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### **A95 The Undergraduate Forensic Internship Experience: A Path to Employment for Anthropology Students**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the impact of forensic internships on employment opportunities for anthropology students.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by identifying opportunities to enhance career development for undergraduate anthropology students.

The popularity of forensic-themed television shows focusing on aspects of forensic science (*Bones*, *CSI*, *Forensic Files*, etc.) has led to a concomitant increase in university enrollments in forensic-related fields, including forensic anthropology. Many of these undergraduate students lack the means or desire to pursue advanced degrees immediately upon matriculation, but employment opportunities in forensic-related fields for the graduate with an Anthropology BA are limited in Florida due to Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) regulations requiring a Bachelor of Science degree (in any field) prior to employment in all entry-level forensic science positions. Since 2006, the Department of Anthropology at the University of West Florida (UWF), in conjunction with the District One Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) in Pensacola, has offered forensic anthropology students the opportunity to intern at the MEO for academic credit, in the hopes of improving their employment prospects after graduation.

The forensic internship as developed at UWF is designed to allow students to clarify their career goals, to integrate theoretical concepts and knowledge obtained in the classroom with real-world employment situations, to gain practical on-the-job experience in a professional setting, and to gain work-related references and networking opportunities, which will enhance their marketability as professionals. Over the course of their internships, students have the opportunity to observe and assist with autopsies, attend and help document death scenes, assist in the field recovery of surface or buried skeletons, process/macerate decomposed bodies, familiarize themselves with Florida statutes governing the medical examiners system and the disposition of human remains, as well as to learn basic office management skills.

Over the past ten years, more than 30 anthropology students have participated in the internship program. The purpose of this presentation is to track the career trajectories of these students, and to evaluate the impact of the internships on the career prospects of undergraduate students in forensic anthropology. Of those interns whose post-graduate careers could be tracked, approximately 10% ultimately decided against a pursuing a career in the forensics field, 15% found employment immediately after graduation in an MEO, either locally or in another state, 27% were accepted into anthropology graduate programs, and 17% were accepted into forensic science graduate programs. The remaining students found employment in fields other than forensics or anthropology.

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#### **Internship, Medical Examiner's Office, Career Development**