

Hi, UPMC Chautauqua Medical Laboratory Science Program student! At the start of this new chapter of your life, I am sure you are feeling excited, happy, and looking forward to your future. But you also may be feeling scared, stressed, and on edge about what these 11 months will be like. I just first want to say it's okay! It's okay to feel all of these emotions.

First, you should know that you will be busy. When you think you finished studying a topic, another one already started 2 days ago. Time flies and there are not enough hours in the day. You'll probably miss out on parties, family time, and Netflix bingeing. And even though it may be sad at first (lots of FOMO), it is something you and your family and friends will have to accept for a little while. But trust me when I tell you it'll all be worth it. As I'm writing this in my last week of my last rotation, time really does fly and I cannot believe how much I have accomplished, learned, and experienced in the past 11 months. So, grab your coffee (you'll need it), and buckle up! It is going to be fun, stressful, and rewarding.

I want to share with you some of my biggest tips, struggles, and suggestions for the next year. First of all, on a serious note, learn how to study efficiently ASAP. This program made me learn a whole new level of studying. I learned that studying out loud really makes me listen to what I'm saying and understand it to the best of my ability. Find whatever works for you and what makes you really be able to know what you're talking about when you're done studying, it is important. I also made all sorts of study charts and sheets on blank pieces of paper. This really helped me also, because sometimes I find it hard to focus on a certain topic if there are too many sheets of notes or if it is too messy. Learning how to learn, study, and keep your notes organized is such a big key thing during this year. Once you have that down, you will be able to learn and remember anything.

Second, soak everything up! Sometimes I would catch myself just wanting a day to be over, just wanting a lab or lecture to finish already, or wanting to just not learn anything that day. Sometimes it is really hard to stay motivated. Now as someone who has now finally done with all lectures, labs, and class... I'm telling you, soak it all up! Everything you learn is beneficial, everything you hear someone say could be of use. Every procedure and experiment you do could help you get a better grade on your next. Especially during 2nd rotation, soak every minute of bench time up. It'll help you become so confident and learn so much. Just watching technologists and then learning what they do will boost your confidence and make you feel like you can run a department on your own already. Every experience, good or bad, is a good one. As a student, you never know too much. I strongly recommend taking every lecture and clinical hour with a grain of salt, as if this is what you'll be doing for the rest of your life!

My third tip is apply yourself. You're probably thinking "of course, that's easy" but it gets hard sometimes. I'm not going to lie and say things will be easy. If they were, anyone would be in this program! Things get hard, sometimes we get unmotivated, we may fall behind a little bit, but you can do it. You can catch back up, you can finish the project, you can study and learn... as long as you want to. If you truly apply yourself and try, then what is going to stop you? You will also make friends and have teachers and techs to help you along the way. But in the end, you owe it to yourself to become motivated again, put in your studying for the night, and keep up. Nothing feels worse than doing poorly on an assignment or exam and thinking "Why did I let myself do that? I could have conquered that if I just tried harder, studied more and applied myself more."

There were so many times where I sat on my couch and counted down the days I would need to study more, feel like the homework was never going to end, and question if I would be okay getting only 5 hours of sleep again. And now that the end is here, I thank myself for never giving up, always trying harder, and knowing that I could really accomplish anything if I wanted to. And you can too. Keep organized, study hard, make cheat sheets, take short power naps to keep going, buy a lot of highlighters and colored pens, never think you can't do it, because I promise you can!

Goodluck, I believe in you!
Lilly, Class of 2021
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