



## Allied Health Sciences

Position Paper of the Medical Laboratory Science Program at Austin Peay State University

Addressing Workforce Issues, Equity, and Inclusion for Laboratory Professionals in Tennessee

The Medical Laboratory Science program at Austin Peay State University supports the findings of professional organizations such as the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science and the American Society for Clinical Pathology related to workforce shortages, national certification, and state licensure. The Medical Laboratory Science program recognizes the Institute of Medicine's view that "Collaboration between physicians, nurses, patients and laboratory medicine professionals can help reduce the current trend in diagnostic errors and potentially prevent unnecessary deaths". Credentialed medical laboratory professionals are an important part of the health care team. Our professionals are experts in test selection, interpretation, and preventing or reducing diagnostic errors. Since most patients are not able to choose who or where their lab tests are done it is vital that high quality standards are maintained. This includes a high quality education from a program accredited by The National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS), national certification as proof of competency to practice, and state licensure to support the requirements for national certification.

The Medical Laboratory Science Program at Austin Peay State University supports our students by providing student training to aspiring professionals. As a recognized institution of higher education, the program is committed to providing the highest quality education possible through cognitive, psychomotor, and affective training of laboratory professionals. The educational program provides opportunities to learning the knowledge required to practice, the experience to perform testing, and professional attitudes consistent with quality patient care from a laboratory perspective. The Medical Laboratory Science program fosters clinical partnerships in the community to provide the required real-world laboratory experience for aspiring professionals. Quality education is the best way to address workforce shortages, equity between professionals, and inclusion of a diverse group of laboratory professionals. The field of medical laboratory science and the medical laboratory science program at Austin Peay State University have a strong history of supporting diverse groups of first generation college students and other underrepresented groups. The medical laboratory science program is committed to being inclusive as well as supporting a diverse student body and program.

The Medical Laboratory Science Program at Austin Peay State University supports our alumni through support of national certification standards, state licensure for medical laboratory professionals, and wage equity for its graduates. Medical Laboratory Scientists are a significant part of the healthcare team. Laboratory testing and its results provide data support of more than 70% of the clinical decisions made during patient care. Professionals in the field of medical laboratory science are highly skilled professionals that impact patient care in Tennessee and across the world.



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Many medical laboratory scientists are first generation college graduates or representatives of diverse classes. Laboratory professionals are vital members of the healthcare team. The medical laboratory science program supports wage improvement and wage equity similar to other professionals in healthcare related fields such as nursing, radiographers, and respiratory therapists as part of the solution to workforce shortages. Medical laboratory professionals are just as important high quality healthcare to all citizens. Besides improving equity, retention of current laboratory professionals will cost less than hiring and retraining new staff. Staff turnover has many hidden costs associated with new hires (which often requires higher wages) and a lack of institutional memory. By assisting professionals in achieving wage equity, there are many benefits including less turnover, higher job satisfaction, and a feeling of respect for their work contributions. Most citizens are not able to choose who performs their laboratory testing so it is important that qualifications are rigorous in support of the highest standard of medical laboratory testing quality. Additionally, wages must be competitive to encourage future students to seek medical laboratory science careers.

The Medical Laboratory Science Program at Austin Peay State University encourages the development of a strategic workforce development committee with community and clinical partners to address workforce shortages, improve testing quality, and in promoting a career in Medical Laboratory Science. It is widely known that large numbers of laboratory professionals are nearing retirement and that the need for laboratory services are increasing. Establishing a workforce development committee would help improve patient access to healthcare, improve rural healthcare, and support educational programs in Tennessee through excellent high paying jobs in Tennessee. The development of a strategic workforce development committee would help leverage resources to improve the number and quality of medical laboratory science graduates.

In summary the Medical Laboratory Science program supports a rigorous accredited education with national certification to establish competency, and licensure to support the enforcement of competency. The Medical Laboratory Science program supports diversity and equity of its professionals in the workforce, and leveraging resources to bridge the laboratory professional shortage in Tennessee and across the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Perry M. Scanlan'.

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