



### E114 Curriculum and Accreditation Pertaining to Crime Scene Investigation Education

*Mark Vecellio, MFS\*, Methodist University, Fayetteville, NC 28311; Erick P. Bryant, MFS\*, Colorado Bureau of Investigation, Arvada, CO 80002*

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**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will have gained insight into the current state of accreditation relating to crime scene investigation education and ideas concerning development of a model program.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community through discussion of potential benefits of accreditation and oversight of university crime scene investigation programs. Additionally, a proposed framework supporting an effective educational Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) program will be presented.

Traditional university forensic science programs generally prepare students for work in forensic laboratories. Such programs may be accredited through the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC), thus helping to standardize and maintain assurance of quality and relevant education. FEPAC accreditation, logically, focuses on the sciences. CSI work, however, is often completed by investigators who are not formally trained scientists nor have completed degrees in a scientific field. Many universities have developed programs focusing on preparing students for CSI or general investigative work; however, these programs are quite variable in terms of curriculum, the methods in which educational content is delivered, and quality.

The primary objective of this presentation is to raise awareness and initiate dialogue relating to accreditation of CSI educational programs. Though CSI work, especially at entry level, does not require the same depth of understanding of the sciences as does forensic laboratory work, it does require thorough knowledge and technique mastery of identification, collection, initial processing, and storage of physical evidence, as well as the ability to request relevant forensic exams of physical evidence that is recovered. Some research, and a wealth of professional anecdotal experience, suggests that evidence is routinely overlooked, improperly processed, or not submitted to forensic laboratories for appropriate testing, thus severely limiting the full capabilities of forensic science. It is thought that quality college education would naturally help correct this problem. Accreditation would help ensure students receive quality, rigorous education.

The second objective of this program is to encourage dialog concerning program objectives and coursework for CSI-related curriculum. A model program will be discussed. This program has undergone over ten years of refinement and development and is based upon training methods used by federal and state law enforcement training centers. The program grounds students in the basic science and the necessary hands-on skills to expertly locate, document, identify, process, collect, protect, and analyze many types of forensic evidence in support of felony investigations. This education/training prepares students for the potential to pursue advanced degrees as well as employment within the forensic science and law enforcement/investigative professions. In addition, the curriculum content is consistent with the primary national certification program.

Program coursework, in addition to general education requirements including life and physical science, consists of a theoretical foundation of courses, including the Introduction to Forensic Science, the Investigative Process, Drugs of Abuse, Homicide and Death Investigations, Forensic Profiling, and Forensic Firearms. Students also complete a series of lab-based courses, including Forensic Photography, CSI, Advanced CSI, and Crime Scene Reconstruction. Students engage in approximately 100 hours of practical exercises in addition to hands-on experience in internships.

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#### Education, Accreditation, Crime Scene Investigation