One of the shining stars of Los Angeles is not a movie or television personality, but Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center (UCLA Health). It is a Level I Trauma Center and has one of the nation’s largest organ transplant programs.

UCLA Health consists of a main laboratory and ten offsite sections, which combined perform eight million lab tests annually. In addition, the UCLA Blood and Platelet Center falls under the purview of the laboratory. Of special note is the extraordinarily large and complex Point of Care Testing (POCT) program, with over 200 POCT sites in support of the Medical Center and surrounding UCLA medical clinics dispersed throughout local cities.

Due to its large size, the laboratory has a departmental section-based customer service outreach program. Each lab section interacts with its internal customers, stressing a win/win mentality focused on improving patient care, resolving issues, and providing the best lab support possible. Nursing staff are some of the lab’s most important internal customers. “Outreach to our internal customers is the foundation of what we do to support our fellow healthcare professionals in their quest to heal patients,” says Dr. Alyssa Ziman, Laboratory Medical Director.

With such a large and complex laboratory, it is essential that there are experts on hand to take care of laboratory-related business functions. UCLA Health’s Clinical Laboratory Business Office created a process improvement initiative to reduce errors in billing practices in order to recoup money for tests performed but not billed. This led to a significant reduction in errors and a gain of $1.9M. “The Business Office is an essential part of the laboratory team. We provide administrative, supply, IT coordination, and financial support to all 35 of our cost centers to ensure that our laboratorians have the tools they need to provide outstanding patient testing,” says Colleen Toten, Manager of the Clinical Laboratory Business Office.

The UCLA Blood and Platelet Center is a large part of the laboratory team, collecting approximately 30,000 volunteer donations per year. These donations yield approximately 70% of the 73,000 blood products that are transfused by the laboratory. Treating more than 1,000 patients per year, the blood bank team created a rare whole blood inventory and transfusion program.

Having a high yielding donor center on a university campus is very unique for a hospital system. UCLA student recruiters work hand in hand with the donor center and student population to help save lives. “The UCLA Blood and Platelet Center acts as a bridge between our community and our healthcare system, resulting in safe, pure, and potent blood products for patients in need,” says David Anthony, Director of the Center.

The laboratory is dedicated to fostering the next generation of laboratorians and has comprehensive training licensure programs available. It also offers free electronic CEUs for staff to maintain state licensure and ASCP certification and enhance managerial skills for future leadership roles.

“Our strategic plan helps us prioritize our resources, ensures our team understands our operational strategies, and provides focus to move our plans into actionable steps toward project and goal achievement,” says Edward Griffin, MBA, Manager of Transfusion Medicine. “We have found that every minute spent in strategic planning saves at least ten minutes in execution.”

UCLA Heath has six lab compliance team members that perform full-time quality assurance oversight with an extensive auditing and continuous process improvement focus. “Quality is the hallmark of good healthcare,” says Elsa Tsukahara, Manager of Regulatory Affairs, “By focusing on quality we make sure that patients receive the trademark high quality care that the UC Health system is known for.”