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Laboratory Assistant, and Phlebotomy Technician Programs at Western Nebraska Community College in Scottsbluff, NE.

Mr. Famitangco is an international lecturer, resource speaker and technical consultant and is a very passionate advocate of the medical laboratory profession. He is an active member and volunteer of the ASCP & BOC and has served on numerous committees. He has also received a number of awards and recognition from peers and professional organizations for his contributions to the medical laboratory profession.

### What did receiving the BOC Lab Hero Award mean to you?

“Being recognized by the ASCP Board of Certification (the first and the largest certification agency for medical laboratory professionals globally) and by your peers, as one of the five recipients of the ASCP BOC Lab Hero Award for your work and contributions during the CoVID-19 pandemic, is truly a great honor. A validation of one’s effort from colleagues who know and understand it the best, is priceless. I share and dedicate this recognition to my team members at the Clinical Laboratory Department of Morrill County Community Hospital and to all medical laboratory professionals who work and serve in rural underserved areas. One of my primary purposes in life is to be a man for others, to serve my fellowmen, my patients and my community, such recognition is undoubtedly an inspiration to continue making a difference with vigor and enthusiasm.”

### How did your friends, family colleagues, etc., react to the news that you had received a 2020 BOC Lab Hero Award?

“With social media, the announcement and the news reached colleagues from the medical laboratory community, co-workers, classmates, friends, relatives and family across the globe. I received so many congratulatory messages and that they are very proud of my accomplishments and contributions to the medical laboratory field and healthcare. To many, especially my family who have supported me through my long and very tortuous path, starting from very humble beginnings in my native Philippines, to Saudi Arabia and now my home country the United States, they have been very proud of every small or big achievement of mine. I am happy that I could return to my family what they had given to me; that is happiness indeed!”

### Everyone gets BOC certification for a different reason, but what is your story?

“I first heard of ASCP Board of Registry [now the BOC] MT certification during my clinical internship in the Philippines in the late 1990’s, and planned on taking the MT(ASCP) certification exam right after my Philippine licensure examination. However, because of the eligibility route requirements for international graduates during that time period, I didn’t qualify and had to put my BOR certification plans on hold. After working more than 2 years in a University Hospital in the Philippines, I was given an opportunity to work alongside my undergraduate professor in a government Ministry Hospital in Saudi Arabia.

“Later on, after my parents migrated to the United States, I started looking for jobs in the U.S. through an agent and landed a job in Nebraska. Arriving in the U.S. on January 14, 2003 under the H1-B Visa Program, I knew I was one step closer to fulfilling the eligibility to sit for the MT(ASCP) certification exam, all I needed to do was to complete the 5 year clinical experience requirement in a U.S. CLIA/CAP/AABB accredited laboratory. During my fourth year in the US, I tried to test the water and applied for a job in Omaha, NE and got scheduled for a phone interview. The first question at the interview was “Are you MT(ASCP) certified?” My response was “No Sir, I am planning to take the ASCP certification exam and



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I will be eligible to sit for the exam next year". The interviewer's response to me was "thank you for your time" and hung-up. That experience motivated me to study hard and prepare for the ASCP certification exams. My yearning of having the gold standard BOR credential after my name intensified. A year later, as soon as I became eligible, I applied, took the examination and passed my MLS(ASCP) certification. During that year, I also completed my Master of Science Degree in Clinical Laboratory Science and received the Award of Excellence from ASCLS-Nebraska. I will forever remember an event after the awards ceremony, a gentleman approached me, introduced himself and told me "you might not remember me, but I interviewed you last year for a position at our organization and I regret that I turned you down, you could have been a great addition to our team". The interview experience reminded me that it is very important to learn and grow from life experiences. Only through these experiences can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

My ASCP BOC certification, qualification, and ASCP membership has positively affected my professional and volunteer life. It boosted my confidence to be a better resource to my hospital colleagues and to meet their needs and expectations. My graduate studies, combined with my ASCP BOC certification, also prepared me to develop educational programs (PBT, MLA, and MLT) and to be a valuable contributor in the formation of future medical laboratory professionals. It opened new doors and opportunities. I was able to give back to the profession by volunteering my time by sharing my expertise and making a difference. It allowed me to broaden my reach beyond my local community, it allowed me to know that I have an influence on a national and global level. My ASCP-BOC certification and ASCP membership allowed me to be an agent of change to improve medical laboratory education, practices, services and most of all, patient care."

### **Why did you choose Morrill County Hospital Foundation as your BOC Lab Hero charity?**

"I have chosen to donate to Morrill County Hospital Foundation. The hospital foundation has been supporting Morrill County Community Hospital in their capital improvements, facility upgrades, and development of additional health care services, which our patients, community, and surrounding areas can benefit from. As a community member and a hospital employee, I know that even a small amount of donation can make a difference in patient care."

### **What message would you like to send to all of the medical laboratory professionals around the world this Lab Week?"**

In this extraordinary time of crisis, I am very grateful to all my fellow medical laboratory colleagues, most especially to those who serve in rural underserved areas with very limited resources, for their heroic efforts, for saving lives, and for being at the forefront in our battle with the COVID-19 Pandemic. I know it has been a very tiring and exhausting fight against COVID-19, but I want you all to remember when you get off work and you look at yourself in your mirror, say to yourself that you saved someone's life today, the patient will definitely not realize the role that you play and healthcare providers may or may not give credit for that, but one of the test result that you put out during the course of the day, one of those was the information needed to make the decision that saved someone's life, you saved it or made it better! Continue to put your heart, mind and soul into even your smallest act!

With the COVID-19 Pandemic, the general public is now learning the importance of what we medical laboratory professionals do and the importance of the services we provide—and policy makers are realizing that the laboratory workforce shortage is real. This is our time, and we have the unique opportunity to celebrate our profession and increase the public understanding of what we do and demonstrate how we make a difference in the health and lives of each of our patients. I encourage my colleagues to get involved, advocate, and spread the word about our beloved profession. Celebrate and participate in Medical Laboratory Professionals Week and let us show the world how great our profession is!"