

Presentation to the National Academies
**Committee on Identifying the Needs of
the Forensic Sciences Community**

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Overview of Forensic Training and Education

1. Current situation and environment
2. Education and accreditation
3. Thoughts on needs

1. Current situation and environment

- The discipline lives at the nexus between **science, law, and law enforcement**
 - This means serving many masters
- ~80% of labs are administratively part of law enforcement agencies
 - Managing police in para-military organization is different than managing scientists in a laboratory
 - Neither are particularly prepared for this

1. Current situation and environment

- Law enforcement and science have **different mandates**
 - This necessitates **different education and training**
- Forensic science is a **separate** scientific discipline
 - Requires:
 - Fundamental curriculum
 - Philosophy and principles
- **Barriers to efficiency and success are cultural**
 - Law enforcement
 - Forensic laboratories
 - Academia

1. Current situation and environment

- Law Enforcement Barriers
 - *“Do you know how many squad cars I could buy for that?”*
 - FS Lab Directors (with **science degrees**) should report to head of agency, not through non-scientific officer
 - **Science requires objectivity and autonomy to be neutral**
- Forensic Barriers
 - *“You can’t understand the subtleties of what I do”*
 - If it’s science, then you can communicate it and others can do it
 - **Publish, develop curricula, teach, research, professional development**
- Academic Barriers
 - *“It’s only an applied science”*
 - Like medicine, engineering, chemistry, etc. it is **basic and applied**
 - **Work against the “applied vs. basic” dichotomy**

"Forensic methods attract a growing interest from professional circles. Unsurprisingly, many young people focus on this career from the start of their study [....]. It becomes absolutely necessary for them to obtain a specialized grade at the end of their specialized study."

Rodolphe Archibald Reiss, 1909

2. Education and accreditation

- 1999: NIJ *Status and Needs* report
 - **Accreditation/certification** of forensic academic training programs/institutions.
 - Setting **national consensus standards of education** in the forensic sciences.
 - Establishing independent, community-wide, consensus standard-setting bodies, such as Technical Working Groups.
 - **Funding by NIJ of forensic academic research** and development programs.
 - Ensuring that all forensic scientists have **professional orientations to the field**, formal quality-assurance training, and expert-witness training.
- 2002-2003: NIJ/WVU Technical Working Group on Education and Training in Forensic Science (TWGED)
 - *NIJ Special Report: Education and Training in Forensic Sciences*

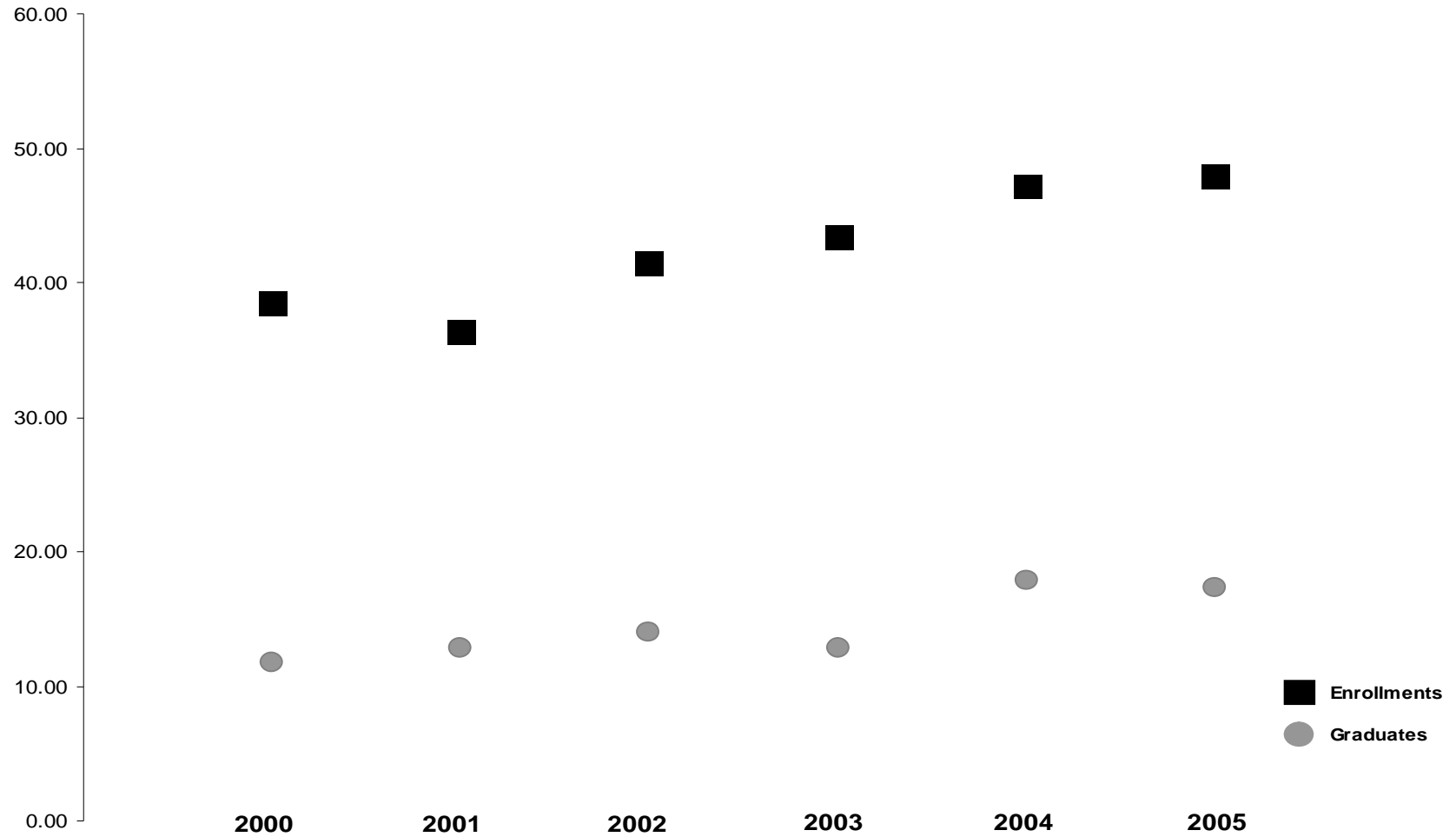
2. Education and accreditation

- 2003: AAFS: creates the Forensic Science Educational Program Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) as an ad hoc committee
 - Pilot program accredits 5 programs
- 2004: AAFS establishes FEPAC as a standing committee

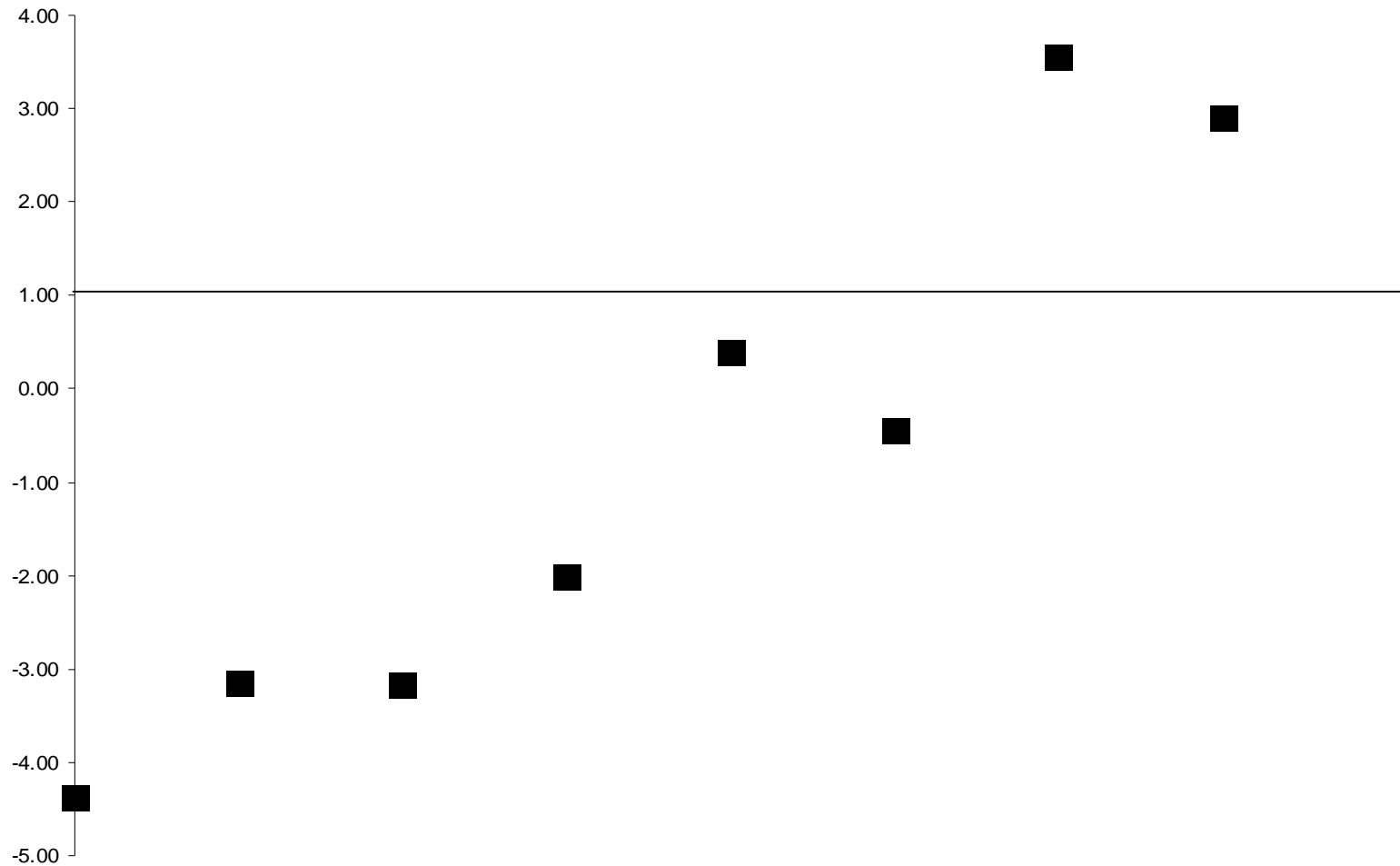
2. Education and accreditation

- 13 programs accredited by FEPAC
 - 3 in Conditional status
 - Routinely 4-6 programs apply each year
- Commission made up of:
 - 4 Academicians
 - 4 Practitioners
 - 1 Public member
- Director of Accreditation (AAFS employee)

FEPAC Enrollments & Graduates



FEPAC Enrollment/Graduate Ratio



How many new FS jobs? One answer: **33,000**

TABLE 1—*Forensic Scientists in the North Eastern United States.*

State	Population (millions)	# Forensic Scientists
Connecticut	3.5	65
Maine	1.2	17
Massachusetts	6.1	66
New Hampshire	1.2	20
New Jersey	8.1	95
New York	18	400
Pennsylvania	12	150
Rhode Island	1	21
Vermont	0.6	12
Total	51	846
Present FS per capita Supply Ratio	846 FS/51 m	1 FS/61,000
900 scientists needed for a 1/33,333 ratio		1800 FS/60 m = 1 FS/33,333

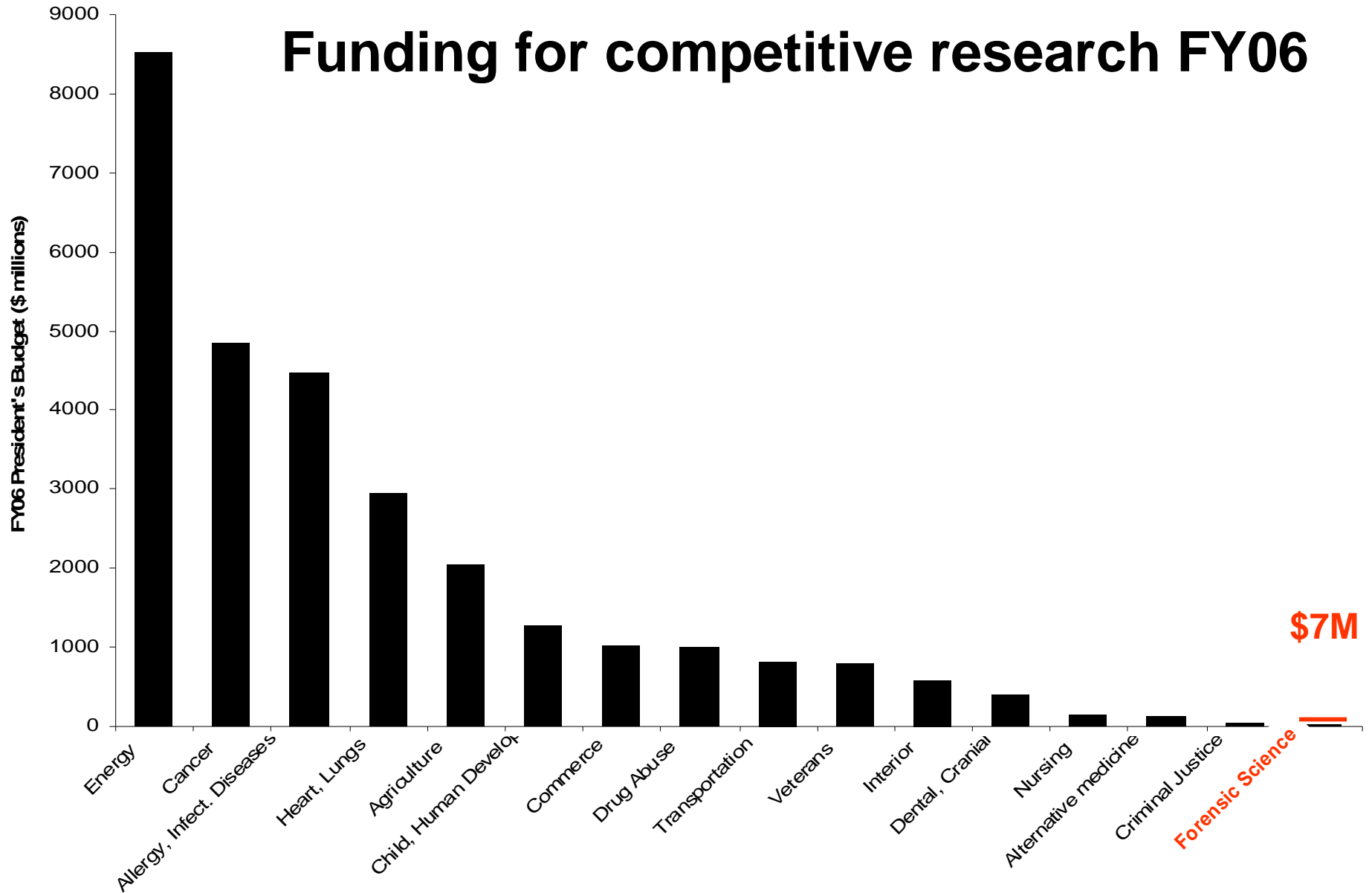
Estimates taken from New York State Police Forensic Investigation Straw Pole of New England States Forensic Scientists (2001).

Dale WM and Becker WS, “Strategy for staffing forensic scientists”, *Journal of Forensic Sciences* (letter to the editor), 48(2) 2003, 465-466.

3. Thoughts on needs

- If FS is not funded at levels of other sciences, how can it progress?
 - Not routinely funded by NSF/NIH because it is not “legitimate”
 - Not “legitimate” because it has not been funded
- FS may have neglected its professional mandate
 - Non-academic disciplines now in question
 - Those that don’t cleanly map to academia
 - “patterned evidence”
 - No university curriculum *per se* as a basis
 - Police and science have different mandates, so little to no interest in internal funding

Funding for competitive research FY06



3. Thoughts on needs

- Percent of FS labs putting resources in:
 - Research = 12%
 - Training/Education = 52%
- Educational/training session sponsored by WVU/NIJ (no cost to attendees)
 - Over 900 “slots” that could be filled in 20 classes
 - Announced at ASCLD
 - *Filled to capacity in 7 working days*
 - 400 attendees from 35 states

3. Thoughts on needs

- We are in a transitional stage of the development of our discipline
 - some variance is to be expected
- Promote growth of discipline as a distinct science and profession
 - Avoid incursions from sibling professions with their own agendas but different mandates (“police-ification” and “lawyer-ification”)
 - Accreditation is a step in the right direction
 - Find mechanisms for graduate education of working professionals
- Fund competitive research
- Promote continuing professional development

**Thank you for the opportunity to make
this presentation.**

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