



D71 Mentor-Mentee: The Challenge to Create Our Future Scientists

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of the complex relationship between the mentor, the trainee, and the goals of the laboratory.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing mentors with a better idea of the goals and aspirations of today's next generation of forensic scientists. Students will get a glimpse into the real world of the forensic lab and what awaits them after leaving the ivy-covered walls.

The world of criminalistics has seen a sea change brought about by external forces in the recent past. Shows like *CSI* and *The New Detectives* have made forensic science glamorous which has led to an increase in the number of students who want to study forensic science. This has led to an explosion in the number of colleges offering forensic science degrees, though the quality of these programs varies widely. These students are ready to go to the crime scene, collect the evidence, analyze it, interview the suspect and witnesses, and make the arrest. At the same time, the field has had to deal with the accusations and recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Report. Meanwhile, labs that are accredited are dealing with the increased training requirements of ISO 17025. A great forensic lab does not merely train technicians, but educates and molds forensic scientists. How does a lab balance the need to tackle an increasing backlog with a diminishing budget while still finding time to mentor young forensic scientists? What do budding forensic scientists do when they discover the field is not sunglasses and Hummers®? Do they take matters into their own hands and become the next lab scandal? Or do they become disenchanting and leave the field entirely?

This presentation will examine the perceptions of what knowledge, skills, and abilities management expects of new hires before they start, the perspective of new hires and what they expect not only from the training program but from the job itself, and if there are ways to craft training programs to not only teach the required skills but also engage the full potential of the new hire. Using surveys sent to the management or section heads and the newest hires of forensic labs, this presentation will pinpoint areas of disconnect as well as mutual agreement. Questions will also be asked of educators as to what they feel their role is in molding these young minds. Possible solutions for resolving the dichotomy will be proposed.

Education, Mentor, Trainee