



**The American Society of  
Crime Laboratory Directors**

**"Excellence Through Leadership in Forensic Science Management"**

# 2014 ASCLD Membership Survey Results

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## Executive Summary

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Each year when new member applications to ASCLD are assessed for membership, a series of revolving questions appear. The questions arise due to the wide breadth of variation among forensic laboratory and management structure. The job of deciphering this falls to the Board of Directors, which must wrestle with circular logic and elusive definitions in order to try to be fair, prudent and supportive of the organization's by-laws. This annual practice prompted a reasonable assertion that membership categories needed to be better defined. At the 2013 symposium, this discussion with the membership at large was attempted. Anyone in attendance that day knows this was not a productive exercise. What was attempted was a discussion of what the Board thought would be a good fix. The Board needed to hear opinions of this proposed structure. Due to time constraints in that meeting, the discussion was tabled. In late 2013 a survey was released in order to gain the insight of the membership. This summary of the survey results will hopefully allow the discussion to continue while also accurately capturing the membership's thoughts. **Note:** The complete survey questionnaire is included later in this document for reference.

## Methodology

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The survey questions were developed by the Membership committee using the questions that normally arise when trying to interpret potential membership applications. A preliminary draft of the survey was then sent to the entire Board who were asked to respond to the questions and make suggestions for possible changes, additions, or deletions.

The final survey form was sent to the entire membership using a free online survey website. Members were asked to complete the entire survey. **Note:** The results reported can only be considered the opinions of the survey participants. They cannot be generalized to represent the entire client population as a whole.

# Participation

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Survey respondents were tracked by participation. Of the 295 that viewed the survey, 246 started it and of these 215 completed the survey. Of the ones that completed the survey, the average time to completion was 12 minutes.



Of those answering the survey, over 95% were from members representing labs in the United States.

## Survey Results

### How inclusive should ASCLD be with regards to membership?

| Response   | Count      | Percent       |
|--|------------|---------------|
| Only crime lab directors can be members (e.g., only one member from each lab, the topmost person on the lab's organization chart)                          | 23         | 10.5%         |
| Only a single delegate from each lab can be a member (only one member from each lab)   | 11         | 5.02%         |
| Only the crime lab director or anyone in upper management (above first-line supervisor)  | 47         | 21.46%        |
| Anyone in a supervisory role can be a member (e.g., anyone with direct reports)  | 13         | 5.94%         |
| <b>Anyone in a leadership role can be a member (e.g., directors, managers, supervisors, quality managers, technical leaders, program managers, etc...)</b> | <b>67</b>  | <b>30.59%</b> |
| Anyone affiliated with forensic science can be a member (e.g., anyone who might also be a member of AAFS)  | 2          | 0.91%         |
| <b>Hybrid Choice – Full Members must fit criteria 1, 2, or 3 and Professional Affiliate Members must fit criteria 4, 5, or 6.</b>                          | <b>56</b>  | <b>25.57%</b> |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>219</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

### In a laboratory system with multiple labs in the organization, should membership be limited to only the director of the entire system, or should it also include directors of each lab within the system?

| Response  | Count     | Percent       |
|---|-----------|---------------|
| Only the laboratory system director can be a member                                       | 6         | 23.08%        |
| <b>The director from each of the laboratories that make up the system can be a member</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>76.92%</b> |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>26</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

### In a laboratory system with multiple labs in the organizations, should there only be one delegate from the entire system, or one delegate from each lab within the system?

| Response  | Count     | Percent       |
|---|-----------|---------------|
| One delegate from the entire lab system             | 2         | 16.67%        |
| <b>One delegate from each lab within the system</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>83.33%</b> |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

## How should we define a "Crime Laboratory?"

| Response   | Count      | Percent       |
|--|------------|---------------|
| <b>In terms of the PARENT ORGANIZATION (e.g., crime laboratories must report to a sworn law enforcement agency, prosecuting attorney's office, federal investigative agency, or exist as an independent governmental agency).</b>  | <b>53</b>  | <b>24.20%</b> |
| <b>In terms of the CUSTOMER (e.g., over 75% of casework must be to support criminal investigations). This definition might include private labs that support such functions.</b>   | <b>54</b>  | <b>24.66%</b> |
| In terms of the FUNCTIONS the organization performs (e.g., the case work must consist of analysis in traditionally recognized forensic science disciplines). For example, this type of definition would include a drug screening toxicology lab that mostly supports private companies and results in personnel rather than judicial actions. It might also include accounting and e-discovery firms that conduct computer forensics mostly for civil litigation issues. | 13         | 5.94%         |
| In terms of the ACCREDITING BODY (e.g., ASCLD/LAB, FQS, A2LA, etc... and , eligibility for ISO 17025 accreditation). For example, this definition would include any lab that is accredited (or pursuing accreditation) by recognized forensic accrediting body   | 27         | 12.33%        |
| <b>Some COMBINATION of two of the above (e.g., must fall under Definition 1 or 3)</b>  | <b>45</b>  | <b>20.55%</b> |
| In broad terms that would encompass ALL OF THE ABOVE examples.   | 27         | 12.33%        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>219</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

The current bylaws state the following regarding Emeritus Membership: "a. The Board of Directors may confer Emeritus and Honorary Memberships on those deemed eligible for such status. A nomination letter describing the nominee's contributions plus two letters of recommendation from current ASCLD members in good standing are required. b. Emeritus Membership may be conferred upon previous members who no longer meet the criteria for regular membership and have rendered distinguished service to the Corporation." **What should our criteria be for awarding Emeritus Membership?**

| Response   | Count      | Percent       |
|--|------------|---------------|
| <b>Current bylaws (Granted by the Board of Directors, for those no longer meeting requirement for regular membership and who have rendered distinguished service to ASCLD)</b> | <b>128</b> | <b>58.15%</b> |
| Limited to one per year  | 5          | 2.27%         |
| AAFS type model with minimum years of experience and distinguished service   | 73         | 33.18%        |
| 2/3 vote of the entire membership  | 14         | 6.36%         |
| No response  | 220        | 100%          |

**What should the membership status be for individuals who change jobs (often due to promotion) and no longer meet the requirements for regular membership?**

| Response  | Count      | Percent       |
|---|------------|---------------|
| They should be allowed to retain Regular Membership status  | 21         | 9.77%         |
| They should change to Retired Member Status   | 41         | 19.07%        |
| <b>We should have a new category (e.g., Professional Affiliate) that would allow promoted members and other interested parties to participate but not as Regular Members.</b> | <b>153</b> | <b>71.16%</b> |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>215</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

Our current bylaws consist of five different membership categories. **Which of the choices below best describes the system you would prefer?**

| Response   | Count      | Percent       |
|--|------------|---------------|
| Current – Regular, Retired, Academic, Emeritus, and Honorary   | 74         | 34.58%        |
| <b>Streamlined – Regular, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus</b> | <b>120</b> | <b>56.07%</b> |
| Other  | 20         | 9.35%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>214</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

Text Data for Other:

- Regular, Retired, Academic, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus, and Honorary
- Regular (or Full), Professional Affiliate, Retired, Emeritus
- Regular, Retired, Professional Affiliate, and Emeritus.
- Regular, Retired, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus
- Regular, Retired, Emeritus, Honorary
- Regular, Retired, Emeritus
- Current plus 'professional affiliate'
- Regular, Emeritus
- Retired persons should be allowed to retain regular membership if they so desire. I never understood why ASCLD wants to exclude someone just because they retire.
- Regular, Professional Affiliate, Academic, Retired, Emeritus/Emerita, Honorary
- Regular, Prof Affil, Retired. Anyone deemed eligible who is not regular or retired = P.A.
- Cannot answer this without knowing the definition of professional affiliate. For example, does this category cover academic?
- Regular, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus, Academic, Retired
- add professional affiliate
- Regular, Retired, Professional Affiliate and Emeritus
- Regular, Retired, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus
- THis is way to big of a question to limit to a survey like this. I am irritated by the survey.

- Regular, Retired, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus
- Regular, Retired, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus
- Regular, Retired, Professional Affiliate, Emeritus

**Please rate your support for adding a “Professional Affiliate” membership category which retains all rights to membership except voting, on a scale from 1 to 10. (1 being no support, 10 being full support).**

| Response     | Count      | Percent       |
|--------------|------------|---------------|
| 1            | 16         | 7.62%         |
| 2            | 12         | 5.71%         |
| 3            | 9          | 4.29%         |
| 4            | 6          | 2.86%         |
| 5            | 18         | 8.57%         |
| 6            | 9          | 4.29%         |
| 7            | 28         | 13.33%        |
| 8            | 39         | 18.57%        |
| 9            | 12         | 5.71%         |
| <b>10</b>    | <b>61</b>  | <b>29.05%</b> |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>210</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

In May 2013, the ASCLD Board of Directors voted to recommend dissolving the ASCLD/LAB ex-officio position from the Board to the ASCLD membership. The Board of Directors would like to first provide background information on this issue in the form of two contrary opinions and then solicit feedback from the membership. Below are two opinions representing each side of the discussion.

PRO: The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD) Board consists of twelve regular Directors and three non-voting ex-officio Directors. The Ex-officio directors consist of the Executive Director, Past President and a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB). At the May 2013 Board of Directors meeting, a decision was made to recommend to the membership that the ASCLD/LAB Ex-officio position be dissolved. This motion originated from conversations between the then ASCLD President and ASCLD/LAB Chair. Amicably, and out of mutual concern for the long term viability of both organizations, the two leaders presented compelling information and persuaded the ASCLD Board to vote unanimously to recommend the dissolution of the Ex-officio position. The following represents some background information and a summary of the Board discussion. • ASCLD is an organization created by crime laboratory directors to further the goals of leaders in the forensic science community. ASCLD/LAB was formed by ASCLD when they recognized a need for crime laboratory accreditation. During the initial stages

of development, there was an advantage for each organization to have a representation on each other's board. This helped ensure appropriate guidance with a free flow of information between the two entities. This arrangement was completely appropriate for the 1980's and 1990's. • Presently, there are two other available accrediting agencies besides ASCLD/LAB. These other accrediting agencies could perceive preferential treatment of ASCLD/LAB because of the board structures of ASCLD and ASCLD/LAB. • The ex-officio positions on the ASCLD and ASCLD/LAB Boards were established to foster communication. Because some agencies are not accredited by ASCLD/LAB and ASCLD/LAB has the policy to not discuss business issues in the presence of non-customer accredited agencies, little information was being communicated to the ASCLD Board. This calls into question the effectiveness of the ASCLD/LAB ex-officio position on the ASCLD Board. Dissolution of the ASCLD/LAB ex-officio position from the ASCLD Board will not affect the information communicated by ASCLD/LAB to the ASCLD Board, since little information is being presently communicated anyway. • A concern of the ASCLD Board is that one of the duties of the ASCLD President is to sit as an ex-officio on the ASCLD/LAB Board. It is an ASCLD/LAB bylaw requirement that the ASCLD Board Ex-officio position be held by a representative from an ASCLD/LAB accredited agency. If the ASCLD President were not from an ASCLD/LAB accredited laboratory, then he or she could not fulfill their duty and would need to appoint another ASCLD Board Member from an ASCLD/LAB accredited laboratory as their designee. The ASCLD Board understands the history and how ASCLD and ASCLD/LAB was developed but believes that the decision to dissolve the ex-officio position is prudent and wise and is an initial step towards addressing this issue. Both entities continue to evolve and the partnership between the two organizations will remain in the form of symposium planning and other activities.

CON: Five years ago in 2009, the National Research Council opined that forensic science was fragmented to its own detriment. Ironically, we now have before us a recommendation to terminate the relationship between ASCLD and ASCLD/LAB as we have come to know it. Among the more compelling arguments for this is the reality that we now have competing accreditation programs operating in the crime laboratory community. For this reason, apparently, ASCLD should grant to ASCLD/LAB only those privileges and access to information it would grant to any other vendor or business serving crime laboratories, and thus should not have an ex-officio seat on our board. In other words, ASCLD/LAB is a vendor, not a close, strategic partner. We should not think so highly of ourselves; we are not a big enough community to sustain competing accreditation programs, which will eventually do what all businesses do in the free marketplace – compete for the lowest price point, which is typically achieved by reducing labor and travel costs by shortening the duration of assessments. This does not help our laboratories. To put the size of our community in perspective – roughly speaking, there are as many police officers working in the state of Wisconsin as there are forensic laboratory scientists working in the entire United States. The community of crime laboratory directors, is even smaller. As most of us know, ASCLD created forensic science accreditation as we know it, and chose to “set free” the program to become its own nonprofit organization, which it is to this day. It is a monumental success story for which we ASCLD members should feel great pride, not embarrassment or guilt. For over 30 years, ASCLD-LAB became and conducted itself honorably, in keeping with the original vision, and has helped us revolutionize how we manage, direct, and control the work of our laboratories. Can it improve? Absolutely. Has it made some mistakes? Probably so. But the

myth we must confront is that ASCLD and ASCLD/LAB are distinct and separate. They are not. Certainly, they are from a legal, tax accounting, and commercial standpoint. But they are, in reality, the same community of crime laboratory administrators. WE ARE ONE, and the partnership between these two great organizations and long-time partners should proudly reflect this simple truth. The story of how there came to be competing accreditation programs among our laboratories is a tragic one, in my opinion, and has been publicly discussed and reported. Also tragic is the fiction that professional self-regulation is not possible, and that ASCLD/LAB having a seat on our board creates a conflict of interest. Who regulates Doctors? Doctors. Who regulates lawyers? Lawyers. At this time, we should seek the strength that can be derived from the unity and knowledge that comes with our partnership with ASCLD/LAB and the democratic power enjoyed by the members of its delegate assembly to improve and evolve the program. ASCLD/LAB is OUR accreditation program; therefore, we are ASCLD/LAB already. There is nothing to separate. **Please rate your support for DISSOLVING the ASCLD/LAB ex-officio position from the ASCLD Board of Directors, on a scale from 1 to 10. (1 being no support, 10 being full support).**

| Response     | Count      | Percent       |
|--------------|------------|---------------|
| <b>1</b>     | <b>44</b>  | <b>21.89%</b> |
| 2            | 18         | 8.96%         |
| 3            | 14         | 6.97%         |
| 4            | 8          | 3.98%         |
| 5            | 18         | 8.96%         |
| 6            | 4          | 1.99%         |
| 7            | 7          | 3.48%         |
| 8            | 20         | 9.95%         |
| 9            | 10         | 4.98%         |
| <b>10</b>    | <b>58</b>  | <b>28.86%</b> |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>201</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

## Extrapolation

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While this survey does give good direction to some of the questions, some answers have proven to be equivocal. This is partly to be expected but also probably indicative of some of the question wording.

### **How inclusive should ASCLD be with regards to membership?**

**In a laboratory system with multiple labs in the organization, should membership be limited to only the director of the entire system, or should it also include directors of each lab within the system?**

**In a laboratory system with multiple labs in the organizations, should there only be one delegate from the entire system, or one delegate from each lab within the system?**

The answer here appears to eliminate just anyone in forensics, any one in only a supervisory role, only one delegate from each lab and only the single lab director. What is favored is a more upper management level person (including the lab director) and a hybrid choice of all the options grouped into “full” members and “less than full” members. For lab systems, it is clear that each lab should be considered on its own and not part of the whole.

### **How should we define a "Crime Laboratory?"**

This answer clearly falls among considering multiple aspects; parent organization, customer, and to a lesser degree, function. Noticeably of low priority is accreditation status and looking at the function of the lab alone. What is also clear is that non-governmental labs are not favored and neither is a very liberal application of “lab”.

### **What should our criteria be for awarding Emeritus Membership?**

The status quo is favored for this issue and the Board will continue to use the current by-law definition to make this award.

### **What should the membership status be for individuals who change jobs (often due to promotion) and no longer meet the requirements for regular membership?**

There is a clear favorite here to have another category of membership, however named, to be used for members who fall outside of the normal qualifying definition. This seems to complement the answers to question 1 where there was a significant percentage of the responses favoring a model of “full” and “not so full” member.

### **Our current bylaws consist of five different membership categories. Which of the choices below best describes the system you would prefer?**

The take-away message to these answers appears to be in favor of NOT the current model. The majority advocates for a more streamlined approach, but a few want to keep a retired category at all costs.

**Please rate your support for adding a “Professional Affiliate” membership category which retains all rights to membership except voting, on a scale from 1 to 10. (1 being no support, 10 being full support).**

There is clear support for a classification of membership that doesn't fall into the full membership category and has no voting rights. Again, this feedback complements input received from two of the previous questions.

**Please rate your support for DISSOLVING the ASCLD/LAB ex-officio position from the ASCLD Board of Directors, on a scale from 1 to 10. (1 being no support, 10 being full support).**

This is pretty well split between for and against.