

Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on Accredited Programs and its Graduates

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ABSTRACT

The purpose for this American Society for Clinical Pathology–Board of Certification study was to characterize the impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic on United States laboratory sciences education programs and graduates using survey responses from associated program directors. Social distancing restrictions and lack of resources in medical facilities during the pandemic resulted in rapid changes in teaching modalities and clinical training for health professions education programs. To assess these effects, a survey was sent to all program directors from the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science, Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools, and Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs accredited programs whose graduates are certified by the Board of Certification. The survey was distributed as electronic invitations via Key Survey, an online survey tool, on June 06, 2022. A reminder was sent on July 6, 2022, and the surveys were closed on October 11, 2022. A total of 201 program directors responded. This study revealed that the pandemic forced approximately 97% of university programs to reformat classes to virtual learning compared with 58% of hospital programs. The majority of university (59.8%) and hospital (54.1%) program directors reported a negative effect of the pandemic on Board of Certification examination pass rates and scores. The pandemic had less of an effect on clinical rotations of hospital programs versus university programs; however, both reported delayed, cancelled, and shortened clinical rotations. The results indicated that the effects from the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic were related to the inherent differences between hospital and university programs. This study suggests that reduced clinical and non-clinical laboratory experiences during the pandemic resulted in poorer psychomotor and affective domain skills of students, especially of university programs.

INTRODUCTION

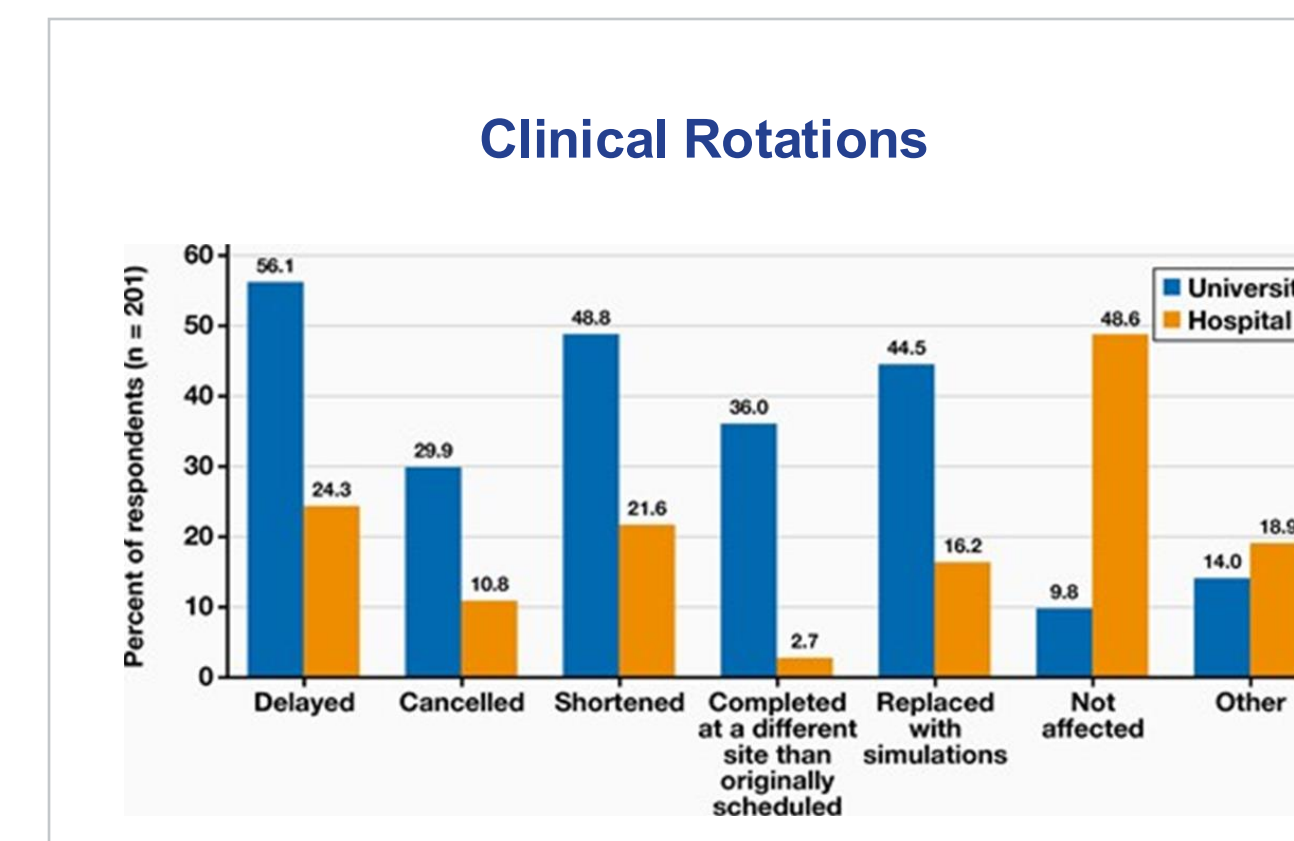
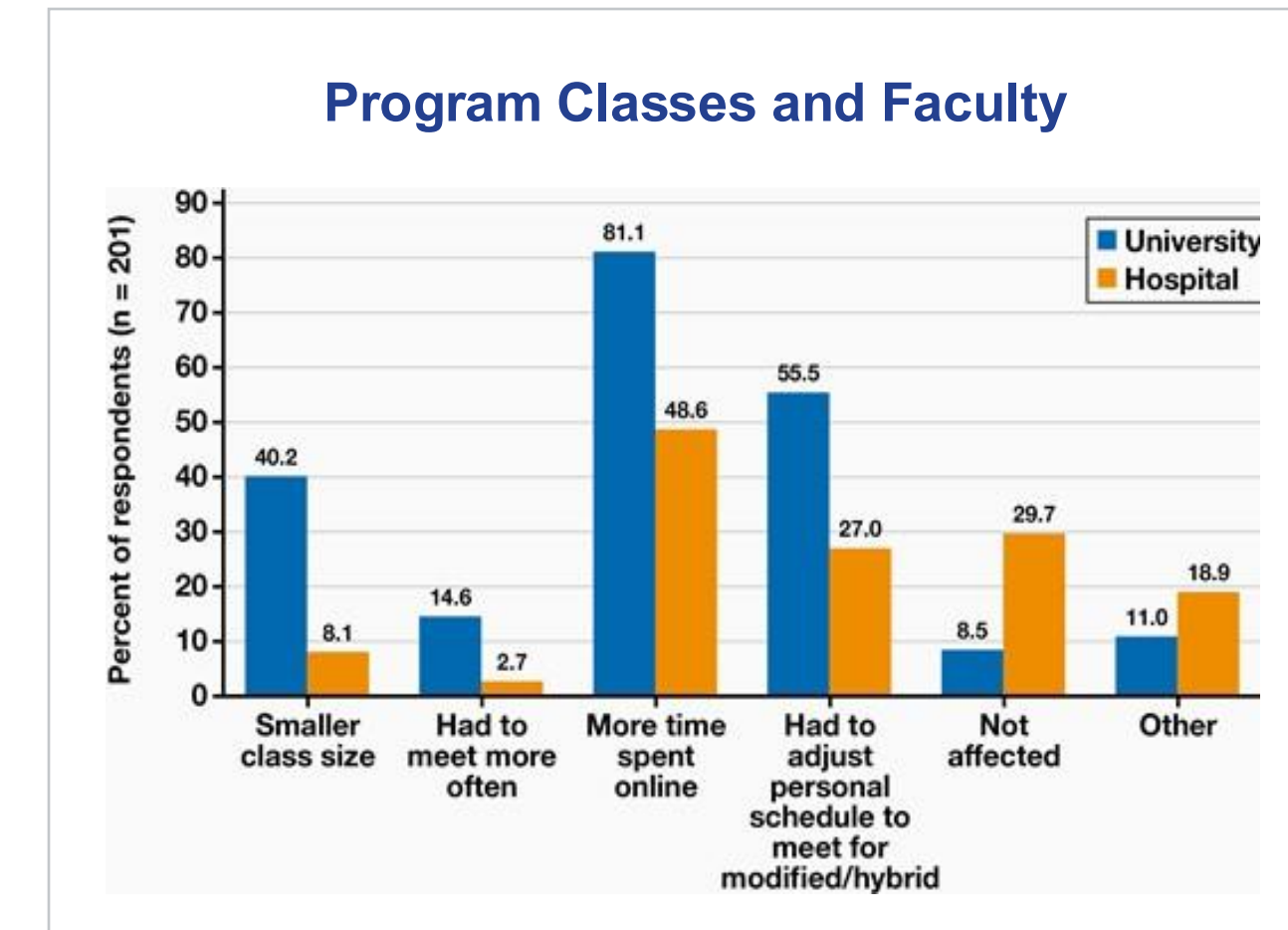
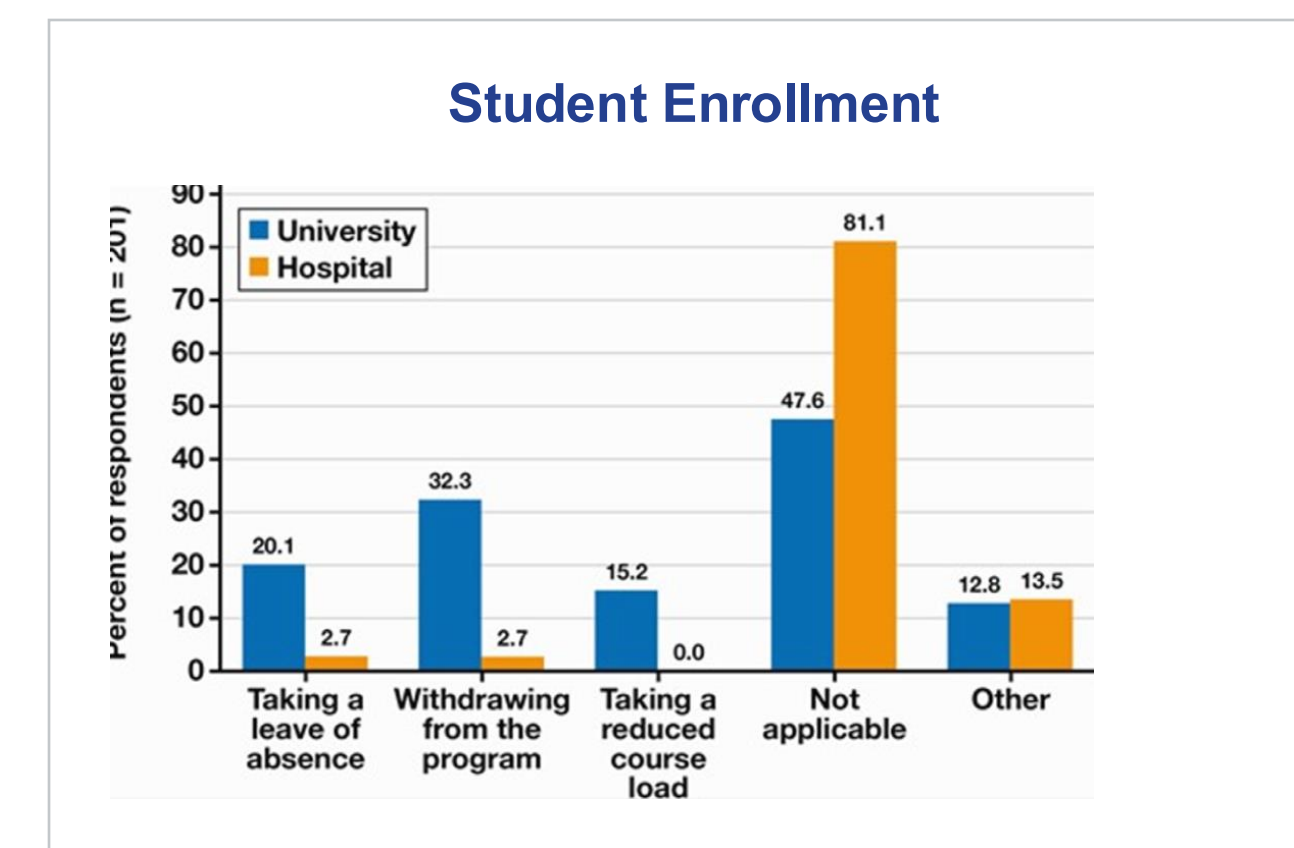
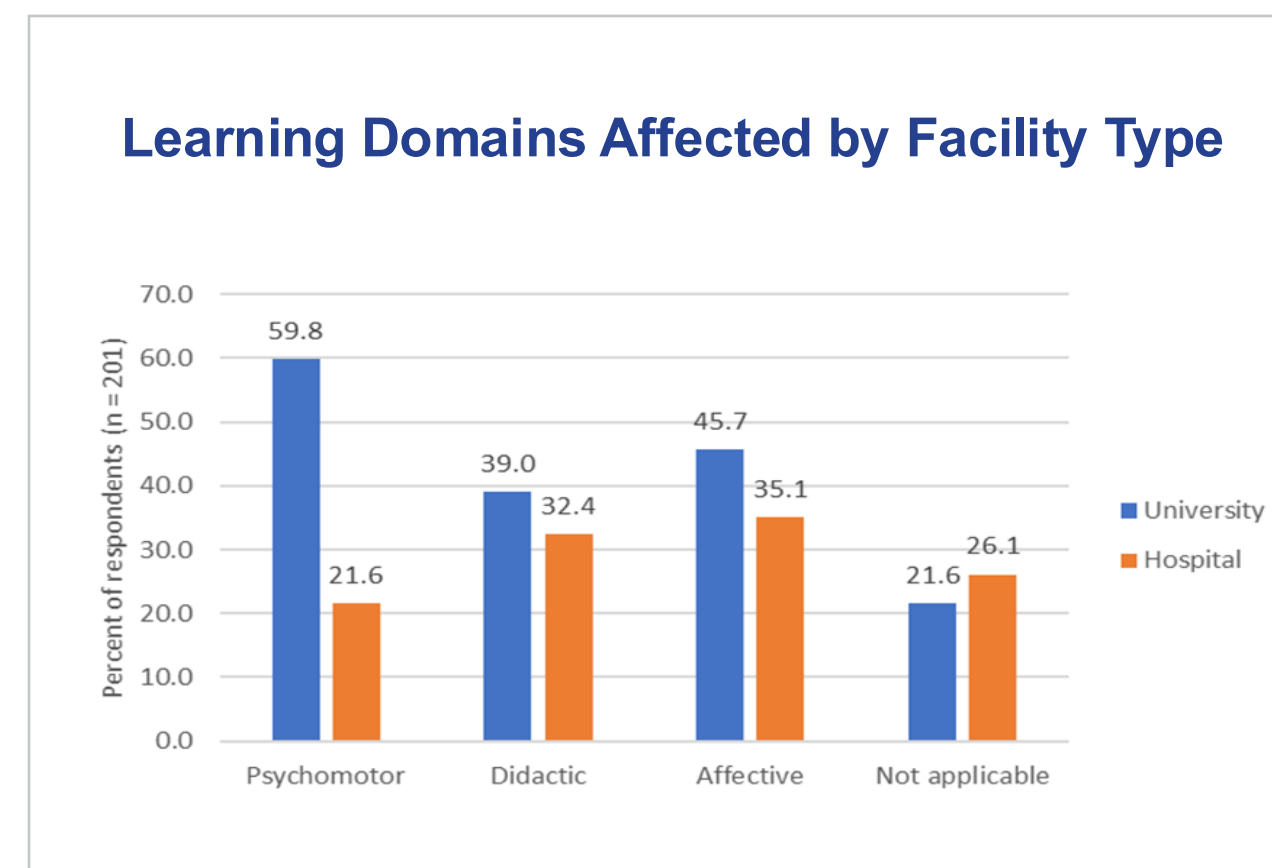
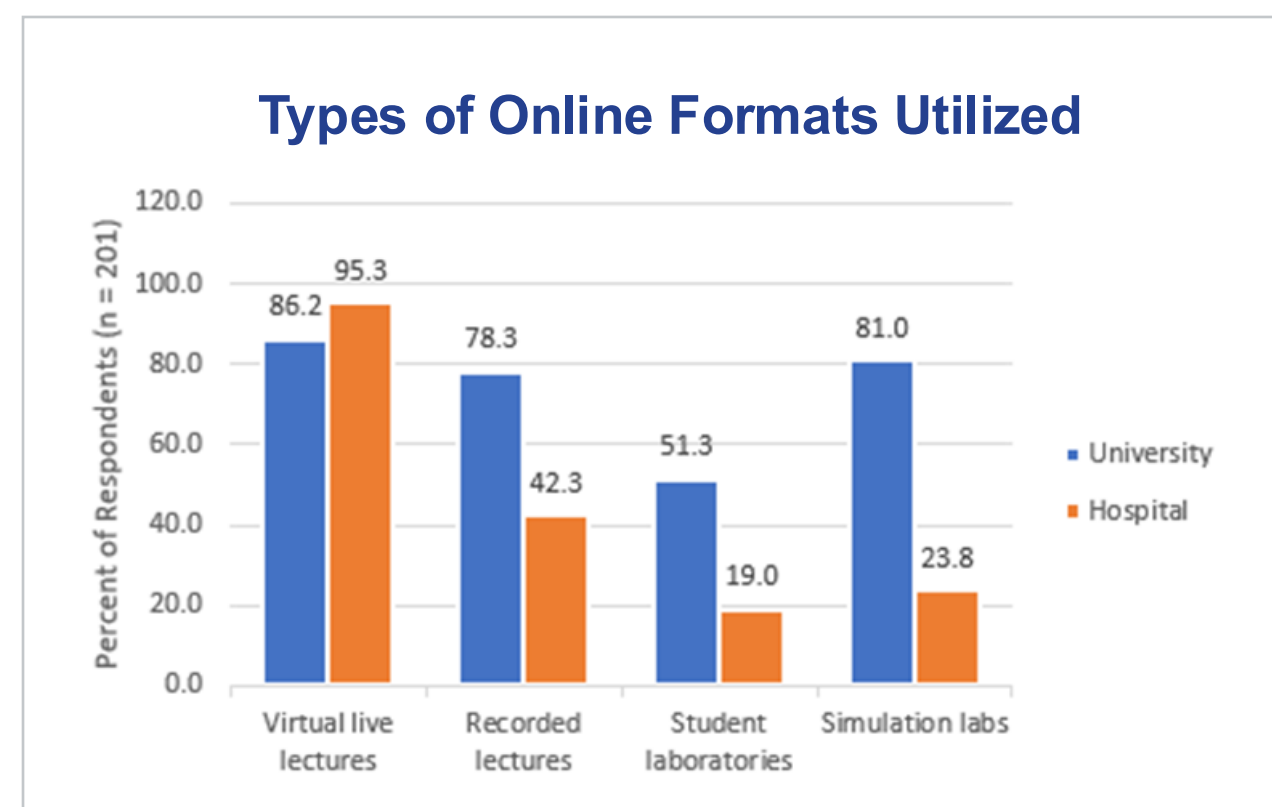
- Beginning March 2020, US hospitals witnessed massive increase in number of patients needing diagnostic laboratory testing due to Coronavirus Disease pandemic.
- Pandemic resulted in exhaustion of personnel, equipment, financial resources at medical facilities.
- Health professions education programs were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - at clinical levels: medical facilities used as training sites.
 - at didactic levels: social distancing restrictions.
- Purpose of study: to determine the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the graduates who sat for the ASCP BOC certification in their respective professional disciplines from the perspective of Program Directors.

METHODS

- Survey sent to program directors of accredited programs
 - NAACLS, Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools, and Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
 - graduates certified by BOC
- Electronic invitations via Key Survey, an online survey tool, on June 06, 2022
- Reminder sent on July 6, 2022; survey closed on October 11, 2022
- Quantitative and qualitative data collected
- Assessed 3 major areas of impact:
 - Education program
 - Graduates
 - Faculty

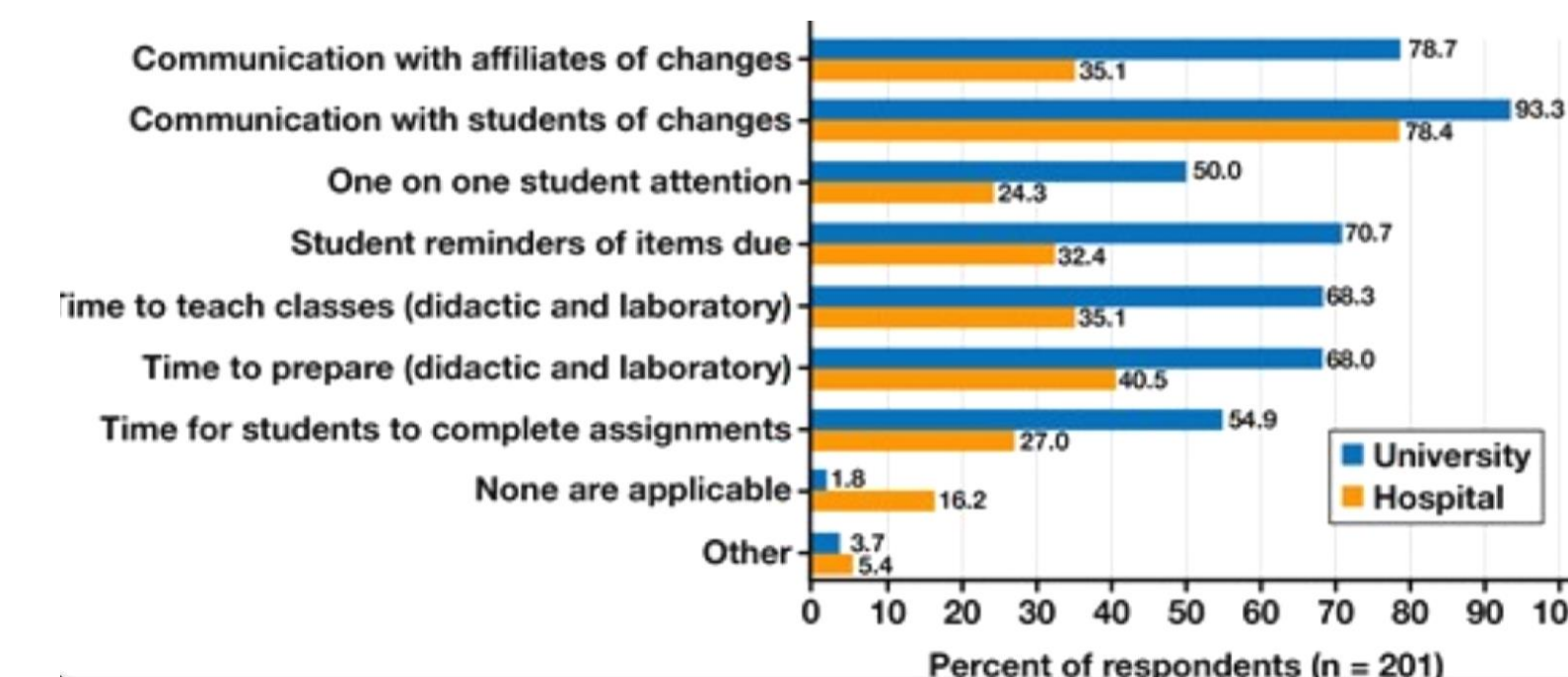
EFFECT ON PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND STUDENTS

Laboratory Medicine, Volume 54, Issue 6, November 2023, Pages e207–e214



EFFECT ON FACULTY: INCREASED TIME

Laboratory Medicine, Volume 54, Issue 6, November 2023, Pages e207–e214



RESULTS

Demographics

- Total of 201 program directors responded to survey.
- 8 distinct accredited programs
- 42 states represented
- 164 (82%): University programs
 - MLS (41%)
 - MLT (46%)
 - Other (13%)
- 35 (18%): Hospital programs
 - MLS (88.5%)
 - Phlebotomy (11.5%)

Online Format

- 92.7% University
- 56.8% Hospital
- 65.4% Other

Effect on BOC

BOC Pass Rates (Negative effect)

- 60% University programs
- 54% Hospital programs

BOC Scores (Negative effect)

- 60% University programs
- 51% Hospital programs

CONCLUSIONS

- University programs suffered more negative effects from pandemic than hospital programs due to inherent differences between them.
- Majority of program directors reported a negative effect of the pandemic on BOC examination pass rates and scores.
- Reduced clinical and non-clinical laboratory experiences resulted in poorer psychomotor and affective domain skills of students, especially of university programs.
- Budget cuts to programs have ensued due to decrease in student enrollment and retention.

MISSION: Provide excellence in certification of laboratory professionals on behalf of patients worldwide.
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