



## Criminalistics Section – 2006

### B144 Future Forensic Scientists: Where Do They Come From?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will come to understand the significance of early education in forensic science starting at the high school level. Professionalism, order, consistency, proper work habits and good analysis of evidence are the cornerstones of forensic science. In order to have students to adopt this philosophy they need to work in an environment that fosters this type of professional atmosphere. Many of these introductory level courses are actually quite advanced, and colleges and high schools are working together to produce a forensic scientist at the highest level possible.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by imploring AAFS members into going and seeking both high school and college forensic science programs (as many already do) and lend their expertise and support. This is the only way these programs can truly be successful and help to produce the future forensic scientists.

Where will the future forensic scientists come from and should the profession care? The answer is simple. They will come from the nation's high schools, colleges and graduate schools. And yes, the profession should care. But why is this any different than in the past? Because in the last ten years the bar has been raised to an extremely high level, expectations are higher and technology is moving at exponential speeds. The media has consumed the public with the mysticism of forensic science and everybody wants to be on CSI. *This* is what is driving the revolution of future forensic scientists. However, this is where everything changes.

Forensic science courses have been established in high schools nation wide by the hundreds to provide an outlet for those students who are awed by the idea of forensics. The AAFS has helped in this venture through the Forensic Science Education Courses (FSEC) which have trained nearly 800+ teachers. Although many are survey courses, some are taught on an advanced or college level making it possible to cover many topics in detail. The result is that every year there are a handful of students who do extremely well and decide to make forensic science their life's work. These students chose to go to college to major in forensic science. Here lies the explanation as to why it is important to care **where** the students come from. These students coming from these programs are driven, they have essentially started their training in high school and are extremely prepared when they get to the college level. They are not just exploring the possibility of this as a career, they are making it one. In response to this interest and demand from students, many colleges have added forensic science concentrations or majors to their academic programs. The bottom line is that when you start with a more driven and knowledgeable student, what you get out is a better prepared, smarter, more productive forensic scientist. With the public expecting "CSI-like results" the industry can keep up without programs like these.

Professionalism, order, consistency, proper work habits and good analysis of evidence are the cornerstones of forensic science. In order to have students to adopt this philosophy they need to work in an environment that fosters this type of professional atmosphere. In these classes, the students do the real work of real forensic scientists making what they do in class authentic. They use the real tools and equipment of forensic scientists (not all, GCMS is too expensive) and take part in mock crime scenes where the aside from solving the case, the most important aspect is the documentation, collection, identification and analysis of evidence. They also study crime scene reconstruction through patterns such as blood spatter and gunshot residue. These courses are aligned with state education math, science and technology standards and teach the students how to; 1) think critically, 2) generate, process, and transfer information, 3) solve problems using an interdisciplinary approach, 4) use analysis and inquiry to solve problems, and 5) apply scientific concepts to address real life problems.

Educators and professionals in the forensics community bear a certain responsibility to make sure that these students get the best education and training possible. This can only be accomplished with support of AAFS members and forensic professionals willing to give their time to work with teachers on curriculum, give advice, speak to students and participate in the FSECs to train more teachers. Reach out to local high school and college programs and offer your help and support and become an invaluable and permanent part of their support team as well as their curriculum. This is where the future forensic scientists come from.

**Forensic Science Education, High School/College, AAFS Support**