

Focus on Forensics

Volume 6, Issue 1

Fall 2007

Welcome Week Features Forensic Science and Others for Science Day Event

Though the day started out dreary, warm smiles from faculty and students in Forensic Science, Chemistry, Biology and other Science departments soon filled the courtyard of the Life Sciences Building with brightness and energy.

Science Day is an outgrowth of last year's Forensic Science Day, and offers an opportunity for students to meet faculty, get tour of their departments, meet fellow students, get information on research and scholarship opportunities, interact with student club members and ask questions of representatives from other University programs, such as the learning center, the career center and study abroad.



Students were also treated to lunch and new students received a brief departmental orientation.

Making the event part of the Welcome Week Activities and recruiting students via email and Facebook resulted in nearly 100 students attending this year's event.

We are working to make next year's Science Day even bigger and better. If you have suggestions for next year's Science Day, or if you'd like to volunteer contact fos@vcu.edu or the student club president, Ally Woosley for more information.



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Student Club Update

Meet our new faculty!

Students discuss study abroad

Career advice for all students

Forensic Science Events

VCU Forensic Science students gather around the Forensic Science Student Club table for Science Day.

Focus on Forensics



Club president Ally Woosley shows local students hands-on forensic science techniques.

“The event was filled with theatrical characters ...”

“Next of Kin” was performed before a packed house. Nearly 100 people attended the event in support of the Forensic Science Student Club.



Forensic Science Student Club Update

Hello Everyone,

As the new president of the Forensic Science Student Club, I welcome everyone back to VCU for the Fall 2007 semester. The executive board and I are very excited about the upcoming year.

We are excited to kick off the semester helping with Science Day. We will welcome new members, sign-up members for different committees, order apparel, and of course, answer any questions you might have. As a student organization, we want to assist you in any way possible with an educated and experienced mind.

Events for this semester will be similar to previous years.

We will continue our speaker series. This is a way for you to meet and make important contacts for later in your career.

We will also have another “Truth about Forensic Science” event at one of the upcoming Open Houses. Last year’s event was a hit and the club got many compliments for our hard work. We hope to exceed even those expectations for this year’s “Truth in Forensic Science Day.”

We are trying very hard to accommodate all schedules when planning our events this semester. We understand that some of the times we pick, are not convenient for everyone and we would love

to hear from club members if this occurs. Feel free to e-mail me (woosleyac@vcu.edu) or the executive board (fssc@vcu.edu) with any questions, comments or concerns.

If you are not a member of our club and would like to be, please email me and I will be happy to add you to our mailing list and our Blackboard website. Good luck to everyone this semester and please come out to support our club at as many events as you can.

Thank you,

Ally Woosley

FSSC President '07-'08

For club updates and information, email fssc@vcu.edu

Forensic Science Student Club Members get set to perform “Next of Kin”. The event was a huge success for the club!



FSSC Murder Mystery Dinner Theater

This past April, the Forensic Science Student Club hosted a new event, a Murder Mystery Dinner Theater. The event was a huge success and club members can be sure to see a repeat this year.

The play, titled “Next of Kin,” was about a family’s mixed-up feud over who would inherit

Big Daddy’s large fortune. The event was filled with theatrical characters and wonderful Italian food. The dinner theater kept the crowd engaged with the twisted plot and comical performers.

Nearly 100 people attended and many left with ‘Clue-themed’ and ‘CSI-related’

door-prizes. The FSSC board has already begun planning the next Murder Mystery Dinner Theater, so please let a board member know if you are interested in acting or helping with the next show. For more information email fssc@vcu.edu.

We’ll see you there!

Who's My Advisor?

Early in the semester all students will receive an email with the name of your academic advisor.

If you do not receive the email, or if you misplace it, please contact the administrative office at 1000 West Franklin Street in order to get the name of your faculty advisor. Call 804-828-8420 or email fos@vcu.edu.

Remember, your advisor is an important link to the University and the Forensic Science Community and you should see your advisor at least once a semester.

The following is contact information for all of the advisors in Forensic Science. So if you already know who your advisor is, why not call and set up an appointment?

Dr. Tracey Dawson Cruz
Life Sciences Building
Room 313
804-828-0642
tcdawson@vcu.edu

Dr. William Eggleston
1000 West Franklin Street
Room 106
804-828-0799
weggles@vcu.edu

Mr. Eric Hazelrigg
Life Sciences Building
Room 349
804-828-0075
ejhazelrigg@vcu.edu

Dr. Marilyn Miller
Life Sciences Building
Room 314
804-828-0765
mtmiller@vcu.edu

Dr. Michelle Peace
1000 West Franklin Street
Room 104
804-827-8591
mrpeace@vcu.edu

Ms. Sarah Seashols
1000 West Franklin Street
Room 109
804-827-8597
sseashols@vcu.edu

Dr. Diane Williams
Life Sciences Building
Room 008
804-827-8596
dkwilliams@vcu.edu

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Advisors can provide students with important information about classes and career options.

Stay Ahead of the Curve

Have you noticed that little line at the bottom of your syllabus encouraging you to sign up for VCU alerts via email and text message?

Have you done it yet?

If not, doing so is simple and easy. Simply log on to <http://www.vcu.edu/alert/>

and click on "Sign Up for Alerts", or go directly to <http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify/>.

Text messaging is reliable and fast. Nevertheless, text messaging is only effective if everyone signs up and keeps his

or her information up-to-date. For that reason, we urge you to enroll today. And to keep your information current.

Forensic Science, Now on Facebook

Have a Facebook account? Now, so does VCU Forensic Science!

Just add the "Forensic Scientist" page on the VCU network to your Facebook account in order to get the latest updates to our calendar and more.

Have a great suggestion?

Write it on our wall!

Communicate with classmates without sending an email. Find more information in more places.

We'll try to post as much as possible over the coming months to try it out.

Please remember to give us

feedback so we'll know what we're doing right and what we can do better. As always, if you have time-sensitive material please call or email us directly at 804.828.8420 or aebega@vcu.edu

See you on Facebook!

Reminders

Galore!!!

VCU alert

facebook

*** REMEMBER TO ADD FORENSIC SCIENTIST TO YOUR FACEBOOK FRIENDS!**



“Studying abroad was an unbelievable experience.”

Around the World and Back Again

It wasn't until I stepped off the plane at Heathrow and was surrounded by all things British, that it hit me – I had just thrown myself into a foreign country for five months, where I knew just one person and I didn't have a clue what to expect.

The semester passed too quickly, and any hesitations or worries I'd gone over with have long since disappeared. I loved every minute of life at UWE and would do it again in a heartbeat!

Being the foreigner really gives you a new perspective on things. Every experience is new and wonderful, and even little things such as figuring out the money system are major accomplishments.

I'd never been outside of the United States before, and for my first experience in another country, studying abroad was the way to go. The staff and students at the University of the West of England were all very friendly, understanding, and accommodating.

Throughout the semester, I

kept in close contact with my lecturers and advisors, all of whom were very helpful.

While at UWE, I took Organic Chemistry 2, Genetics, and Forensic Biology and Forensic Chemistry. All classes meet on a two week rotating basis – often times I had labs one week and lectures on the other week.

In comparison to VCU, the laboratory time is a strong focus, as hands-on experience is an essential part of the learning process. I thoroughly enjoyed the labs, which included blood spatter analysis, document examination, and all the classic forensic tests.

In addition to class work, I wanted to branch out and get more involved at UWE. I am on the rowing team here at VCU, so I joined the rowing team at UWE.

I highly recommend joining either a club or sports team during your time abroad, as it's a great way not only to meet people and form friendships, but also to travel and see how that club or sport

varies in another culture.

UWE is located in Bristol, about two hours west of London. The city itself is full of history and places to discover.

Many afternoons were spent at the riverside, at the museum, at the shopping center, and exploring the large churches. Bristol also has its own airport with frequent (and cheap!) flights all over Europe.

A large portion of the learning experience with studying abroad is about other cultures and figuring out how to get around on your own, not just classroom smarts.

Audrey, the other VCU student who went over to UWE, and I became good traveling buddies, going all around England and also to Spain, Ireland, and Scotland.

Studying abroad was an unbelievable experience. I strongly urge you to find out more if you are interested.

Denise Kropaczek

Denise Kropaczek stands in front of Scotland's Rogie Falls. Becoming involved in the rowing team at UWE allowed Denise a connection to the University she may have missed out on otherwise.



New Faculty Fill in the Blanks



Michelle Peace

B.S., Chemistry, Wittenberg University

M.S., Forensic Science, George Washington University

Ph.D., Pathology, Virginia Commonwealth University

- Forensic Science is always challenging, always growing - an answer to your creative and scientific cravings
- The most important skill any scientist can possess is (Besides great pipetting technique!) Accurate, contemporaneous note-taking.
- One thing I would like students to take away from my courses is that they need to have a passion for science, which drives them to study and understand without thinking about "writing for the exam".
- If I were not a Forensic Scientist I would be a National Geographic Photographer
- My favorite thing to do outside the classroom/lab is anything with my German Shepherd, Zilpo - I take her everywhere - I'd love to bring her to school!
- One thing I cannot tolerate is someone's inability to take responsibility for their actions.
- If I could have a superpower it would be telekinesis.
- The best book I have read recently is The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary by Simon Winchester.

Diane Williams

B.A. Art History & Chemistry, Hollins University

Ph.D. Chemistry, Virginia Tech

- I have made my career as a Forensic Scientist because no two days are ever the same and I enjoy creatively solving different types of problems.
- If I were not a Forensic Scientist, I would be an art history or philosophy professor.
- Forensic Science is still in it's infancy; we have much to learn.
- The most important skill any scientist can possess is curiosity combined with problem-solving ability.
- One thing I would like students to take away from my courses is an understanding of how to think creatively.
- My favorite thing to do outside the classroom/lab is read.
- One thing I cannot tolerate is discrimination in any form.
- If I could have a superpower it would be never having to sleep so I'd have more time!
- The best book I have read recently is Small Wonder by Barbara Kingsolver. It's a beautiful collection of essays that she wrote in the aftermath of 9/11 about the importance of understanding our world.

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Forensic Science Faculty including new faculty Michelle Peace enjoy lunch with Forensic Science students on Science Day.

*Forensic Science
is still in it's
infancy; we have
much to learn.*





Start planning
now for career
options



Helpful advice from career guru Haley Sims.

Year by Year, to a Great Career!

Hello Forensic Science Students! My name is Haley Sims and I am your Career Consultant in the University Career Center (in the Student Commons).

Here are some of the things you can be doing each year to stay on track. I can help you with any of these, just ask – hgsims@vcu.edu or 804.828.1645. I look forward to working with you!

FRESHMAN YEAR:

- Create/update your resume and references. Email me to ask for samples – hgsims@vcu.edu
- Get a Career Connections account (visit the front desk any time to do this).

SOPHOMORE YEAR:

- Get involved – attend Forensic Science Student Club Meetings and Career Center events.
- Begin writing cover letters for the positions you may be interested in when you graduate. Check out the Job Search Correspondence Handout on our website (www.students.vcu.edu/careers/) which goes over exactly what to write in a cover letter and gives examples.

JUNIOR YEAR:

- Look for relevant experience – internships, externships, co-ops, shadowing, related part-time job, volunteer work, etc.
- Practice interviewing

- Use the questions on our website to write down your examples or practice with a friend: www.students.vcu.edu/careers/ ... look under Frequently Used Tools
 - Use Interview Stream (it's a pre-recorded interviewer who asks you questions and a webcam records your answers).
 - If you have a webcam, you can use this from home; just click Interview Stream on our website: www.students.vcu.edu/careers/
 - If you don't have a webcam you can sign up for an appointment online to use it in the Career Center.
 - Schedule a mock interview with me. Just send me dates and times that you're available (hgsims@vcu.edu).
 - Attend our Mock Interview program in the Spring to get feedback from real employers.
 - If you're thinking about graduate school, begin researching programs and what you will need to do in order to apply on time (deadlines, applications, GREs, personal statement, letters of reference, etc.)
 - Check local employers' websites (ask me for the science employers handout)
 - Network - you never know what will come up in everyday conversation
 - Attend the Career Fair & network with employers – October 10, 2007 & February 6, 2008
 - Brush up on Salary Negotiation skills
 - Visit www.quintcareers.com and check out the tutorial in the Career Toolkit and www.salary.com
 - National Association of Colleges & Employers (NACE) average offer
 - d. If they ask for salary requirements, you can always give a range (between 5-7,000 dollars) and you can list this information in your cover letter if you're not sure where to do so.
- Track everything - when you apply for a job, write down (Word, Excel or a notebook) where you applied, for what position, how you applied (mail, website, etc.), the date you applied, who the contact person is, if you've followed up, what the timeline is, etc

SENIOR YEAR:

- Look for job descriptions you're interested in:
- Search Career Connections

Forensic Science Celebrates Accreditation



This past Spring Forensic Science faculty, staff, and students came together to celebrate FEPAC accreditation for the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs. Forensic Science Student Club President Briana Blinn joins Dr. Marilyn Miller and past Forensic Science Student Club President Jill Grizzard at the celebration reception on March 6th, 2007.



Drop In for Drop-In Advising

Want to get answers to questions you might have about certain career paths? Are you thinking about graduate programs? What will it really take to **do** Forensic Biology or Forensic Chemistry for a living?

All of these questions and more can be asked of your favorite professors by attending one of our Drop-In Advising Brown Bag Sessions.

These sessions are available to all Forensic Science Majors in addition to your regular

advising component. The Drop-In Advising is designed to be an informal discussion or Q & A, so make the most of it.

Please plan to attend one of Drop-In Advising Sessions.

Congratulations!

Every issue we highlight student and faculty awards and honors through our newsletter. If you have received an award or honor, please email Angelica at aebega@vcu.edu.

Stephanie Karczynski was awarded the ASCLD scholarship and was also nominated for the Who's Who Among Students In American Universities.

Elsa Jacob was awarded the Emily R. Murphy scholarship.

Jeanette Aiken was awarded the Carol and Marcus Weinstein Honors Scholarship and was inducted into the Society of Toxicology and

the American Chemical Society. She also participated in the Honors Summer Undergraduate Research Program

Katherine Moore was inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi and the Golden Key International Honor Society

Dr. Alphonse Poklis was a guest Speaker on "Murder and Suicide by Poison" at the "19th Annual Law Enforcement Conference" at Seven Springs Resort in Pennsylvania.

Congratulations also to those students planning to graduate in December 2007!

- GinaMari Blackwell
- Felicia Brown
- Brittney Clark
- Crystal Corbin
- Ashley Faulkner
- Sean Fox
- Bethany Guckert
- Altovise Howard
- Eric Lauer
- Bronwyn Piper
- Mary Frances Shore
- Crystal Sweet
- Dierdre Terlep

Get Involved!

Focus on Forensics



Ashley Nelson was accepted into the RUMBA program to do research study at San Jose State University this summer for 10 weeks.

“...I was the only out-of-state student”



Lisa Schwenk spent her summer at the ATF absorbing as much knowledge as she could in preparation for her second year in the graduate program at VCU.

Ready to RUMBA!

Over the summer I participated in the Research for Undergraduates using Molecular Biology Applications (RUMBA) program at San Jose State University in San Jose, California.

RUMBA is a ten week research program supported by the NSF-REU. There were a total of eight students who participated, and I was the only out-of-state student.

In the program there were five mentors including my mentor, Dr. Julio Soto, who is head of a biology lab at San Jose State University.

I was given an original research project to work on for the entire ten weeks. The title of my research project was Determining if the ARE1 sites in the coding sequence of

HRO-Twist play a role in mRNA stabilization

Also, every two weeks each participant was required to give a presentation of methods and results that were accomplished for that two week time period.

At the end of the ten week program, I had to give a formal presentation on the project that I worked on for the ten weeks in front of the Dean of the Biology department and other students and professors.

Along with the presentations we were also required to write a journal style paper on our research. The abstracts were submitted to SACNAS (The Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science).

I am now working on developing a poster on my research to present at the SACNAS National Conference in Kansas City, Missouri. In addition to all the work we also took group trips.

In all, it was a great learning experience that has prepared me for future lab work and research. I hope that others when presented with similar opportunities will take full advantage of the chance to experience research first hand.

Summer at the ATF

I was given the opportunity to intern with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Forensic Science Laboratory – Washington, focusing on two research projects, both using gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS).

I walked into this experience expecting to become familiar with two different instrument operating systems and to gain insight into the inner workings of a forensic lab.

My internship far surpassed any of my expectations. Not only did I refine my understanding of GC-MS instrumentation, but I gained first-hand

knowledge of the inner workings and professional atmosphere of a Federal agency.

Obviously, my primary goal was to absorb as much knowledge as possible during those three months regarding applications of forensic chemistry and how to achieve my career goals. I did, in fact, do that.

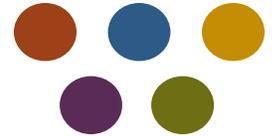
I am confident that my understanding of forensic science has dramatically increased, benefiting my second year graduate studies at VCU. On the other hand, I also formed invaluable relationships with my coworkers and supervisors – something that cannot be learned in the classroom.

I recommend that all students take full advantage of any internship opportunities that come their way. It is amazing how much I discovered about chemistry, and myself, in one summer.

Whether working independently in the lab or discussing research results with my coworkers, I was constantly learning about forensic chemistry. I was encouraged to ask questions and share my opinions. I could not have asked for a better internship.

Forensic Science Educational Conference

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This summer VCU was privileged to host the 13th Forensic Science Educational Conference. Teachers from all over the country came to VCU to attend the conference, co-sponsored by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and CourtTV and co-hosted by VCU and the Virginia Department of Forensic Science.

By all accounts, the conference was a great success thanks to planning by Dr. Eggleston, Dr. Miller, Ann Davis of DFS, and the rest of the program committee, including very dedicated local teachers.

During the three days, July 19th, 20th, and 21st, teachers learned about a wide range of forensic science topics and were given ideas for hands-on labs they could perform in their own classrooms.

Teachers became students as they listened to lectures about Forensic Anthropology, Toxicology, Law, Entomology, Pathology, Odontology, and

Teaching Forensic Science. They spent time in the lab working with blood spatter, DNA, vehicle lamps, fibers, fingerprints, drugs, questioned documents, and gun shot residue. They were also treated to informative lunches and attended a spectacular reception sponsored by the College of Humanities and Sciences.

While some of the teachers were old hands at teaching forensic science, others were learning about the field in-depth for the first time.

There were, of course, countless people working behind the scenes, all of whom deserve a tremendous “thank you” from the Department. We’d like to take this opportunity however, to recognize, students and alumni who contributed so much to the program.

Our thanks go out to the following student volunteers, Briana Blinn, GinaMari Blackwell, Allyson Woosley, Sarah Carney, Colleen Moore, Elizabeth Beirne, Bethany Guckert,

Rachel Monteran, Pamela Parker, Candace Thompson, and TA’s, Mark Bennett, Kellie Garcia, Leslie Guion, and Alexe Pittock.

Thanks also to all of the alumni who returned to assist, including Ann Davis, Shannon Buskirk, Eric Hazelrigg, Jarrod Champagne, Katherine Butler, and to Drs.

Alphonse Poklis and Carl Wolf who helped us at a moment’s notice!

A huge thanks also, to Pete Marone for his efforts and to everyone at VA DFS for their help in making the conference an exciting experience for the teachers.



Dr. Alphonse Poklis shares his insights with middle and high school science teachers during a Toxicology lab exercise

*Thanks to everyone
for your hard work!*



Virginia Department of Forensic Science Director, Pete Marone works with two Richmond City teachers on perfecting the angle for a blood spatter exercise.



Volunteers Needed for AAFS/DC 2008!

The 2008 AAFS Annual Meeting is scheduled for February 18-23, 2008, in Washington, DC. Volunteers are needed to accomplish an array of tasks throughout the week of the meeting.

Volunteers who are not members of the Academy may receive complimentary registration to attend all non-ticketed sessions of the meeting with a minimum of 8 hours of completed volunteer service at the meeting. Please note: Individuals receiving complimentary registration

are not eligible for continuing education credit.

Although AAFS Members do not receive complimentary registration for volunteering, the Academy does need its members to volunteer.

Your service to the Academy is recognized as instrumental in making the event a success. Persons accompanying attendees are also welcome to volunteer if they wish.

Credit Card information is now required, however, your card will only be charged

should you attend the meeting for free and fail to fulfill your volunteer commitment.

Volunteer Applications must be received no later than December 1, 2007, and are accepted on a first come, first served basis. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

See your advisor or email aebega@vcu.edu for registration forms.



The Young Forensic Scientists Forum

Forensic Scientist Forum requests participants for the Annual Poster Session as part of the: American Academy of Forensic Sciences 60th Annual Meeting being held February 18-23, 2008 at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC

This session is designed for Undergraduate or Graduate Students to present Academic Research and Unique or Education Casework

Present YOUR work in a relaxed, informal atmosphere to a broad audience including foren-

sic students, scientists, administrators, and faculty!

Guidelines for Creating a Professional Poster

Poster Content should include:

- Introduction to the relevant area of forensic science
- Overview of methods used in the research or casework
- Results (including spectra, tables, and pictures)
- Conclusions drawn (academic and legal)

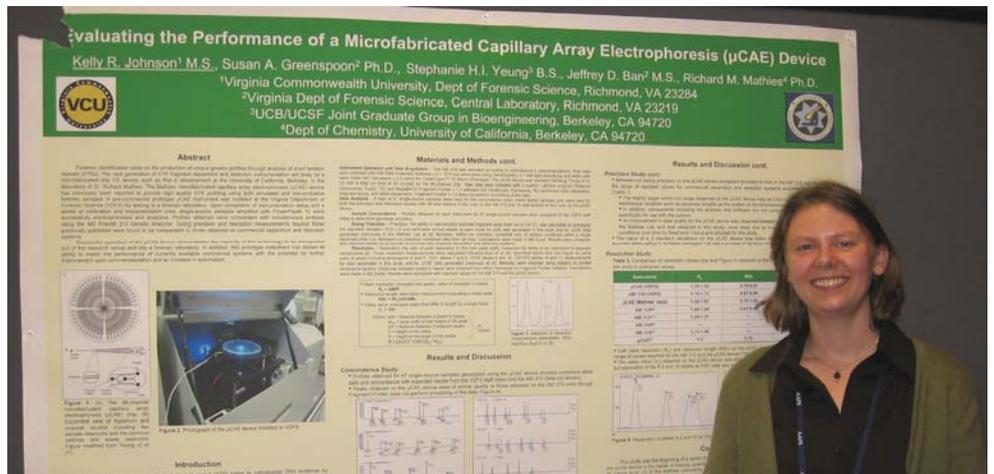
Other Suggested Presentation Material:

- Business cards or other contact information

- Handouts of the poster
- Handouts of the manuscript

Please submit your Curriculum Vitae and 1-2 paragraph abstract to the Poster Chair, Arliss Dudley-Cash, by January 1, 2008, at yfsfposter@gmail.com

Forensic Science Graduate Student Kelly Johnson presents at the 2007 Young Forensic Scientists Forum at the American Academy of Forensic Science Meeting in San Antonio, Texas.





Forensic Science Graduate Students gather to discuss the day's events at the VCU sponsored Reception for faculty, students, and alumni



Several undergraduate presenters pose with Forensic Science faculty member, Marilyn Miller

Forensic Science Students Travel to AAFS Annual Meeting

This spring, thanks to a student engagement grant funded by the College of Humanities and Sciences, several Forensic Science students were given travel funds to help them attend professional meetings. Many students who received awards used the funding to attend the AAFS Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Also, this year, for the first time, the VCU Department of Forensic Science sponsored an alumni reception, where students, faculty and alumni all came together to discuss their shared experiences as Forensic

Scientists. The reception featured a nacho bar and beverages and some very cute stuffed armadillos! We hope to sponsor a similar alumni function at the 2008 conference to be held in Washington D.C., where we'll be sending a large group to attend and present

The annual Academy meeting is a good chance for students to experience first hand the expectations of a professional meeting. In addition, students can listen to topics in a number of areas they might not otherwise have the opportunity

to access during their college careers.

Over twenty current and recent VCU students and faculty made or were co-authors of presentations or posters at this Spring's American Academy meeting, and each year that number grows.

For more information about AAFS and how you can be part of the 2008 delegation, please talk to you advisor and visit <http://www.aafs.org>.



VCU Forensic Science students who presented at the AAFS Conference in San Antonio gather for a group photo.



Sarah Carney takes a brief break from her volunteer duties during the Forensic Science Educational Conference this summer to pose for a picture with Forensic Odontologist Brion Smith.



Summer at the DFS Eastern Lab

“I got to see all the internal components and even cleaned the ion source for one of the mass specs”

Through the generosity of both the DFS lab director in Norfolk and her staff, I spent about five weeks observing forensic science in action.

My host section was Drug Analysis, where I watched scientists analyze samples for marijuana, cocaine, heroin, Ecstasy, meth, and other controlled substances.

My visit coincided with the annual maintenance of the gas chromatographs, so I got to see all the internal components and even cleaned the ion source for one of the mass specs. The section supervisor had also identified several new color tests for ketamine in the literature that I investigated using various concentrations of the lab's ketamine standard.

I got a crash course on fingerprint examination from the Latent Prints supervisor, who had a few projects planned for me as well. We ran identical sample sets (not evi-

dence) through both the atmospheric cyanoacrylate fuming chamber and the vacuum fuming chamber and compared the resolution of the developed prints. We also experimented with several washes following dye-staining. My other stops included Trace, Firearms, and Toxicology. In addition to a general introduction, I got to observe trace and firearms examiners work on victim clothing from a hit and run and a neighborhood shooting, respectively.

Surprises. The biggest surprise in the drug analysis lab was that there is very little quantitation. Their primary objective is to determine the presence of a controlled substance, not the concentration.

While the scientists have the knowledge and equipment to determine quantity, they typically use a combination of microscopy, color tests, thin layer chromatography, and GC/MS to identify controlled

substances in their samples. Another surprise was how useful those painful organic chemistry classes turned out to be...

Thoughts on the Future. One of the most important things I gained from this internship was the knowledge that I could work in a lab – in fact, I liked being in a lab. I also got in touch with my inner mass spec geek.

I am looking forward to my remaining Forensic Science coursework, especially microscopy and instrumental analysis. I may have a way to go, but at least I am on the right road.

Thanks to Dr. Miller and Dr. Eggleston at VCU, and Director Uremovich, Susan Stanitski and her staff, and Lee Kennedy at DFS for making this internship possible.

-Sarah Carney

New Faculty Fill in the Blanks

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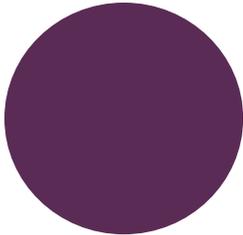
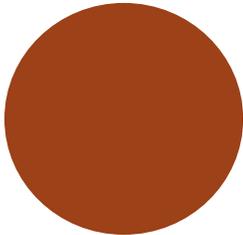
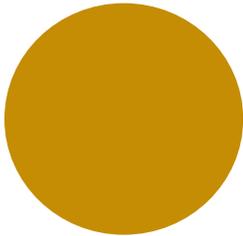
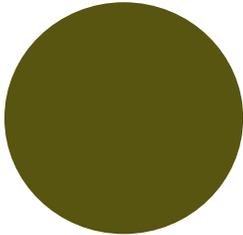
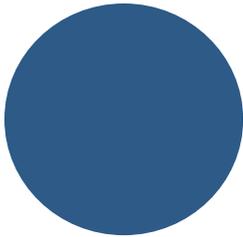
Sarah Seashols

B.S. Biology, The College of William and Mary

M.S. Criminal Justice, Virginia Commonwealth University

- I have made my career as a Forensic Scientist because I became interested in Forensic Science while performing Biochemistry & Molecular Biology research on the MCV campus, shortly after college. I didn't know anything about the "CSI effect", and I didn't know a lick about forensic science. All I knew was that I loved molecular biology, and I thought that Forensic Biology would be a great way to apply my knowledge and skills, while making a contribution to society. Although I started out ignorantly, it turned out to be a great choice.
- If I were not a Forensic Scientist, I'd be a farmer and horse trainer. In fact, I am a farmer and a Forensic Scientist. My husband and I have 25 acres east of Richmond, and it, along with our two daughters, requires much of my evenings and
- weekends.
- Forensic Science is the application of science to the law
- The most important skill any scientist can possess is objectivity. You need to be able to put away your bias, whether it is your hypothesis when working at the research bench, or the case circumstances when analyzing evidence. I can't stress that enough.
- One thing I would like students to take away from my courses is that in class, we may get caught up in the details— mechanisms, components, protocols. We do this so they become ingrained in your mind. Your career will be much more varied and exciting. Cases are always different. Finding the key to a case can be a thrill, and reporting results and testifying can be very fulfilling. However, the way you analyze cases must be consistent, rational, and according to established procedures. Therefore, in order to get that exciting career, you have to understand the basics and grasp the concepts.
- My favorite thing to do outside the classroom/lab is to ride my two horses, Queso & Zeke. Queso is my best buddy, and partner for the 50 mile endurance rides we enjoy competing in. Zeke is a young horse that I'm training, hopefully to be my new foxhunting mount -- time will tell.
- One thing I cannot tolerate is apathy. As a teacher, I'm energized when people are excited to learn and asking intelligent questions, and I am happy to help those that are struggling to succeed, but I can't tolerate apathetic people.
- If I could have a superpower ...I'm very happy with my life without superpowers...
- The best book I have read recently is ... let's make that the book I am most looking forward to reading... I can't wait until Winter Break comes so that I can read The World Without Us, by Alan Weisman. It's about what would happen to the world— cities, rural areas, etc., if every human being suddenly disappeared – how the earth would go about healing itself and what artifacts of civilization would endure.

Finding the key to
a case can be a
thrill



Departmental Calendar

October 2007	November 2007	December 2007
October 4—FSSC Speaker, Dr. Jim Burns, Forensic Odontologist, Richmond Salon II	November 2—Last day to withdraw from a course with a mark of “W”	December 8—December Commencement and Diploma Ceremony
October 9—Drop-In Advising, Michelle Peace	November 3—Second Fall Open House	December 10-18—Final Examinations for Fall classes
October 10—Fall Career Fair	November 5—Spring semester registration begins for all students	December 21-January 2—University Closed for Winter Break
October 13—First Fall Open House	November 11—Veterans Day, University open, classes in session	
October 18-19—Reading Days, University Closed	November 12—Drop-In Advising, Sarah Seashols	
October 22—Tracey Dawson Cruz	November 19—Drop-In Advising, Eric Hazelrigg	
October 22-26—Advising Week	November 22-25—University closed for Thanksgiving Holiday	
October 31—Drop-In Advising, Marilyn Miller		

VCU Paved the Way



Benjamin DeStaercke is proud of the education he received at VCU. He is now working for the State of Wisconsin lab as a Forensic Scientist.

Without my VCU forensic science degree, I might never have had the good fortune to get a position as a DNA Analyst with the state of Wisconsin (my home state).

This was the first, and last, job I interviewed for, and I am certain that the reputation of VCU's program, helped convince the interview committee of the Wisconsin Department of Justice that I was well prepared for the position of DNA analyst.

VCU is one of very few accredited schools that offer a degree

in forensic science. Doors are opened for many applicants because they have attended VCU. The practical, real-world instruction that I received at VCU was invaluable to me. It has made my transition from school into the world of a state crime lab much easier.

The range of classes offered from Forensic Serology to Forensic Molecular Biology has also made the transition smooth. These classes offered a real hands-on learning experience. At VCU they do not just lecture

you about the world of forensic science, they also let you explore it for yourself through classes that immerse students in the world of a practical forensics lab.

Furthermore, VCU prepared me to understand that every department in the state lab, or any lab for that matter, must work together to get the job done.

My VCU experience taught me all this, and opened the door for me to not just have a job, but an exciting career.