



E118 A Journal of Our Own: *The Journal of Forensic Science Education*—The Official Publication of the Council of Forensic Science Educators

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will be aware of a newly developed open-access journal titled *The Journal of Forensic Science Education* that is intended to be a resource to help forensic science educators: (1) develop pedagogy and curriculum appropriate to the forensic science discipline, (2) promote scholarship in forensic science education, and (3) serve as a communication resource between forensic science educators.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how *The Journal of Forensic Science Education* can further the goal of quality forensic science education by serving as a vital resource for educators that can help develop scientific competency in students at multiple levels.

An assessment of the forensic sciences, published in 1999 by the National Institute of Justice, described the educational and training needs of the forensic science community as “immense.”¹ This immense need has developed over the past three decades by the unprecedented demand of the criminal justice system for crime laboratory services due in large part to the development of technologies that can provide scientific information that previously could not be obtained. As a result of this demand, local, state, and federal government resources have been allocated to expand laboratory services, although the availability of individuals with the requisite skills and education to fill new positions is severely limited. To try and meet this need, undergraduate and graduate forensic science programs have developed at an unparalleled rate over the past two decades in the United States and abroad. An examination of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences website reveals more than 120 forensic science programs leading to a bachelor’s or master’s degree. This number is probably the proverbial “tip of the iceberg,” particularly considering that few international programs are listed. Considering that the vast majority of these programs did not exist 20 years ago is cause for optimism about the future of forensic science. However, at the same time, this rapid growth is cause for concern about the quality of many of these programs. In addition, the forensic science educational landscape is even bigger considering the number of high school science teachers who now teach forensic science courses, usually as popular science electives.

The Council of Forensic Science Educators (COFSE) was created more than 20 years ago with this goal in mind. COFSE objectives include the exchange of ideas and discussion of problems of common interest between forensic science educators and for educators to work collectively to upgrade the quality of forensic science education. COFSE is composed of individuals involved in forensic science education from the high school through graduate level. It has helped give rise to the “forensic science educator,” a concept distinct from educators of other scientific disciplines. COFSE is also the parent organization of Delta Delta Epsilon, an international honor society designed to recognize high-achieving forensic science students at the undergraduate and graduate level, furthering the idea of forensic science as more than simply an applied scientific discipline. At the annual meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in 2018, COFSE presented a full-day workshop on active learning in forensic science.

It makes sense, then, for COFSE to take the next step and establish an official publication. *The Journal of Forensic Science Education* will commence in 2019 and will be an international, peer-reviewed journal devoted to improving forensic science education pedagogy, laboratory and classroom activities, and promoting the scholarship of forensic science education. In many ways, it will be modeled after the *Journal of Chemical Education* offered through the American Chemical Society that has been in publication since 1924. Currently, the planning committee for the *Journal* is creating an editorial board and an on-line platform. The *Journal* will be open access and housed through the Texas Digital Library. Articles will be indexed through Google® Scholar and other databases. The *Journal* will welcome editorials, commentaries, letters, pedagogical articles, laboratory experiments, demonstrations, technology reviews, and books reviews. The *Journal* will serve to enhance communication among forensic science educators from high school to university and people interested in the teaching and learning of forensic science from forensic laboratories and government.

Reference(s):

¹. National Institute of Justice. *Forensic Sciences: A Review of Status and Needs*. 1999.

Forensic Science Education, Journal, COFSE