

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



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Always keep learning

What started as a plan to pursue an undergraduate degree in nursing all changed for Kelly Ritter, MSHS, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}SM^{CM} after taking one microbiology course and falling in love with the subject.

“I went to one of my professors at that time for advice on what career options involve microbiology, and she pointed me in the direction of clinical laboratory science,” Ritter says. “From there, I found the clinical laboratory science program at the MD Anderson School of Health Professions (SHP). During my time in the program, my instructors reinforced my passion for the field and gave me the necessary tools to succeed in the laboratory setting.”

Ritter received her Bachelor of Science in Clinical Laboratory Science from SHP in 2013 and a Master of Science in Clinical Microbiology from The George Washington University in 2021. She is now pursuing a Doctorate in Health Sciences with a focus on health care leadership in clinical practice and education settings at the university. Additionally, Ritter received her Specialist in Microbiology Certification through the American Society for Clinical Pathology in 2021.

“I believe MD Anderson helped inspire me to become the best version of myself early in my profession, which led me to pursue my doctoral degree,” Ritter says. “Part of the vision of SHP is instilling the value of lifelong learning and continued education, and I am living out that vision.”

Following graduation from SHP, Ritter worked in various clinical and research microbiology laboratories while simultaneously continuing her graduate education. Today, Ritter is a professor of biology and the primary microbiology instructor at Tyler Junior College in Tyler, Texas. She is also an adjunct instructor in the Biomedical

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Laboratory Sciences Department at The George Washington University School of Medicine and Health in Washington, D.C.

“I credit my time in the clinical laboratory science program at MD Anderson for laying a solid foundation of knowledge off which I could reach my personal goals,” Ritter says, adding that her mentors also played a key role in her success.

When asked what advice she had to share with prospective clinical laboratory science students, Ritter says, “If I had the chance to talk to a prospective MD Anderson student – especially a clinical laboratory science student – I would tell them that yes, it is hard, but it is well worth it! Whether you are identifying which bacteria is causing someone’s infection, or finding the abnormal cells in their blood that will later lead to a diagnosis, knowing that you are making an impact on patients’ lives is an incredible feeling and a noble calling.”

Between school, her two children and all their soccer games and tournaments, Ritter maintains a busy life. If she does happen to catch a moment of free time, you can often find her enjoying a yoga session, reading horror novels or delving into a book about germs.

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