

## **B163** A Collaboration for Forensic Student Success: Bridging the High School-to-College Transition

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be knowledgeable regarding a new approach to forensic science students transitioning from K-12 studies into undergraduate programs. Attendees will learn about this transitionary program through a pilot research-focused internship conducted between a high school and a primarily undergraduate institution.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a model of how to prepare high school seniors for undergraduate forensic science programs on two different aspects: forensic science educational expectations and campus life expectations. Research has shown that a gap exists between secondary and post-secondary education due to a lack of consensus between K-12 graduation requirements and higher education curriculum requirements.<sup>1</sup> Although a tight collaboration between a high school and college forensic science program cannot endeavor to change requirements, the pilot internship provides a first glance at the skills and critical thinking needed to succeed in a forensic science undergraduate program. With the increase of interest in forensic science, universities and high schools have responded by developing summer programs, outreach programs, and college-level classes for students.<sup>2</sup> While these programs provide opportunities to promote the many sciences rooted in the forensic discipline, the transitionary program offers an advantage. Students have the ability to work on original forensic research, analyze samples via instrumentation, present their results, and explain how their studies impact real-world situations. The pilot program's hands-on experience with forensic research prepares students for the skills and critical thinking expected in forensic science.<sup>3</sup>

Any life transition is difficult, and the first year of college transition is oftentimes considered the hardest a young person's experiences. During this time, students may experience personal and emotional problems while struggling to be successful in the classroom. Many colleges and universities have created programs and courses to help ease the stressors encountered during this transition (e.g., first-year experience groups, orientation sessions, and individual counseling). Faculty and administrators also continually work toward addressing deficiencies in the classroom with tutoring, small class sizes, and individualized student support. The approach presented in the pilot internship addresses the deficiencies of college-bound young adults by creating an opportunity for students to begin this transition during their senior year of high school. The program allows the students to experience campus life through dorm housing, social activities, off-campus trips and field work. These experiences help to ease the transition of high school students to campus life.

The pilot program partnered a Philadelphia, PA, suburban high school with a rural Pennsylvania college. In the early summer of 2017, Keystone College hosted seven high school seniors with varied interests in the biological and physical sciences. Three students were interested in the forensic sciences and are the focus of this program assessment. The goal of the program was to immerse high school seniors in original forensic science research through a week-long internship program in which they live and learn on campus as college students. At the completion of the week, students gained laboratory, critical thinking, presentation, and research skills to carry into college. These newly acquired or enhanced skills will help them be successful in their high school-to-college transition. Original research focused on trace evidence analysis and the postmortem submersion interval was conducted and results will be presented. Data and evaluation through surveys of the students during the program and during their first term as college students will also be presented.

## **Reference**(s):

- <sup>1.</sup> Somerville, J., and Y. Yi. Curriculum and assessment systems. *Student success: Statewide P-16 systems.* (2003): 27-35.
- Ahrenkiel, Linda, and Martin Worm-Leonhard. Offering a Forensic Science Camp To Introduce and Engage High School Students in Interdisciplinary Science Topics. *Journal of Chemical Education*. 91, no. 3 (2014): 340-344.
- 3. Eeds, Angela, Chris Vanags, Jonathan Creamer, Mary Loveless, Amanda Dixon, Harvey Sperling, Glenn McCombs, Doug Robinson, and Virginia L. Shepherd. The school for science and math at Vanderbilt: An innovative research-based program for high school students. *CBE-Life Sciences Education*. 13, no. 2 (2014): 297-310.

## Education, K-12, College Transition