

American Academy of Forensic Sciences

Presentation to the National Academy of Sciences “Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Science Community”

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*A professional society
dedicated to the application
of science and law.*

1/25/07

American Academy of Forensic Sciences

As a professional society dedicated to the application of science to the law, the AAFS is committed to the promotion of education and the elevation of accuracy, precision, and specificity in the forensic sciences.

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Who are we –

- Founded in 1948.
- Nearly 6,000 members.
- Representing all 50 United States, Canada, and 55 other countries worldwide.
- Members include physicians, attorneys, dentists, toxicologists, physical anthropologists, document examiners, psychiatrists, physicists, engineers, criminalists, educators, and others.

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AAFS Promotes Forensic Science Education –

- The Academy's annual scientific meeting is held in February at which time over 700 scientific papers, breakfast seminars, workshops, and other special events are presented.
- Seminars and meetings
- Journal of Forensic Sciences
- Web-site (aafs.org) and Newsletters
- Initiation of actions and reactions to issues of concern
– the AAFS is a founding member of the CFSO

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AAFS Promotes Forensic Science Research –

- Forensic Sciences Foundation is the educational, scientific, and research arm of the AAFS.
- The overall objectives of the Foundation are:
develop and conduct education and training programs; develop new ways to improve the forensic sciences; promote public education concerning all disciplines in the forensic sciences; and support research in fields relating to the forensic sciences.

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Forensic Science Education Programs

Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) –

- Maintain and enhance the quality of forensic science education through a formal evaluation and recognition of college-level academic programs.
- Develop and maintain standards and administer an accreditation program that recognizes and distinguishes high quality undergraduate and graduate forensic science programs.

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The Young Forensic Scientists Forum –

- Dedicated to the education, enrichment and development of emerging forensic scientists and future leaders of the field.

Forensic Science Educational Conference –

- Dedicated to increasing science teachers' knowledge of the forensic sciences and to assist them as they enrich and/or develop challenging, innovative curricula. Partnering with Court TV.

Issues Important to the AAFS

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Funding of Resources –

- Crime laboratories and medical examiner/coroner offices are generally under-funded.
- Lack of funding leads to backlogs.
- Although resources have recently targeted DNA backlogs nationwide, laboratories continue to face backlogs in other disciplines such as trace evidence, chemistry and toxicology.
- Funding is needed in all areas (staffing, facilities, equipment, etc.).

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Funding of Education –

- Shortage of qualified forensic scientists at all levels of competency – CSI to Director.
- Training critically needed and required by all forensic science disciplines.
- A limited number of forensic science training programs currently exist including undergraduate, graduate and on-the-job.
- Continuing education is a vital component of forensic science practice.

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Funding of Research –

- Advances the field of forensic science through the development of new methodology.
- Ensures the validity of scientific protocols through quality management.
- Facilitates technology transfer through sharing of information.

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Crime Lab and Homeland Security Missions –

- In many States, there is virtually no connection between crime laboratories, medical examiner/coroner offices and the regional Homeland Security Mission.
- Disaster victim identification by DNA and other means is often times not integrated.
- Crime laboratories who send personnel to crime scenes have little training or expertise in chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives hazards.

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AAFS Recommends –

- Development of new forensic science public policy including the dissemination of best practices and guidelines.
- Development of a *National Forensic Science Master Plan* which addresses resources and funding priorities.
- Enhancement of support and funding in the area of forensic science education, training and research.
- Establishment of a *National Forensic Science Fellowship or Scholars Program*.

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We invite the National Academy of Sciences to participate in the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

February 18-22, 2008

Washington, D.C.

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