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### **E78 The Changing Landscape of Forensic Science Education: How a Historically Black University Is Addressing the Need for Underrepresented Minorities**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand of an undergraduate forensic science program at a historically Black university and the importance of increasing the numbers of underrepresented minority forensic science graduates.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the benefits to forensic science and the criminal justice system of a more diverse forensic scientist population.

Forensic science educational programs have flourished since *CSI* first aired on television in October of 2000. In fact, more than 15 years later, there are more than 139 campuses in the United States that provide some type of forensic science program with either a BS, MS, associate's degree, or a certificate provided upon completion. Indeed, forensic science continues to be one of the high-need subject areas in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields at the national level. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that forensic science technicians will grow by 31% over the 2006–16 decade, faster than the average for all occupations, with job opportunities best for those who have a BA in forensic science.

Locally and nationwide, the number of forensic science graduates among minorities is very low. Currently, African Americans make up only 8% of forensic science program graduates. Thus, there is a strong need for the development of undergraduate forensic science programs and research for underserved minority populations. In 2013, Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) successfully implemented the Forensic Science Bachelor of Science degree program. At the present time, SUNO is the only university in Louisiana, and one of only four Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the nation, offering this degree.

SUNO's forensic science degree program is committed to producing technically knowledgeable and skilled graduates equipped with the basic foundational science and laboratory problem-solving skills necessary for success in the crime laboratory. Upon completion of the Forensic Science program, graduates will be prepared to function as forensic scientists or for advanced study in areas such as forensic science, biomedical research, medicine, and law. This presentation will reflect the challenges faced when establishing a forensic science program at an HBCU.

Ultimately, this program seeks to increase the number of African Americans in the field of forensic science in order to bridge the ever-widening gap in the criminal justice system in the United States. The broader impacts of this program include: (1) increased recruitment and full retention of underrepresented students with a strong commitment for academics, STEM fields, and the forensic science profession; (2) a significant advancement of the forensic science program at SUNO; (3) establishment of partnerships with K-12 schools and STEM teachers and students; and, (4) an improved critical transition from K-12 to undergraduate study. Other impacts include expansion and diversification of the forensic science workforce as well as serving as a sustainable model for supporting diverse, academically talented minority students in the forensic sciences.

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#### **Forensic Science Education, Underrepresented Minorities, STEM**