# The Critical Role of Academic Pathologists in State Pathology Societies

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**Dr. Chakshu Gupta:**

Just a few years ago, the Missouri Society of Pathology was dormant with no active membership. As I've worked over the past few years to reactivate the society and get pathologists from across the state and in various practice settings such as, private practice, employed and academic pathologists to join me, I quickly hit a challenge. That was to get academic pathologists to join the society.

"We don't need CMEs and advocacy does not impact us." Were the two most common reasons they gave me for not joining. Apparently the Missouri Society of Pathology was not alone in facing this challenge. Many other state pathology societies struggle to get academic pathologists to become members. We all recognize that engaging academic pathologists in state societies is mutually beneficial. So what can we learn from societies that have been successful in engaging academic pathologists and use that in our own states.

My name is, Chakshu Gupta. I am the current president of the Missouri Society of Pathologists. Today I speak with Dr. Marilyn Bui and Dr. Jim Zhai, two pathologists from Florida, who have been successful in engaging academic pathologists in the Florida Society of Pathologists. Dr. Zhai is the current president and Dr. Bui, the president-elect of the Florida Society of Pathologists. The FSP has 550 regular members and has gone from 90% private practice to a good representation, from private practice, academic and reference labs. Their annual meeting is well attended by pathologists from across the country and their success is in part due to involvement of academic pathologists.

So Dr. Bui and Dr. Zhai, why should an academic pathologist join their state pathology society? In other words, what can state pathology societies offer academic pathologists?

**Dr. Marilyn Bui:**

Thank you, Dr. Gupta and the CAP, for this kind interview and we're very excited to be here. I'm going to start answering the question by a very personal story. The bottom line is, join state past a society, is not just check a box on the list. It's actually a gateway for you to have a very rewarding professional life. For example, I have been a CAP member for 17 years. I got involved with the House of Delegates for 11 years. There I met the president of our state society, Dr. McNeil. She's in private practice. She's engaged with our society. She said, "Marilyn, you should join us. As an academic pathologist, you can help us to run the educational program."

I joined and I was so impressed by the dedication of the pathologists, especially in academic setting. They are very strong in doing advocacy and also the networking opportunity is wonderful. As a fellowship program director, now I have my fellows connected with a potential employers in the national meetings. As academic pathologist, now I have myself and my colleagues has the opportunity to teach, to do fellowship first and then to improve our professional development opportunity. At the same time, we learn from the private practice pathologists, what matters. So to enhance our teaching, advocating a lot more. So I'll leave that to Dr. Zhai now.

**Dr. Jim Zhai:**

Thank you, Dr. Bui. And Florida Society Pathologies have been strong in the history. Over years, the mix of academic and private has been changing based upon the historical climate. When I joined Florida Society Pathologist 10 years ago, most of the members are private. Over years, we observed the opportunity to invite the academic pathologist to join us. And now we have a 60% of academic pathologists and roughly 40% of the private practice. And we are one community.

I think this is an important message that, the borders between academic pathologists and community pathologists are blurring and more blurring every day, because we have a lot of things in common, we care, the practice, the quality, education and advocacy. Those are the common things for every single pathologist no matter where you practice. So academic offer a great deal to the state of society pathology. For example, the membership and we just mentioned, 60% in our society. And the education, we have keynote speakers from almost every education program. We have slide seminar faculty, we have a trainees contest, we have trainees job fair, we have fellowship fair, and those are great platform for interactions for communications between academic and community pathologist. And we are having a one very friendly personal community together. That's one of the important things, very cohesive leadership as well. Over years, we are standing on the shooter of the joints, previous leadership, and we are enjoying the one community and a part of the success of Florida Society Pathologists.

**Dr. Chakshu Gupta:**

Well, I believe those are some excellent points. In Missouri, I'm in the process of organizing a leadership retreat where the agenda includes, ways to help academic pathologists expand their consultation services and reference laboratory testing. And offer a forum for residents and fellows to network with state pathology groups for potential job opportunities.

Now let's explore the other side of the coin. Dr. Zhai and Dr. Bui, what can academic pathologists offer state pathology societies?

**Dr. Jim Zhai:**

I just mentioned that we are in the one community, but academic pathology need platform to let the junior factor shine as well. Their training program, they have trainees, need a job. And a lot of them, they'd love to stay in the regional area and where the hires, the employers stay and practice and fellowship program. And so state society can have a lot to offer to the academics, to let them benefit as well. In Florida, we have actively engaged with the legislations in the state level. Last year we have the DNA bill, if passed will be dramatically negative impact our practice. And our society work together with the lobbyists, with the legal staff, with bidding staff, and with Florida Medical Association staff. We united and reversed the bill. And many, many academic pathologists, almost every one of them, benefit this endeavor.

Another example is the Medicaid deciding not to pay 800 of the test on the menu. And again, we united our efforts and we fought hard and we won the battle. So as a result, about $15 million within Floridian Pathologists has been recovered. So those are the examples that state society can do a lot to the academic pathologies as a partner. So it's a two, it's a two-way beneficial relationship. Academic, do great deal of benefit for the society and society do a lot for the academic pathologist.

**Dr. Marilyn Bui:**

Yeah, I agree with everything Dr. Jim Zhai just mentioned. So for academic pathologists, I've been served on the APT committee. When you promote from assistant to professor, the minimum requirement is, you are good in patient care and then you have local recognition. So when you are being part of state society, very often the contributor send cases to Moffitt Cancer Center for review. We're reviewing and now, you'll communicate with this group of pathologists.

Second is, your education effort, in addition to teach your institutional courses. How about that you teach locally and nationally, state society, give that platform. And also we provide opportunity for leadership development. We put our faculty on committees, ask them to run the committee or chair the committee, or we give them opportunities to either run special programs at our annual meeting or do the round tables at the fellowship fairs. In addition, because you are interacting with all the private practice pathologists, especially the people are hiring, your trainees will have a good opportunity to be exposed. For example, multiple of my fellows, they found their job because of their FSP connection, not the job advertised on paper.

Now the job that you go to, Pathology Outlines, those are the jobs before they're even posted, people already reaching out. "Dr. Bui, I know you have a very good program there. Do you have excellent fellow? Recommended to us?"

"Oh, sure, the fellows will do a good job." They get interview and they get the great jobs. So there are so many benefits. So this is a way of expand your network, so you've make friends professionally so everybody can benefit from this.

**Dr. Chakshu Gupta:**

Those are some great points. In my state, I'm fortunate that academic pathologists support the MSP by serving on its board and leading its professional development section. A huge shout out to Dr. Richard Cote, chair of pathology at Washington University in St. Louis, for approving group membership for all academic pathologists at their institution.

Now that we know how membership in state societies helps both academic pathologists and their state society, let's talk about some ways to make that happen. Dr. Bui and Dr. Zhai, what tools can we use to engage academic pathologists in state societies?

**Dr. Jim Zhai:**

Thank you. This is not easy, has to be persistent and passionate. And we apply what resource we have, as you mentioned, the University of Miami was one of the earlier department involving FSP, supporting FSP, and we organize our efforts. For example, we invited our lobbyist, going to different department and share the perspectives, share the achievement that FSP has achieved and the benefit. And those benefit that help the Department of Pathology and the department chair understand that the reimbursement is important for their operation, the opportunity for education is good for their faculties. So a couple of years ago we started a program, we called, Department Chairs Circle. We invite all the department chair, and this is second year already, interrupted by pandemic, however it came back stronger.

All the department within the Florida Society within Florida State, joined us and we share the perspective, we share, we need work together. The result is fantastic. As a result, we start another meeting, for example, inviting all the programs of the trainee fellowship and we will start some fantastic statewide education program. I'll let Dr. Bui continue to illustrate that program.

**Dr. Marilyn Bui:**

Yeah, I agree with Dr. Zhai said, engaging the department chairs is one important strategy. At the FSP, we're very fortunate that we have the following tools. First is, we have a excellent professional management company and then the leadership of Ms. Aaron Corell. And the company work with us like a partner. So that's very important.

Second is, we have very engaged board members. There are three generation of board members there, new in practice, people in middle career and very experienced pathologists, had other leadership positions from other organizations. We also have resident's fellow as member of the board. And they're all very engaged. They're not only in charge of the strategic planning. For example, if we realize there were some membership lagging in renew their membership, we will assign the tardiness list among the board members. People actually pick up the phone or email or contact those and tell them, "How can I help you to make FSP membership a meaningful experience? Because we want you. We need you."

And also we take steps to make sure that the, engage, entice and empower our members. They love our annual educational program. We'll have two meetings. One, is in winter in Disney. The other one, in summer by the beach. People from national, international audience, they come to attend. And in addition to a very practical lectures from excellent speakers, we also design programs for local pathologists. They can showcase their cases, which design program for resident's fellows. They can participate the poster presentation, they can receive awards, they can do interesting case presentation.

And then we have really nice exhibitor events so people can interact with exhibitors. So exhibitors love FSP. Every time, no matter how many space we open, one month before the meeting, all the exhibitor spots are sold out, because they love that one-to-one interaction with our audience. And also we have our advocacy professional people to doing that for us, so this way, whenever there is a advocacy issue, you involves pathologists, because we care about our scope of practice, we care about, how do we get paid, we are also care about the safety of our practice. Whenever there are issues like that, and we will unite and also connected with all our pathologists to provide that benefits to our membership, to make it really a meaningful networking professional development opportunity. So this way we engage, enticing, our pathologists keep coming back and working together with FSP.

**Dr. Chakshu Gupta:**

Well, that concludes our podcast on engaging academic pathologists in state pathology societies. I'm sure you found it useful. If you have follow-up questions for any one of us, please reach out via the MyCAP app. For general questions about CAP's partnership with state pathology societies, you can send an email to statepath@cap.org.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Zhai and Dr. Bui for sharing their insights. This podcast was supported by CAP's State Pathology Society member work group.