



B159 Are Forensic Science Programs Meeting the Current and Future Needs of Prospective Employers?

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will be familiar with forensic science educational programs in the United States, the skill sets gained by students in these programs, and the subsequent placement of graduates into forensic science laboratories.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing data to inform the discussion surrounding forensic science educational programs meeting the current and future needs of employers.

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of forensic science educational programs offered in the United States at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In the early 2000s, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences established the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC), with the aim of developing and implementing education standards to ensure the high quality of forensic science education programs. The FEPAC standards stipulate that forensic science degree programs must include core courses in forensic science topics and specialized science topics, as well as a capstone/research experience, which should culminate in a scholarly product, such as a presentation or publication. Further, programs must demonstrate interactions with forensic science laboratories that may include internships and collaborative research opportunities. Accreditation is granted for five-year cycles, and programs must undergo a rigorous reassessment process to be granted reaccreditation. As of July 2019, there are more than 25 undergraduate and 20 graduate programs currently accredited, meaning that each program has demonstrated implementation of and compliance with the standards.

In this joint session, representatives from different forensic science educational programs, local and federal hiring managers, as well as representatives of the legal profession and those who educate jurists, will provide information and data to fuel discussion regarding the question “Are forensic science programs meeting the current and future needs of employers and the criminal justice system?” In this presentation specifically, ways in which various forensic science educational programs implement FEPAC accreditation standards at both the undergraduate and the graduate level will be discussed. In one example, recent program changes that have been made to enhance the skill set of students will be presented, including additional required courses, a more formal research proposal presentation, and the incorporation of professional development opportunities. This presentation will also provide data on job placement of recent graduates and lessons learned from post-graduation surveys. In addition to FEPAC-accredited BS and MS programs, this presentation will also discuss the recent creation of two PhD programs in forensic science in the United States. This aspect of the presentation will describe the motivations and considerations for the PhD programs, the requirements of the programs, and some lessons learned following the first few years of operation of each program. Throughout the presentation, specific examples will be given to contribute to the discussion of “Are we meeting the current and future needs of employers and the criminal justice system?”

Forensic Science Education, FEPAC, Employer Needs