**Sldp Experience**

## Rachel Ward

# wHAT IS sldp?

The American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) offers student members an opportunity to participate in the Student Leadership Development Program (SLDP). The program took place at the 2017 ASRT Educational Symposium and Annual Governance and House of Delegates Meeting from June 22-25 in Orlando, Florida. The program accepted two student members per state. To be considered for the opportunity, we filled out applications and wrote an essay explaining how we would grow professionally from our participation in the program. Those of us who made it past the application process we were then interviewed via video chat by our state affiliates. A decision was then made and after accepting a position in the SLDP we had to prepare for the trip with webinars that went over what we could expect and what was to be expected from us during these four days. After completing our required pre-trip activities, we received our airfare to Orlando, hotel rooms, and stipend for meals and other expenses we would encounter while traveling.

# FINALLY in orlando

The first day was full of new experiences. I got to Orlando and really didn’t know anybody, aside from my mentor, Dawn Dickinson Keyser of the Michigan Society of Radiologic Technologists (MSRT), whom I had met briefly on the flight in. I got settled in my hotel room just in time for the first student activity. I made my way to the SLDP Orientation early and picked up my backpack and name tag. I walked into the meeting room and sat down with two girls who were chosen from the same state. They were so friendly and introduced themselves to me and immediately started a conversation. This wasn’t so bad. Our table quickly filled with other students who were just as equally lost as us. That was the moment when I realized nobody knew how to do this. We were all just figuring it out as we went along.

The presentation began and I quickly figured out that the large majority of the students were all in Radiology, opposed to me, a student in Radiation Therapy. I got a little discouraged when I couldn’t join in the table’s conversation on their competencies and how they are preparing for their board examination. I scanned the room for badges with the radiation therapy “T” on them but with no luck I decided to get some advice from Becky Apodaca. Becky is the ASRT Director of Professional Practice and she worked hard to organize everything for us. I asked her if there were other therapy students and how I could go about finding them. Instead of finding me a student to network with, Becky introduced me to Sandra Hayden. I didn’t know who this woman was, and I didn’t realize her significance in the ASRT. This woman was beyond knowledgeable about the profession. She gave advice on how to connect with other therapy students as well as practicing therapists, and helped me realize that there was so much more to radiation therapy than the hospitals I rotate through in Wayne State University’s program. Sandra and I were the last two people to leave the room that night and I went back to my room with this new-found confidence and determination that I can accomplish anything I want in my professional career, I just had to work for it.

# asrt educational symposium

The next morning I took my optimistic self to the Educational Symposium. We sat through “Governance and Affiliate 101” and “ARRT 101” which gave us a run-down of what would happen at this conference. We were introduced to the faces that make up the Board of Directors. The President: Michael Latimer, President-elect: Amanda Garlock, Vice-President: Melissa Jackowski, Secretary-Treasurer: Stephanie Johnston, the Speaker of the House: Michael Odgren, the Vice-Speaker of the House: Beth Weber, and Chairman: Sandra Hayden. Yes Sandra Hayden, I realized the women whom I had spent the evening talking to was one of the most important people in attendance. It was amazing to know that someone that graduated from my university was able to contribute so much to the ASRT.

The program explained what the House of Delegates is about, what our board members do, the significance our state affiliates have, and, as students, our importance as future leaders in the ASRT. The American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) course went over the process of getting our certification, which was something on a lot of our minds as graduating students. The speaker also covered the newly implemented system for maintaining our certification over the course of our professional careers. As students, we have heard about it, but it was nice to finally get a full explanation of what we would be doing and why the ARRT decided to start this process.

I spent the rest of the day attending educational seminars that were focused on patient care, coaching and mentoring of students, and what the journey is like from the perspective of a patient. They reinforced the point that our patients deserve the best care we can give them. As well as that compassion and empathy go a long way. They also introduced the difference between coaching and mentoring and the difference the two have on the student’s learning. That seminar made me understand the reason some of the therapists I have encountered as a student teach the way that they do. I realized that even though we all don’t come from the same disciplines and specialtiescan all learn from experiences of others.

# welcome reception and pin exchangE

I showed up that evening to the pin exchange and sat down with my table of state affiliates. I wasn’t sure of how the ‘pin exchange’ worked or what even the purpose was. One of my state representatives poured out a bag of Michigan pins on the table and said, “help yourself!” I grabbed a handful and before I could get a foot from my table a group of people came up and began asking, “What state do you have!?” and as I gave them a pin they exchanged mine with one of their own and began talking to me about my program and what it’s like to live in Michigan. That’s when I realized the importance of the seemingly ‘lame’ pin exchange; it was an ice-breaker. This exercise gave you a reason to talk to every person in the room. It was amazing and I loved it. I ended up teaming up with the two therapy students from Texas and completing our pin collections together. Later when I returned to my affiliate table and they called me a ‘pinning fool’ and they were right. I had spent hours running around and meeting new people. My name tag was now covered in pins and weighed much more than it did when I had walked in, but more importantly I walked out that night with a group of friends. We all spent the entire night talking about our programs and experiences out by the pool.

# House of delegates

The House of Delegates got much more serious the next morning. We began the morning meeting by walking in holding our state flags. It doesn’t seem like much of a big deal but to be there as the only two students representing all of the radiologic programs for our state we started to feel pretty important. I was given the privilege of sitting with my state affiliates for the first business meeting of the House of Delegates. They acknowledged so many people and their contributions to the society, and even awarded people for their incredible work. The Speaker of the House went through the process and knowing there were 96 students in the room, took the time to explain the process to us as he went along. We received reports and updates from the ASRT, ARRT, and JRCERT. The affiliate open forum allowed each state the opportunity to propose items that they would like to see improved. We later attended the chapter meetings of our choice and it was interesting to see the same topics discussed from the perspectives of the different disciplines. It was amazing to see how passionate some people feel about their profession and to watch them advocate so strongly for their discipline.

# honor’s event

We were able to attend the Honor’s Event on Friday Night. We watched as members of the ASRT were elevated to Fellows as well as Life Members. These awards are only given to members who have provided dedicated service to the ASRT. The Fellows are categorized are those who have made outstanding contributions as selected by the ASRT Board of Directors. The Life Member status is awarded to volunteers who have been members for over 30 and have been selected by a three-fourths vote by the Board of Directors for their tremendous service.

As each member was awarded the speakers gave a brief description of member’s education, careers, achievements, and contributions over the course of their careers. It was inspirational to hear about the incredible things these people have done for the society. This was another section of the program that made a significant impact on my drive to be involved in this society. I hope to one day be standing on that stage, while someone lists my accomplishments and contributions to an audience of members and student-members that I can inspire, like they did for me.

# what i took from this experience

I absolutely loved this experience. It was truly eye-opening, and I believe I have grown professionally so much from this program. I found my place in the ASRT and learned what I can now do to be the best radiation therapist I can be. I learned in just a few short days how to network, and that is something that I am beyond grateful for. I made incredible connections with people who I am already looking forward to seeing at the meeting next year. I would strongly recommend this opportunity to every radiologic student. It gave me this extra push to be a better student as well as health care provider. I am so grateful that I was given this opportunity.

I am very excited to see what the future will hold for me in the ASRT. Aside from finishing the Radiation Therapy program at Wayne State University and becoming a certified radiation therapist, I have plans to write material for the ASRT’s *Scanner* and *Radiation Therapist* Journals. Without a doubt in my mind, I will be at the 2018 ASRT Educational Symposium and Annual Governance and House of Delegates Meeting in Las Vegas. I am so excited to reconnect with the amazing people I met this year! Maybe I will even be able to take my experience from this year’s program to be a mentor for the students in attendance next year.

I realized the importance of being involved in the ASRT as well as the at the state level with the MSRT. I am now a student intern on the MSRT board as well as an editor for the MSRT’s social network page. I want to continue to play an active role in these societies and help better the profession.