department (2014 – 2024)**



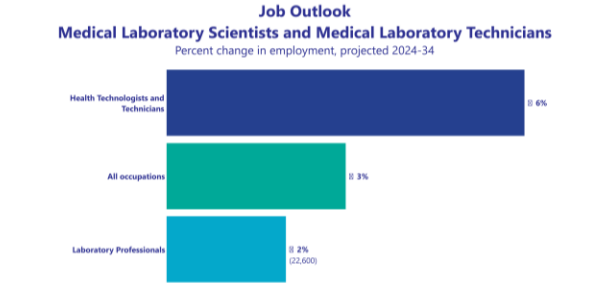
**Figure C: Program Graduates by Year**



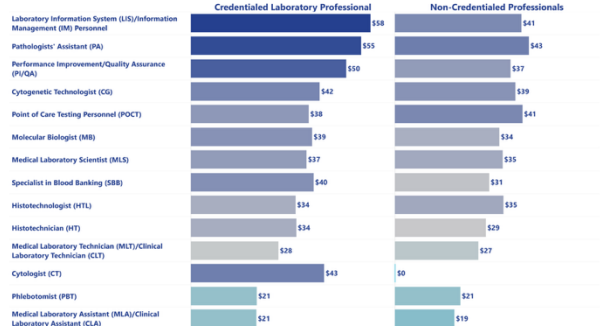
**Figure D: Applicant Volume vs. Capacity Volume**



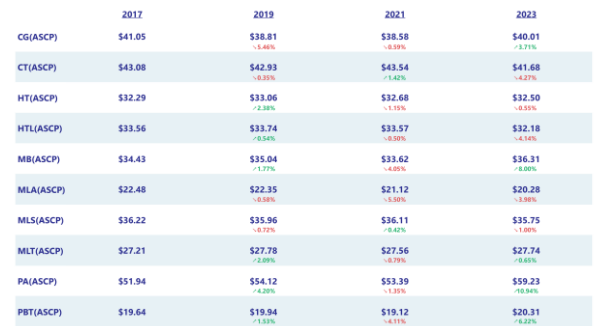
**Figure E: Projected Workforce Demand Growth (BLS, 2024–2034)**



**Figure F: Credentialed vs Non-credentialed Hourly Wages**



**Figure G: Percent Change Overall Hourly Wages**



## Results/Discussion

In the 2024 ASCP Vacancy Survey, the overall average vacancy rates are 13.2% for staff positions and 11.5% for supervisory positions (Figure A & B), with many educational programs reporting unfilled student slots. NAACLS data shows that applicant demand exceeds program capacity in some pathways. However, other programs face lower applicant numbers than capacity (Figure C & D). At the same time, the BLS projects a 2% increase in demand for medical laboratory professionals from 2024–2031, illustrating that about 22,600 openings for medical laboratory technologists and technicians are projected each year, on average, over the decade (Figure E). Most of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace professionals who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire. Despite this need, many students lack early exposure to laboratory careers, making intentional outreach essential.

University-based strategies include early workforce development touchpoints, such as freshman major declaration programs, laboratory tours, and alumni career ambassadors; along with structured retention supports like peer mentoring and faculty check-ins. Stony Brook University, for example, reports improved student persistence after pairing recruitment with mentorship initiatives. Hospital-based programs emphasize visibility through online presence, information sessions, occupational route infographics, and tuition scholarships tied to service agreements. Community-college models expand access by embedding phlebotomy or medical laboratory assistant entry points, offering 1+1 articulation agreements, and building early exposure through STEM events and apprenticeships (ASCP BOC Program Directors Advisory Committee (PDAC) Live Events: Student recruitment and strategies [video]. September 24, 2025).

Retention is strengthened when students see a clear connection between education and long-term career trajectories. ASCP BOC studies show that a majority of credentialed individuals believe their credential enhanced their career opportunities, and many employers prefer or require ASCP BOC credentials for hiring. The 2023 ASCP and ASCP BOC Wage Surveys show credential professionals earn more than non-credentialed peers (Figure F). Despite inflation limiting real wage growth, staff-level roles such as pathologists' assistants (+10.9%), molecular biology credential holders (+8.0%), and phlebotomists (+6.3%) saw notable gains (Figure G). Wages also rose consistently with experience, underscoring the long-term value of credentials.

## Conclusion

Taken as a whole, recruitment into laboratory programs is most effective when paired with education about the lifelong value of professional credentials. By linking outreach, engaging discovery experiences, and credential-driven career trajectories, educators can not only attract more students but also build a sustainable workforce pathway aligned with patient care and health system needs.



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