

# Focus on Forensics

Virginia Commonwealth University

VCU DEPARTMENT OF  
FORENSIC SCIENCE

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VCU's first *Truth in Forensic Science* event was a success on every imaginable level. Forensic Science faculty and students from the Forensic Science Student Club presented information at the February 3rd Open House about a variety of Forensic Science topics.

In addition to the traditional tour of campus, and University, College and Department information presented at the Seigel and Trani Centers, prospective students were invited to three teaching laboratories for a glimpse of some of the materials that they would study and work with in VCU classes. They met and talked with over 20 current students whose college experience is a great guide for them as they approach their college choices. Prospective students and their

families were treated to presentations by Student Club members, focusing on everything from toolmarks to toxicology. Presentations were grouped based on area of interest, biology, chemistry, and crime scene/general.

Briana Blinn, President of the Forensic Science Student Club, noted that many presentation groups were able to provide hands-on experiences to prospective students, including agarose gel loading, color tests, fingerprinting, alternate light sources, forensic anthropology, and a mock crime scene.

Club members spent hours in advance of the event researching



their topics, talking with faculty and putting together their presentation materials, including many handouts

The *Truth in Forensic Science* event was unique among the participating College Departments and Schools. Several visitors provided highly positive feedback that the event was an excellent "model" for future Open House events throughout the College.

## Stamp of Approval

At its January 6-7, 2007 meeting, the Forensic Science Education Programs Commission (FEPAC) of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) acted to award **full accreditation** for a term of five years to the Bachelor of Science Degree Program in Forensic Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Awarding of full accreditation by FEPAC followed the submission of a lengthy self-study document in the summer of 2006, revision and resubmission of the self study early in the fall 2006 following feedback from FEPAC, a comprehensive evaluation by a

two-member site-review team in October 2006, and review of the self-study and site-review team report by the Commission in January.

Full accreditation reflects the exceptional quality of the Department's undergraduate students, full- and part-time faculty, staff, Dean's office and other supporting VCU Departments and units, and our partnership with the Virginia Department of Forensic Science.

Pending announcements of other full accreditations awarded at the January 2007 FEPAC meeting,

VCU's B.S. in Forensic Science would be **one of only eight** fully accredited undergraduate Programs, and VCU is **one of only two** Universities with fully FEPAC-accredited B.S. and M.S. Forensic Science Degree Programs.

As with accreditation of the M.S. in Forensic Science Program in 2006, accreditation of the B.S. in Forensic Science Program could not have been achieved without a strong team effort over several years and involving numerous faculty, students, staff and advisors in planning and implementing a strong curriculum, provid-



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# FSSC Update

The new year offers a clean slate, a chance to begin anew.

As students we unofficially have a New Year twice a year. In August, we start a new and challenging academic year. In January we are presented with yet another beginning.

As the Forensic Science Student Club enters 2007 we will continue to feature our **Case Study Series**, highlighting the role of forensic science in Mass Disaster Recovery, Questioned Documents, Counterterrorism, Entomotoxicology, Forensic Anthropology and more!

We are also offering an insight into the difference between how forensic science is depicted on television and what to expect in reality.

This "CSI Effect" has caused an uproar in courtrooms in recent years. Please join us in analyzing the **Real to REEL: "CSI Effect"**.

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences has chosen VCU to host one of three **Forensic Science Educational Conferences** this summer! The conference is directed toward teaching high school teachers the ins and outs of forensic science.

**Volunteers are needed** to

help with registration, guides, and teaching assistants. The conference is scheduled for July 19-21.

Interested in a night of murder, mystery, costumes, and dinner?

Pencil in Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> on your calendar for the **FSSC's Murder Mystery Theatre Dinner!**

We plan to start around 5:30pm. We would love to offer this event free to all and dependant on how our fund-raisers go, it may be... until then please plan on contributing \$5 if you would like to join us. We have the Commonwealth Ballrooms booked so we would like as many of you as possible to join us for dinner!

Each table will have the opportunity to solve the mystery and win a prize. Please RSVP as soon as possible so we can plan dinner accordingly!

## Who will be the next FSSC President?

Are you an outgoing, motivated, full-time forensic science student interested in the *behind the scenes* workings of the FSSC?

If so, we are now accepting mission statements for the following positions on the

Executive Board for the 2007-2008/9 term:

- President
- Vice President
- Undergrad Board Members (2)
- Graduate Board Member

See our constitution on Blackboard for qualifications and job specifications. Please submit your mission statement and a photo of yourself by March 1.

We have more events planned and you will be notified via email and Blackboard throughout the semester!

Please send any comments, questions, mission statements, and/or volunteer inquiries to [fssc@vcu.edu](mailto:fssc@vcu.edu).

Thank you for all your continued support. We had a great fall semester and we look forward to making this semester even better! Have a wonderful 2007!

Best Wishes,

Briana Blinn

Briana Blinn  
FSSC President

Visit the FSSC Website:  
[www.studentorg.vcu.edu/fssc/](http://www.studentorg.vcu.edu/fssc/)  
Contact Briana with questions and/or comments:  
[blinnbm@vcu.edu](mailto:blinnbm@vcu.edu)

**FSSC Members gather  
in Front of the Shafer  
Court Dining Hall**



# Stamp of Approval

Continued from Page 1

ing extensive support to students faculty and staff, and hiring the best faculty and staff.

I would particularly like to note and recognize the many invaluable contributions of Ms. Dorothy Fillmore, Coordinator, Dr. Marilyn Miller, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Ms. Kristin Marland & Ms. Angelica Bega-Hart, Administrative Assistants, Mr. Peter Marone, Director of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science, and Ms. Ann Davis, Firearms and Toolmarks Section Chief, Virginia Department of Fo-

rensic Science.

I also want to note the critical roles of Dr. Paul Ferrara, former Director, Virginia Department of Forensic Science, Dr. Robert Holsworth, Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences, Dr. Eugene Trani, President, and the many students and alumni who made time to meet with the site-review team.

Finally, special thank yous go to Dr. Stephen Gottfredson, Provost, and Ms. Sherry Mikuta, founding Director of the Forensic Science Pro-

gram, for their foresight, many efforts and ongoing support in creating the B.S. in Forensic Science Program and helping it to become successful.

I thank and congratulate all involved in attaining this important milestone in the undergraduate Program's development and encourage all of you to continue to "Keep up the BRILLIANT work."

— Dr. Eggleston

**Calling All Alumni!**  
See Pages 4 and 5  
for more information about our  
alumni events at  
AAFS and MAAFS

## Checking in from Bristol

Our experience thus far in Bristol has been nothing but wonderful. The students are lively and fun and the staff have been more than accommodating.

This really is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and we plan to make the most of our time here both in our studies and in travel.

It is everything we could have hoped for and more.

—Audrey Thacker

Audrey Thacker and Denise Kropaczek take a little time out to do a little touring.



## In Service

I had the privilege of taking "Professional Practices in Forensic Science" (FRSC 490) in the first semester it was offered at VCU.

The premier service learning course for the Forensic Science program, the class is designed as a "capstone" senior seminar that focuses on the ethical and professional practices of forensic science and allows students to put everything they have learned to use.

This service learning class allowed us to travel to area middle schools and teach hands-on laboratories, forcing us out of our comfort zones and turning us from students

into teachers. Even though we brought pretty common techniques to the schools, fingerprint enhancement and hair and fiber analysis with a microscope seemed to be some of the only "real science" to which the students had ever been exposed.

We brought a fresh face and an interesting subject into the classroom, and the students were energetic and willing to learn and relate to the labs.

Taking FRSC 490 was a life-changing experience. Dr. Miller encouraged us to take our assignments to an unfamiliar and uncom-

fortable level, and that, in turn, helped us all to learn to think on our feet and to pull together the sum of our experiences and apply them to our task.

Seeing the looks on the students faces and realizing that they were interested in and actually learning something was exciting and inspiring.

Professional Practices ranks as one of my favorite classes and the absolute most meaningful experience I have had at VCU.

—Christopher Burnette

Don't forget to send us your alumni updates! Email us at [fos@vcu.edu](mailto:fos@vcu.edu)

# FSEC/VCU 2007

## VCU to host 14th Forensic Science Educational Conference

In December 2000, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) was released comparing US students with those of 41 other nations. At the end of 12th grade, our students ranked among the very lowest in math and science of the 42 countries.

Keenly aware of the deficiencies, middle- and high school science teachers are seeking appropriate methods to improve science competence in students.

With today's explosion of television programs and media coverage of the latest advancements in the forensic sciences,

students have become fascinated with anything relating to the work of the forensic scientist.

Wishing to foster a stronger interest in science learning, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences now co-sponsors Forensic Science Educational Conferences.

The goal of the Conferences is to increase science teachers' knowledge of the forensic sciences and to assist them as they enrich and/or develop challenging, innovative curricula.

VCU is honored to host this important event!

**The American Academy of Forensic Sciences, VCU, & Court TV present  
The 14th Forensic Science Educational Conference "Teaching Forensic Science: Behind the Scenes"**  
**July 19-21, 2007 Richmond, VA**

Topics: General Forensic Science with Law, Forensic Biology, and Forensic Chemistry presented by AAFS members

# MAAFS

Please plan to attend and present at the 2007 annual meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists (MAAFS) on May 23-25, 2007 at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capital Hill.

Registration, Abstract and Workshop forms and other information can be found at the MAAFS website <http://www.maafs.org/annualmtg2007.htm>.

This regional meeting of forensic scientists is more intimate than the much larger AAFS annual meeting and focuses on examiners in the mid-Atlantic region. Wednesday, May 23rd is devoted to discipline-specific workshops, ABC exams and the like.

Student registration is \$60, which is waived if presenting.

The conference organizers are accepting presentation requests through February 28th and still are looking for volunteers (contact Dr. Roc at 202-585-7263).

This is a great opportunity to get involved in the forensic science community, especially if you are unable to attend the annual AAFS meeting.

Please join the Department of Forensic Science for the "2nd Annual VCU Alumni and Students Reception", Thursday evening, May 24th at the Hyatt Regency.

This is great place to meet alumni and friends working in the field and to do some networking.

**Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists**

**2007 MAAFS Annual Meeting**

**May 23-25, 2007**

**Hosted by CSOSA/PSA Forensic Toxicology Laboratory &**

**The Forensic Toxicology Laboratory, District of Columbia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**

# Job Seeker's Top 10

By Haley Simms, University Career Center

- 1. Know your goal.** What type of job are you looking for?
- 2. Brainstorm.** Where would you want to work? Check out their website. They may not have posted their positions with the Career Center.
- 3. Be prepared.** Those who are proactive have more success than those who are reactive.
- 4. Write a strong resume & have it critiqued by as many people as possible.** A strong resume is often the first step in the job search.
- 5. Understand what a cover letter is and practice writing tailored cover letters for sample position descriptions.** The more you write them, the better you get.

- 6. Practice answering behavioral and technical interview questions.** Use Interview Stream as a private, mock interview tool. Set up an appointment for a mock interview with your Career Counselor, Haley Sims, [hgsims@vcu.edu](mailto:hgsims@vcu.edu).
- 7. Network!** This is the number one way people get jobs. If you're not sure what networking is all about, check out some of the books in the resource library of the Career Center or ask your Career Counselor.
- 8. Take advantage of all of the opportunities the Career Center provides** such as two Career Fairs per year, the Mock Interview program, preparatory workshops, the Employer Panel, etc. We are putting these events on for you!
- 9. Write down your progress.**

When you apply for a job, keep a record of it, maybe an Excel spreadsheet. Any time you follow up with the employer, make a note of it so you can keep track of the tangible steps you are taking in the process.

- 10. Remember that finding a full-time job is a full-time job.** Take action each and every day. Do something that will put you one step closer to obtaining that job.

For great resources, visit the University Career Center's website:

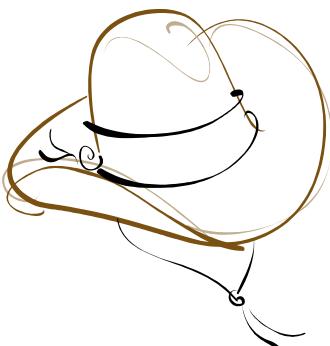
[www.students.vcu.edu/careers/](http://www.students.vcu.edu/careers/)  
 Frequently Used Tools  
 Resume Guide  
 Cover Letter Guide  
 Sample Interview Questions

**First Annual VCU Alumni & Student Reception**  
**Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**  
**Room 206B of the Henry B. Gomez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas**

## AAFS

Calling All Alumni, Students, Faculty and Friends attending the 2007 AAFS Meeting!!!

If you are attending the **2007 American Academy of Forensic Science's 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX**, please plan to join us for the **First Annual "Virginia Commonwealth University Alumni and Student Reception."**



We invite all alumni, faculty, students and friends to join us to enjoy the company of old, new and future friends, and partake of a Nacho bar and Texas-themed cash bar at 7:00-9:00 p.m., on Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, in room 206B of the Henry B. Gomez Convention Center.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Yippee-ki-yay!!!



# Important Dates

Please join us for these upcoming events!



## FEBRUARY 2007

- 2/3 Open House and "Truth in Forensic Science Day"
- 2/7 Dr. Carl Wolf, "The Chromatographic Detection of Drugs of Abuse in DUI/D Blood Samples, what drivers are really using"
- 2/14 Rebecca Bohr, "Evaluation of the Plexor™ GI Prototype Real-Time PCR Method for the Simultaneous Quantitation of Total Human Autosomal and Male DNA in Forensic Samples"
- 2/14 Last Day for Undergraduates to Submit work for removal of grades of "I"
- 2/19 AAFS Annual Conference Begins Conference continues through 2/24
- 2/28 Dr. Tim Croley, "Automated Identification of Potential Poisons and Toxins Employing LC/MS"

## MARCH 2007

- 3/1 Deadline to submit mission statement for consideration as FSSC officer
- 3/6 FEPAC Accreditation Celebration
- 3/7 Katie Carlson, "The Effects of Various Fabrics on Muzzle-to-Target Distance Determinations"
- 3/11 Spring Break Begins, continues 3/11-3/18

- 3/19 Summer Advance Registration Begins

- 3/21 Michelle Bonnette, "Primer and Cycle Number Modifications for the Improvement of STR Analysis after Degenerate Oligonucleotide Primed - PCR"

- 3/23 Last day to withdrawal with a grade of "W"
- 3/26 Advising week begins, see your advisor between 3/26/-3/30 if you haven't already

- 3/28 Lauren Claytor, "A Validation of Fracture Matching Through the Microscopic Examination of Fractured Surfaces"

## APRIL 2007

- 4/1 FSSC Hosts Mystery Dinner Theatre
- 4/4 Jordan Tidrick, "The Significance of Bunter Mark Association in a Limited Geographic Area"
- 4/10 Jessica Smith, "A Study of the Adaptation of the S.E.E. 2000 MSP to Permit Collection of Fluorescence and Dichroism Data"
- 4/14 Block Party for Accepted Undergraduates
- 4/18 Rachel Voiles, "The Analysis of Questioned Documents Using the ImageXpert™"
- 4/19 Deadline for Fall Internship Applications

- 4/25 Abby Gambrel, "Extraction and Analysis of Vegetable Oils from Fire Debris"

## MAY 2007

- 5/1 Last Day of Spring Classes
- 5/19 May Commencement
- 5/19 Department Diploma Ceremony

## JUNE 2007

- 6/29 Last day for summer degree candidates to submit graduation applications to their advisors for August degrees

## JULY 2007

- 7/19 Forensic Science Educational Conference Begins, Continues 7/19-7/21

## AUGUST 2007

- 8/22 Forensic Science Day
- 8/23 First Day of Fall Classes

Important  
DATES!

# Who's My Advisor?

If you haven't seen your advisor yet, you probably have lots of reasons. You can't find the time, you don't know what to ask, or maybe you don't even know who your advisor is. Students who see their advisor are often more successful and have

fewer problems than students who don't see their advisor. Maybe you've lost the contact information you had for your advisor, or maybe among class work, homework, exams and the like, you've forgotten who your advisor is? Don't despair!

Email us at [fos@vcu.edu](mailto:fos@vcu.edu) or drop by the main administrative office at 1000 West Franklin Street for more information.

## Fall 2007 Advance Registration :

\* Due to Banner implementation a full schedule was not available at the time of publication. Registration for Honors Students should begin on March 26th. The department will email students as soon as we know more.

## Comings and Goings



Tracey Dawson Cruz with the newest addition to her family, her son, Javier.

It is with great pleasure that we congratulate **Tracey Dawson Cruz** and her husband Ivan Cruz on the birth of their son, Javier Charles Cruz on December 20, 2006. We hear that all are doing well, other than some sleep deprivation.

Dr. Dawson Cruz is on leave during the spring 2007 semester to spend extended time with Javier and his sisters Kelsey and Gabriella.

The department also wishes to extend our many thanks and best wishes to **Dorothy Fillmore** and **Brian Shannon** as they move from

the Department to other opportunities.

Ms. Fillmore has played a leading role in the development and success of the Department since its inception as the Forensic Science Program.

We will greatly miss her, but wish her the greatest successes as she moves on to new challenges in the VCU Department of Psychology as its Associate Director of Academic Operations.

Similarly, we wish Mr. Shannon our best as he returns to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science at the conclusion of the spring 2007 semester to aid in the development of the newly created Mitochondrial DNA Analysis Laboratory here in Richmond.

We wish **Dr. Paul Ferrara**, Distinguished Professor of Forensic Science and Chemistry, our most heartfelt best wishes as he steps down as Director of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science to pursue more time on the links and on other projects.

We hope to help him find ways to bring his vast experience and expertise to the classroom in the fall and in the future. Dr. Ferrara was instrumental in the development and success of the B.S. and M.S. Programs in

Forensic Science at VCU, and in the accreditation of both Programs.

And finally, Congratulations to **Pete Marone**, Associate Professor of Forensic Science and Chemistry, as he begins his new role as Director of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science. Together with Dr. Ferrara and others, Mr. Marone has long supported and taught in the M.S. Program and played a critical role in the development and success of the new B.S. Program.

He too played important roles in accreditation of both programs. We look forward to continuing to work with Mr. Marone to enhance and build upon the exceptional relationship between VCU and DFS.

Please join us in congratulating and extending best wishes to each of these faculty members.



Dorothy has come to be a department fixture. We will miss her warm smile and her helpful guidance.

# Congratulations!!!!!

**Dr. Alphonse Poklis** was featured in *Capsule*, the alumni magazine of the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy

**Ms. Michelle Bonnette** received the VCU Graduate School Graduate Student Research Award (\$1,000)

**Ms. Lauren Claytor** received the AFTE Walter Howe Scholarship and a VCU Graduate School Graduate Student Research Award

**Ms. Jordan Tidrick** received the AFTE Steve Molnar Scholarship

**Atiya Jordan** was this year's recipient of the "Black History in the Making" Award

**Lindsay Buford** was selected as the alumni representative, and **Michael Cariola** was selected as the industry representative for the Department's Advisory Committee.

Affiliate faculty member **Pete Malone** was appointed Director of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science.



## Graduation

Join us in congratulating these students who plan to graduate in May 2007

### M.S. Candidates

Bohr, Rebecca C.  
Bonnette, Michelle D.  
Briley, Eileen M.  
Carlson, Katie Mee Soo  
Champagne, Jarrod R.  
Claytor, Lauren K.  
Erickson, Erin E.  
Gambrel, Abby K.  
Halphen, Aimee M  
Hill-Williams, Kristin D.  
Johnson, Kelly R.  
Seman, Lori B.  
Smith, Jessica J.  
Smith, Kristen L.  
Tidrick, Jordan M.  
Voiles, Rachel A.

Burnette, Christopher R.

Carias, Phoebe A.  
Connor, Katherine L.  
Dailey, Mariah D.  
DeStaercke, Benjamin J.  
Dibble, Breanne G.  
Dillon, Candace E.  
Farley, Laura B.  
Faulkner, Ashley R.  
Grauer, Viktoria C.  
Howard, Altovise N.  
Hussain, Farrukh M.  
Kamoun, Houda M.  
Martin, Loree B.  
Mekonen, Yealemget  
Monkres, Jeremy  
Murphy, Ian J.  
Newcomb, Bridgette A.  
Orosco, Alexander C.  
Pairett, Autum N.  
Postell, Patrell E.  
Quinn, Leah M.

Razi, Fatima

Thomson, Irene E.  
Vega, Krystall J.  
Voultsis, Evangeline  
Wadi, Hassan O.  
Walski, Naomi J.  
Weinheimer, Samantha M.

### Join us for Spring Commencement Exercises!

**May 19, 2007**

**University Commencement:**  
Richmond Coliseum  
10am

**Departmental Diploma Ceremony:**  
Business Building Auditorium  
2pm

### B.S. Candidates

Bareford, Jonathan W.  
Bertsche, Joseph V.  
Buford, Emily S.

