

Achieving Certification as a
Clinical Lab Scientist at the Age of 16:

ONE ZOOMER'S JOURNEY

Along With Insights on Educating Gen Z
about Careers in
Laboratory Medicine

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Biggest Influences

These factors most shaped my journey:

My siblings

I am the oldest of 9 children and many of my siblings have medical and special needs. Witnessing their perseverance through adversity motivates me daily.



My parents

My parents are my greatest inspiration. They encourage me to do my best not for the sake of my own achievement, but to build my capacity to positively impact my community.



Freedom to Learn

The microschool my mother founded is very nontraditional. I didn't get grades, or have tests, so learning was always joyful. Many of my classmates have also graduated at young ages.





My Story

- Early struggles in school
- Mother began homeschooling me
- This led to her founding a microschool in my community
- At the school, I was empowered with a love of learning
- At 12 years old, I had finished the entire high school math curriculum, so my teachers reached out to Bossier Parish Community College
- I graduated with my AS in General Science at the age of 14. I chose to graduate from high school at this time to be eligible for scholarships to pursue my BS.
- I graduated from LSUHSC with my BS in Medical Lab Science at the age of 16.



My Clinical Lab Science Program

LSU
Health
SHREVEPORT
— School of —
**Allied Health
Professions**



Admission

I called to inquire about the program. The program director, Dr. Stephanie Blackburn, later told me she had no idea I was only 14!



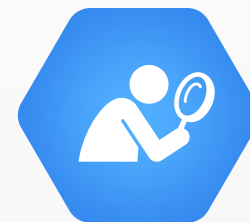
Studying

The program was challenging. I learned quickly that my GPA would no longer be perfect, and I had to adjust my expectations and adapt to a new way of studying.



Clinicals

Some of the clinical sites would not allow me to participate due to my age. I am incredibly grateful to LSU Ochsner for saying “Yes.”



Passing Boards

Taking the ASCP boards was the most nervous I had ever been. Fortunately, I found out immediately after the test I passed! I was on cloud 9!



My Present

- After initial challenges in obtaining a job due to my young age, I am now working as a clinical lab scientist (generalist) for Christus Health in my hometown of Coushatta, LA.
- My favorite part of the lab is hematology.
- am pursuing my Master's in Public Health from LSUHSC. I attend evening classes three nights a week.
- If I followed a traditional path, I would be graduating from high school next May, but I will have my MPH by that time.
- I am considering one day pursuing my MD/PhD. I am especially interested in genetics.

3 Perspective Shifts Among Zoomers



1

Changing Sentiment Surrounding College

Many Gen Zers no longer believe in the absolute value of higher education.

2

Transparency Over Finances

Many Zoomers think about, communicate about, and plan for future finances in a way that is not often expected for young people.

3

Increasing Value of Mental Health

Gen Z values mental health and work-life balance in a new way.

1 Changing Sentiments About College



- There is a growing movement among Gen Z that college is no longer necessary for success.
- Entrepreneurship, including social media influencing, and especially vocational and trade careers, are becoming increasingly attractive options.
- Many large companies have publicly discontinued degree requirements.
- Educational innovators are offering short term career skill certification opportunities by big names like Google.

SCHOOL SUCKS AND ITS U
Eric Struk 20M views • 1 year ago
SCHOOL SUCKS AND ITS USELESS! 🤔
<https://www.instagram.com/ericstruk/>

1

Possible Opportunities



Emphasize career certification
Present Medical Laboratory programs more in line with vocational/ trade programs. Emphasize ‘immediate career’ and words such as ‘technical training’, ‘licensure’.



Pathways from high school
Create pathways for high school seniors with dual enrollment credits to enter medical laboratory training immediately after high school graduation.

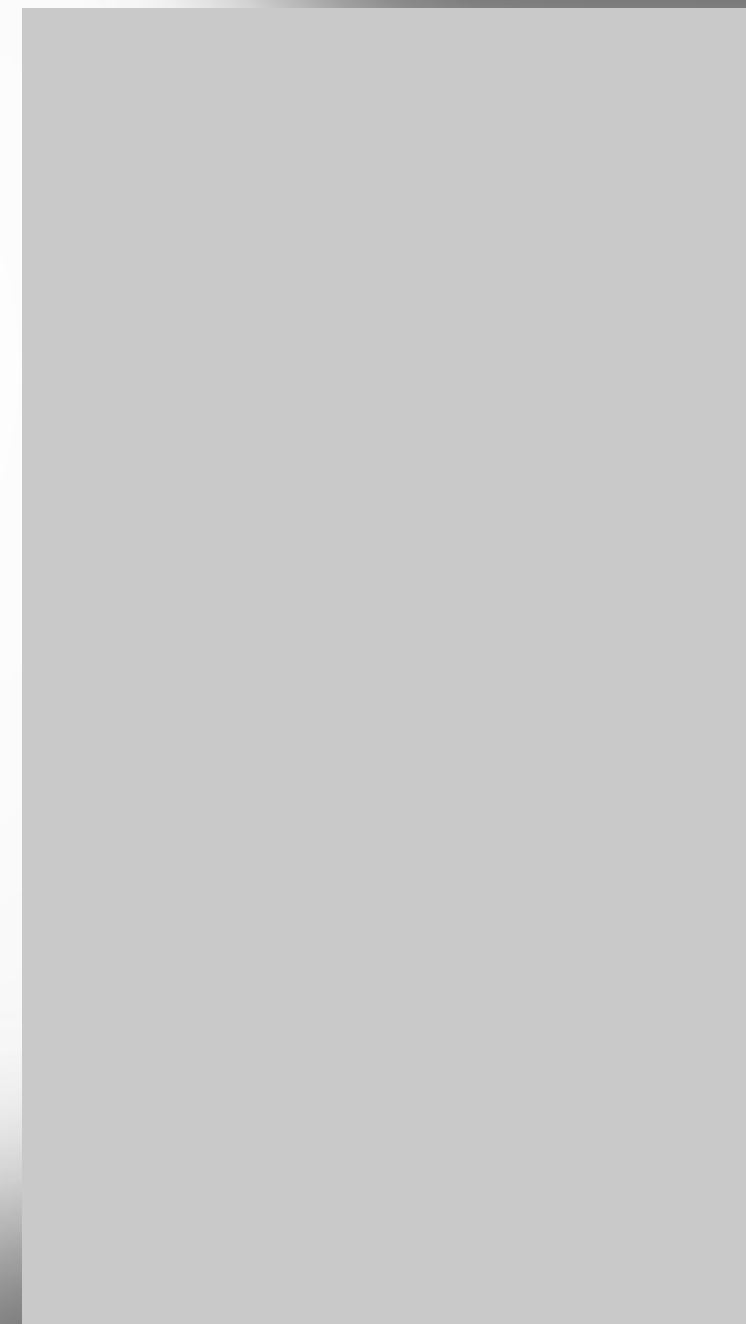


Pathways with community colleges
Create joint programs with community colleges.

2 Transparency Regarding Finances



- Zoomers are comfortable talking about salary, finances, and financial goals in a way many of our parents are not.
- Financial breakdowns including earnings/cost of living/personal budgets are readily shared online.
- Many Zoomers hold a belief that earning 100,000 annually is now necessary to be 'middle class'



2 Possible Opportunities



Establish a clear path to 100k
Nursing has nurse practitioner tracks, and CRNA paths. The PA track offers a 100k path. To recruit more lab scientists, young people need to see a path to 100k.



Talk \$ details in your marketing
Consider sharing testimonies from students about the costs of their education vs. their earning immediately after graduating.

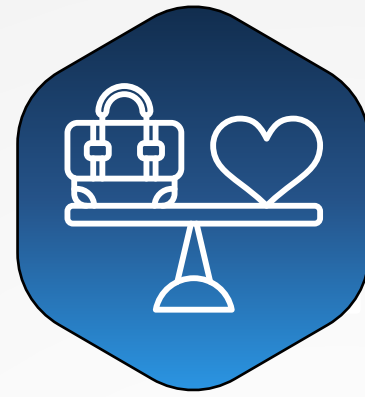


Job contracts and loan repayment options

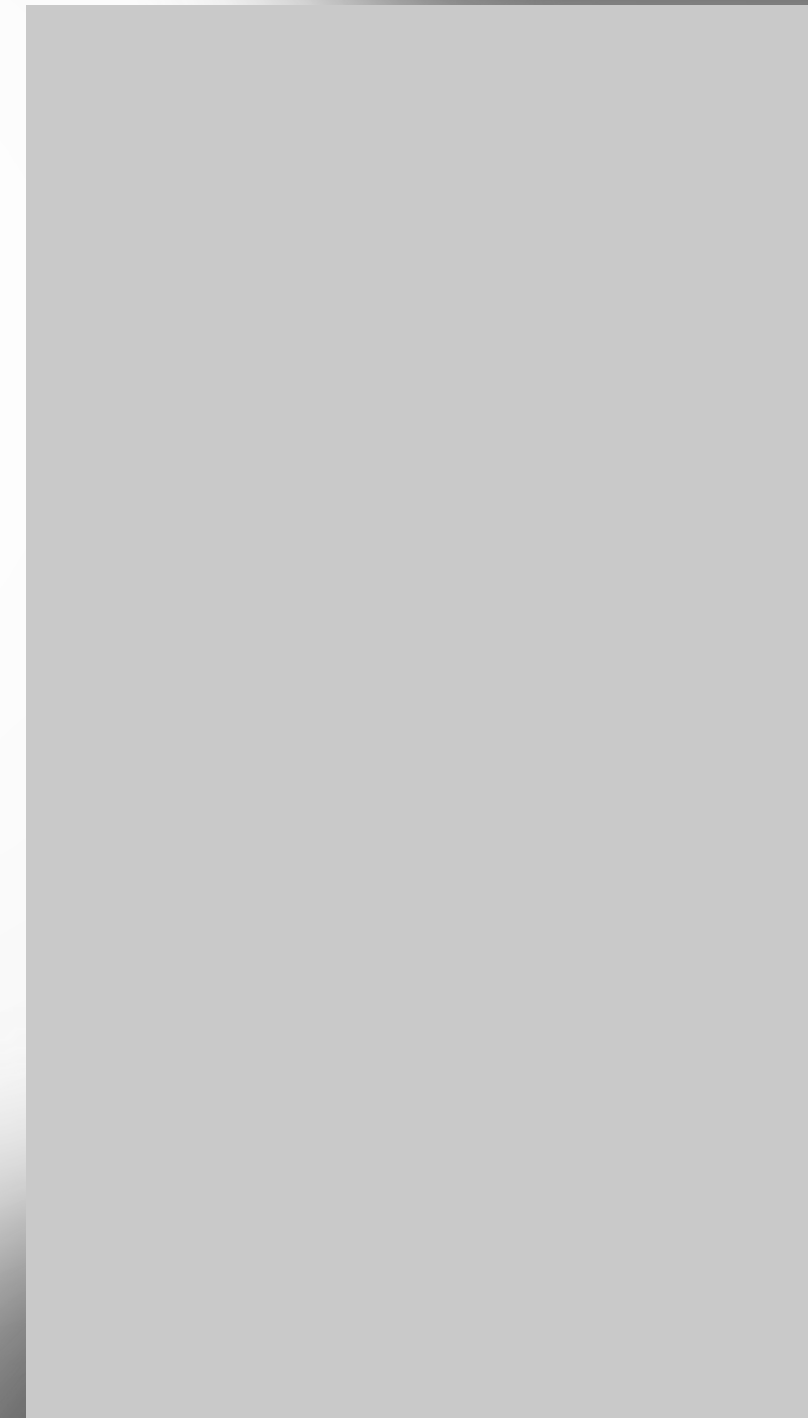
Begin job recruitment at the start of academic programs with loan repayment options.

3

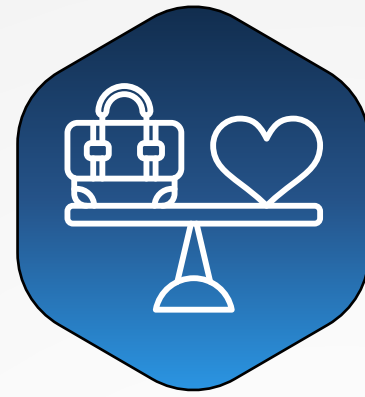
Increasing Value of Mental Health



- Most zoomers have increasing recognition of the importance of mental health and often consider the impact of work or school on their mental health.
- Tending to one's mental health is not considered shameful.
- Many Gen Zers are increasingly open about mental health struggles.
- Many zoomers consider their own mental health and the mental health of others to be a considerable priority.



3 Possible Opportunities



Promote the mental health benefit
Many talented young people are concerned about the impact a career in healthcare will have on their mental health. The CLS career offers incredible advantages in this arena:

- Minimal face to face interactions with patients
- Stable hours/ diverse opportunities for excellent work/ life balance.
- No need to evaluate patients and make high stakes treatment decisions.



Include marketing materials of lab scientists at work

Compared to other health care fields, patients don't interact with lab professions. Remove the mystery and decrease anxiety.

The Main Reasons I Choose Lab Science

01

Career

I knew when I earned my Bachelor Degree, I would also be able to become licensed and have an immediate career. This appealed to me more than a general biology degree that would require further graduate work.

02

Finances

My Pell grant and TOPS scholarship were enough to totally cover the cost of my program. I actually made money through earning my BS in MLS.

03

Program Duration

My CLS program was only 4 semesters, but included the summers. This meant I turned my AS into a BS within just 15 months.

04

Work Environment

Significant patient interaction really intimidated me because my personality is not extraverted. When I discovered the lab scientist role, I felt it was a great fit for me.