

# CRIME LAB REPORT

*Media and industry analysis for the forensic science community*

John M. Collins Jr. and Jay Jarvis, Managing Editors

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WWW.CRIMELABREPORT.COM

ACFSL  
SPECIAL EDITION

*Introducing*

## THE AMERICAN CONGRESS OF FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORIES

*The United States Assembly of Forensic Science Laboratory Professionals*



### **Reinventing the 21st Century Forensic Science Organization**

Until now, there has never been a multidisciplinary membership organization serving all professionals of forensic science laboratories in the United States.

**Membership is now open!**

Please read this special edition of *Crime Lab Report* and visit the ACFSL website at:

**[www.fslabs.org](http://www.fslabs.org)**

### **Our Mission**

To unite and serve current and former professionals employed within the forensic laboratory sciences in the United States, while creating the conditions necessary for our members to serve the American criminal and civil justice systems with confidence and integrity.

### **Origins of the Congress**

ACFSL was created on June 2, 2015 when a small group of concerned forensic laboratory professionals convened to discuss the nature of contemporary criminal justice reform initiatives being proposed and advanced by federal policy-makers in Washington, D.C., and the likely effects of those initiatives on the future administration and practice of the forensic laboratory sciences in the United States. It was determined that unification and collaboration among all forensic laboratory professionals was needed to properly protect and preserve the forensic laboratory sciences in America.

The American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories (ACFSL), calls on administrators, scientists, support-personnel, and stakeholders to embrace our organization, its mission, and the guiding principles upon which it was founded.

Each and every day, the forensic laboratory sciences make our American criminal justice system more fair, objective, and reliable.

Each and every day, thousands of forensic laboratory professionals across the United States commit themselves to the highest standards of practice and professionalism, often with great personal and professional sacrifice.

For the forensic laboratory sciences to advance and meet the growing expectations of our society, we must be able to recruit, hire, and retain the best possible candidates. We must provide these candidates with the environment, equipment, and facilities necessary to conduct their work promptly and reliably.

Organizations that practice forensic science must treat forensic science and the development of their employees with the utmost seriousness. Cultures that encourage scientific and professional excellence must be created and nurtured.

Finally, even as the reform of criminal justice continues across America, forensic science laboratory professionals must be treated with respect and provided every opportunity to succeed. The unfair disparagement and marginalization of forensic science professionals who've served with honor, skill, and distinction is unacceptable.

The American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories is committed to putting the future of the forensic laboratory sciences where it belongs - in the hands of those who genuinely care about its future.

# Why the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories is needed

OCTOBER 31 2015 BY CRIME LAB REPORT

The American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories was created to make a little guy a whole lot bigger.

Consider this. There are more police officers in the state of Wisconsin than all forensic laboratory scientists working in accredited laboratories across the entire United States, or just under 15,000.

In comparison, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are over 600,000 lawyers in practice in the United States.

Compared to many other professions, forensic science has no bulk, no formidable size to withstand the unbridled activism and political jockeying that are slowly eroding the judicial and investigative environments in which forensic science professionals now practice.

If we ever reach a point where no reasonable person would want to attempt a career in forensic science—either because of the rampant adversarialism or simply because it no longer seems like a rewarding or reasonably lucrative field of endeavor—then we will have a lot to worry about as a society.

We will no longer be able to hire and retain the best people to work in our forensic science laboratories.

Will anything else really matter at that point?

The fact that this tiny profession we call forensic science further divides itself into sub-communities comprised of professionals sharing similar areas of expertise or, in the case of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, levels of organizational authority, means that the myriad voices of professionals working in forensic science laboratories are barely audible. But together, they can become deafening.

There was and continues to be an important place for specialized organizations in forensic science. They are needed. They are critically valuable. This will never change.

The creation of the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories, however, represents a potentially historic professional unification of professionals sharing a common trait—employment in a United States forensic science laboratory.

Regardless of one's discipline or technical expertise. Regardless of one's position. Regardless of one's level of authority.

It is a simple matter of economics and scale. By identifying and convening a large number of people sharing common interests and responsibilities, their collective voice becomes more powerful, and it becomes more efficient to keep them fully informed.

For nearly a decade, and despite our best efforts, *Crime Lab Report's* managing editors have watched the forensic laboratory sciences lose its grip on its own professional narrative—and sometimes, its own reputation. We have published ground breaking editorials and peer-reviewed research papers that demonstrate, conclusively, why many forensic science laboratories do not deserve the disparagement and marginalization that have been thrust upon them.

But we are also realists. We understand that nothing is more powerful than a strong, large, and interactive professional community. No government agency, no political campaign is more influential than a unified, collaborative network of professionals sharing common interests and priorities.

Government administrations are temporary. Professions, like forensic science, are in it for the long haul.

*Crime Lab Report* is proud to serve as a critical channel of communication and outreach for the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories, and we are currently adjusting our editorial practices to improve our ability to support what we expect will become a large and vibrant professional community.

More important, however, is the role that the congress will play. It cannot simply act as a mouthpiece for the status quo. While giving a much louder voice to its members, it must also challenge outdated ways of thinking as much as it must challenge misinformed judicial activists and critics.

If you currently work in a forensic science laboratory, you may be involved with DNA, controlled substances, firearms, toolmarks, trace evidence, latent prints, evidence care and control, or administrative support.

These, of course, are your *specialties*—but your profession is *Forensic Laboratory Science*.

And it is this profession that the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories has been created to support, serve, and defend.

It is now up to forensic science laboratory professionals across the United States to recognize the opportunity that now exists to become a more important part of the conversation that is taking place in Washington, D.C. and in state capitals across America.

The American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories is needed.

The American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories is here.\*\*\*\*\*

## Accreditation Options for All Forensic Organizations



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# THE AMERICAN CONGRESS OF FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORIES



The United States assembly of forensic science laboratory professionals

## Membership Options and Instructions



### How to Apply

- 1** Visit [www.fslabs.org](http://www.fslabs.org)
- 2** Click the **MEMBERSHIPS** option
- 3** Click **APPLY NOW**
- 4** Select a membership option
- 5** Click Next at the bottom of the screen
- 6** Follow the instructions on your screen
- 7** You may immediately pay with credit card or send a check made out to:  
***The Forensic Foundations Group***
- 8** Check your email for your automated invoice and confirmation notices.

**NOTE:** If you are not interested in joining the congress, or if the congress does not apply to you, you may also subscribe to *Crime Lab Report* or become a Friend of the Group. Friends of the Group receive occasional notices about professional training and other critical announcements. We do not sell or release our lists to any third parties.

### Levels of Membership

#### Ambassador - \$125.00

Ambassador membership is the highest personal level of membership, and is the only level that includes membership in both the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories AND the Forensic Science Chamber of Commerce. Ambassadors must have at least 5 years of experience working as a competency-tested, testifying forensic laboratory scientist - or - 3 years of experience working in a FLSA exempt supervisory or administrative position within a forensic science laboratory where at least one full-time, competency-tested, testifying scientist is employed. Ambassadors are voting members in the ACFSL and nonvoting members of the chamber.

#### Professional - \$70.00

Professionals are persons who are currently employed in a forensic science laboratory where at least one full-time, competency-tested, testifying scientist is employed. This is the primary voting membership level for the congress.

#### Preprofessional - \$60.00

Preprofessionals are current students and future forensic laboratory scientists. Preprofessionals are nonvoting members. This membership comes with a personal subscription to *Crime Lab Report* and access to members-only archives.

#### Postprofessional - \$100.00

Postprofessionals are former or retired forensic laboratory professionals. Post-Professionals are nonvoting members. This membership comes with a personal subscription to *Crime Lab Report* and access to members-only archives.

#### Collaborator - \$145.00

Collaborators are stakeholders and support professionals with legitimate professional interests in the forensic laboratory sciences. Collaborators are nonvoting members. This membership comes with a personal subscription to *Crime Lab Report* and access to members-only archives.



[www.fslabs.org](http://www.fslabs.org)

## Executive Board

### Officers

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Crime Laboratory  
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We are setting a new standard for supporting forensic science laboratories in the United States. Your membership comes with benefits and advantages that will grow over time. Here are just a few reasons to join now:

## Membership Benefits

- Personal membership kit mailed to your home or office
- Membership identification card
- Personal subscription to *Crime Lab Report*
- Exclusive access to supplemental, printed communications related to the Congress and the Chamber
- Access member-only pages at our website
- Access 10 years of *Crime Lab Report* archives
- Influence private innovation with your free reciprocal membership in the FS Chamber of Commerce
- Receive the *Annual Proceedings* of the Congress and the *Chamber of Commerce Catalog* each year (2016)
- Memorialize your opinion on a number of key research and policy questions
- Allow your professional voice to be heard while your privacy is protected
- Access “best in class” professional training through the Forensic Foundations Group

**Be a part of history!**

**Become one of the first 500 members of the Congress to have your name memorialized in a special commemorative publication celebrating the birth and growth of our organization!**



# We are seeking volunteers!

The Forensic Foundations Group is the publisher of *Crime Lab Report* and the incubator of The Forensic Science Chamber of Commerce and the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories. We are seeking energetic, self-motivated, qualified, and highly-professional volunteers to assist with the management and support of these important organizations. Ideal candidates are current or retired employees of forensic science laboratories based in the United States, and have five years of experience working as a competency-tested, testifying forensic laboratory scientist. The ability to commit 1-2 hours of time per week, on average, is required. Volunteers appointed to these positions will also have a seat on the *Crime Lab Report* Editorial Board.

If you are interested in one or more of these positions, please email us at [office@forensicfoundations.com](mailto:office@forensicfoundations.com) and attach a current resume or CV. Consideration for full or part time employment will be given to high-performing candidates who are interested in joining the Forensic Foundations Group.

## Member Services and Support Manager

The Director of Member Services and Support assists with the creation, recommendation, and initiation of improvements to services offered to members of the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories and the Forensic Science Chamber of Commerce. This individual interacts with a variety of members, seeks and considers feedback, continuously evaluates the quality and value of services, develops ideas for improving those services, and assists with their implementation and monitoring.

**Compensation:** \$300 annual honorarium

**Term:** No limit—annual renewal

## Chamber of Commerce Liaison

The Chamber of Commerce Liaison works collaboratively with the leaders of the American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories and the Forensic Science Chamber of Commerce to ensure effective communication and collaboration between the two organizations. This individual ensures that Chamber members are kept informed about “the voice of the customer” while Congress members are kept aware of innovative products and services offered by Chamber members.

**Compensation:** \$300 annual honorarium

**Term:** No limit—annual renewal

## Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer manages social media and newsletters put forth by the Chamber and the Congress. The PIO also assists with the development of press releases and other public communications related to the business of the Chamber and the Congress. The PIO also coordinates communication with other forensic science organizations of which our members are affiliated.

**Compensation:** \$300 annual honorarium

**Term:** No limit—annual renewal

## Director of Assembly Planning and Hosting

The Director of Assembly Planning and Hosting coordinates the activities of other volunteers and works collaboratively with host facilities and other support persons in the hosting of a biannual assembly of Chamber and Congress members.

**Compensation:** \$300 annual honorarium

**Term:** No limit—annual renewal

## Director of Occupational Performance Committees

The Director of Occupational Performance Committees assists in the management and support of the activities and agendas of the Occupational Performance Committees, which are groups of professionals assembled to collaborate and/or deliberate on various professional topics of importance to forensic science laboratories in the United States.

**Compensation:** \$300 annual honorarium

**Term:** No limit—annual renewal



# THE FORENSIC SCIENCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

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www.A2LA.org/forensic



A2LA is a non-profit membership association with over 35 years of experience providing internationally-recognized accreditation and training services. A2LA offers a forensic accreditation program for forensic testing laboratories (ISO/IEC 17025) and crime scene units (ISO/IEC 17020). A2LA also offers accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065, ISO/IEC 17043, ISO 15189, CLIA and ISO/IEC Guide 34.

## Arma Forensics

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www.armaforensics.com



Arma Forensics specializes in independent forensic firearms and ballistics analysis. In addition, based on our former casework and supervisory experience, we also offer case file reviews and limited analysis in other disciplines.

## ASCLD/LAB

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The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board is a not-for-profit corporation specializing in the accreditation of public and private crime laboratories. Since 1982, we have been committed to the ongoing support, education and oversight of facilities striving for excellence in forensic analysis. ASCLD/LAB is proud to have over 30 years of experience accrediting federal, state and local crime laboratories throughout the United States, as well as laboratories in various additional countries.

## Booz Allen Hamilton

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The Forensic Foundations Group specializes in the development of advanced occupational competencies for forensic science laboratory practitioners and administrators. The company also manages industry-wide programs and publications each aimed at improving talent and trust in the forensic laboratory sciences. FFG is the official publisher of *Crime Lab Report* and the manager of the Forensic Science Chamber of Commerce. It is the first and only organization serving forensic science laboratories in the United States with certified credentials in human resource management.

## GE Healthcare Life Sciences

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GE Healthcare works on things that matter. For more than 17 years, forensic scientists around the world have relied on GE Healthcare's Whatman FTA technology for room temperature collection, transport, and archiving of samples containing genomic DNA. GE Healthcare provides both custom kits and off-the-shelf products for easy, reliable DNA collection for databasing and forensic casework. The DNAscan™ Rapid DNA Analysis™ System is a fast, rugged, and easy-to-use rapid DNA analysis system developed to enable law enforcement agencies to process DNA samples in less than 90 minutes.

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JusticeTrax LIMS-plus® is a premier laboratory information management system designed for forensic laboratories. Since 1995 JusticeTrax has provided forensic laboratories with comprehensive case management software, outstanding customer support, software development and integration. LIMS-plus DNA® was introduced in 2014 to manage sample workflow, including data upload and download with instrumentation.

## Shot Caller Global, Inc.

**Gary Brewer**  
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GunOps enables a visual and interactive way to monitor recovered firearm evidence as it is booked into the police department. This allows Crime Lab Technicians to filter and view firearm related evidence according to geographical areas, which then enables the operator to more quickly zero in on the targets of greatest opportunity to success. This is accomplished by connecting many pieces of information in order to link crimes, guns and suspects in a timelier manner so as to be of most value to investigators. The software manages a large volume of information on firearms crimes and is completely searchable making GunOps the ultimate time saver.

## StacsDNA

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STACS DNA delivers the only sample processing software specifically designed for forensic DNA laboratories. Since 2000, we've helped DNA labs of all sizes to accelerate throughput, save time, prevent errors, cut costs, and maintain chain of custody – all without hiring any new staff. STACS tracks and controls samples, manages workflows, integrates systems and instrumentation and improves data quality. Most of the major forensic DNA labs in North America are our customers, such as the FBI, RCMP, U.S. Army and the largest state labs.

## Ultra Electric Forensic Technology

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www.ultra-forensictechnology.com



Forensic Technology created the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS) in 1991. IBIS technology can find the "needle in the haystack", suggesting possible matches between pairs of spent bullets and cartridge cases, at speeds well beyond human capacity, in order to help forensic experts give detectives more timely information about crimes, guns, and suspects. We partner with hundreds of public safety agencies in over 120 countries, providing cost-effective and sustainable solutions.

# Electronic Data Entry for DNA Testing Improves Quality

OCTOBER 27 2015 BY MELISSA SECCARICCIA

Automating data entry as part of evidence sample management will not only help keep DNA sample testing accurate, but also contribute to maintaining a tight chain of custody.

Forensic DNA laboratories that must continually record data throughout the DNA testing process, and which are doing so manually, can greatly benefit from electronic data entry. Accurate data entry is essential in making the DNA process work cohesively because it affects every aspect associated with the handling and analysis of DNA samples. Any errors with data entry can skew the results yielded by DNA sample testing.

## Lab Found Manual Approach Too Risky

After wrestling with its own manual approach for data entry, the Phoenix Police Department Crime Laboratory has been carefully evaluating an electronic DNA sample testing software program. For years, the laboratory has used the **LIMS-plus** solution from Phoenix, Arizona-based JusticeTrax, which integrates evidence tracking, analytical results and lab management information. It is now installing the new **LIMS-plus DNA** software from the same vendor, a program that automates the delivery of DNA profiles to local, state, and national databanks. More specifically, LIMS-plus DNA is a browser-delivered application that provides sample management and tracking for forensic DNA samples as they progress through the extraction, quantitation, amplification and detection stages.

When you see the work involved with manually entering crucial data onto worksheets during the DNA process at the Arizona PD Crime Laboratory, the need for accomplishing this electronically makes perfect sense. For example, let's say there are five items from which DNA must be extracted and processed, and the items are numbered 1,2,3,4, and 5. For sample prep, you manually type in item #1, give it a description, and when you proceed to extract, item #1 must be hand-typed onto your extraction worksheet. This step must be repeated for items 2-5, as well. Quantitation requires a similar, separate worksheet. After an instrument performs quantitation and reveals how much DNA is in your sample, you must go back to the paper worksheet and record this. So, for sample #1, it may show 1.25 nanograms of DNA. You must perform this manual documentation for *all of the samples*, which means this same documentation must be accomplished for, say, up to 80 samples per batch.

"If you have an error with this manual method, such as a typo, it could upset everything in the DNA processing," noted Christie Abbott, forensic scientist with the Phoenix Police Department Crime Laboratory. So, for example, "If you don't have that right quantity of DNA in your *Quantification* step, you're going to have the wrong volume for testing in your *Amplification* step."

"The software not only assists case analysts when they are doing a batch, it also helps in the review process because every case handled must be technically reviewed."

- Janel Smith, DNA Technical Director, Phoenix Crime Laboratory

## Software Instantly Populates Data Across DNA Stages

This experience shows exactly why using an electronic DNA sample management program is so valuable, especially for the critical step of data entry. The new software solution that Phoenix Crime Laboratory is installing streamlines data entry so that mistakes can be avoided. "With the software, you can enter your sample information once, and after that you don't have to type it again," said Janel Smith, DNA Technical Director at Phoenix Crime Laboratory. "The software automatically populates the next stage of the DNA process." Also, Smith added, "When a user of the software works with Quantitation data, that user will be able to export whatever quantity of DNA is available into other software being used." The LIMS-plus DNA software will highlight samples based on certain parameters.

## Instant Validation

As valuable as it is to have these functions performing electronically via the software, Smith cautions that when entering sample information into the program, it is up to laboratory personnel to make sure the information is accurate. Assuming accurate information is entered into LIMS-plus DNA, the software validates that sample information has gone to the right spots. "It allows us to validate that when we import a plate, the software will populate the correct data in the correct spot where it needs to go," Smith said. "Therefore, I won't have to check that as a reviewer."

## Tracks History of Changes

Another advantage of entering data electronically is that if something in the DNA work changes, software like LIMS-plus DNA keeps a history of these changes. This is particularly helpful in a courtroom whereby if an attorney wants to initiate discovery and needs the history of what's been done with DNA (*i.e., a person for whom DNA sampling was done, but now that person is excluded*).

## Significant Time Savings

In addition to electronic DNA sample management software's efficiency and quickness with DNA processing, time saved can be substantial as well. One example is replacing the manual entry of data into different types of equipment during the DNA process. "For an hour for each batch to accomplish manual entry and review, this really adds up for time spent over a year," Smith said. Now, the software handles in seconds this manual entry of data and proofreading a worksheet before it's taken into the laboratory.

*Melissa Seccariccia is Product Manager for JusticeTrax and is responsible for development and planning of all of the company's forensic laboratory software products. She served as a forensic biologist and project coordinator for an accredited government laboratory for five years. Melissa also is chief designer of the LIMS-plus DNA software product offered by JusticeTrax.*

# Oregon Investigating Evidence Theft By State Laboratory Analyst

OCTOBER 26 2015 BY JAY JARVIS

In mid-September, officials with the Oregon State Police (OSP) Forensic Services Division announced they were investigating a drug analyst for tampering with controlled substances evidence.

The analyst is reportedly assigned to the OSP laboratory in Bend, which is approximately 120 miles southeast of Portland.

Officials with the OSP were reluctant to release details of the investigation, which is still ongoing. Estimates indicate that the number of cases that could be subjected to re-analysis could number in the thousands.

According to press reports, the analyst was first identified as Nika Larsen in a letter sent to area attorneys.

Larsen, an eight year veteran with the agency, is accused of removing drugs from evidence sent to the lab for analysis and, in some instances, replacing the contents with over-the-counter pills. Larsen also worked previously in OSP forensic labs located in Pendleton and Ontario.

John Hummel, the District Attorney in Deschutes County, where Bend is located, told KTVZ News "This is fraud on a massive scale. I'm looking through all the police reports, all the evidence, every piece of evidence that she has analyzed, and we have to determine if her involvement in the case might have compromised the verdict."

Aliza Kaplan, a professor at Lewis & Clark Law School and co-founder of the Oregon

Innocence Project, questioned the independence of an investigation carried out by the OSP.

"It has to be an outside review, versus one that is an internal investigation. That wouldn't be appropriate, considering especially the wide range of cases in different counties which were affected," Kaplan told the Bend Bulletin.

Hummel agreed that justice would be best served with an independent probe.

The week after news of the story broke, the Oregon Department of Justice took over the investigation. Representatives of the U.S. Attorney's Office are also reviewing the case and are considering federal charges.

Oregon Governor Kate Brown said in a press release dated September 25 that State Police Superintendent Rich Evans requested the governor to appoint a committee to review practices at the laboratory.

In response, Brown created a "workgroup" co-chaired by Sen. Jackie Winters, R-Salem, and House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland. Other members appointed to serve included Chuck French, a retired deputy district attorney; Ernest Lannet, chief defender in the Office of Public Defense Services' Criminal Appellate Section; criminal defense attorney Kevin Sali; Michael Slauson, special counsel on public safety to Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum; and Keizer Police Chief John Teague.

The group was charged with looking into the tampering allegations against Larsen as well as identifying any changes needed at the crime labs, including drafting any new legislation prior to the start of the February state legislative session.

Crime Lab Report will be following this story as it develops and will provide its readers with more information in a future issue as it becomes available.\*\*\*\*\*



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# Constitution of the Congress

August 18, 2015—Pending Ratification by the Executive Board

## Article I - Name

The organization is hereby named, known, and referred to as The American Congress of Forensic Science Laboratories (ACFSL).

## Article II - Purpose and Mission

### Section 1 - Purpose

The purpose of ACFSL is to promote the improvement of any scientific, administrative, legislative, journalistic, and judicial practices that impact the forensic laboratory sciences in the United States.

### Section 2 - Mission

The mission of the ACFSL is to serve and represent its members through effective programs of communication, advocacy, assembly, and information-sharing.

### Section 3 - Nonprofit Status

As part of the incubation of the organization, at such time that membership reaches 1000 persons or earlier, it shall apply for and organize as an independent, nonprofit organization. This act shall not, in any way, affect the incubation provisions included in this constitution.

## Article III - Affiliations

The ACFSL shall be established, funded, and managed by The Forensic Foundations Group, LLC (FFG) of Dewitt, Michigan during a prescribed incubation period. Membership dues shall be collected by FFG on behalf of the ACFSL for the purpose of offsetting its operating costs and for the continued growth and advancement of the organization.

## Article IV - Membership

### Section 1 - Composition

ACFSL's members must be currently employed in a United States forensic science laboratory, or formerly employed by such a laboratory for a minimum of 3 years. A "United States forensic science laboratory" is a laboratory based in the United States of America (to include its states, territories, districts, and reservations), and that is accredited as a forensic science laboratory or functions in a manner reasonably similar to accredited forensic science laboratories.

### Section 2 - Eligibility

Eligible members are those satisfying the conditions of Section 1 of this constitution, and are without any past felony convictions, and have not been suspended by at least 3/4 of the Executive Board, and have not been terminated by a 2/3 majority vote of members in good standing.

## Article V - Executive Board

### Section 1 - Initial Incubation Period

An executive board of 9 persons shall be seated after selection by the Forensic Foundations Group, LLC and shall unanimously approve, in writing, the organization's first constitution. A principal officer of the FFG shall serve and be compensated as the Executive Director and, in such capacity, shall select the first President of the Executive Board who shall preside over its affairs. This incubation period and the appointment of the first executive director shall remain in force until December 31, 2025 or until total membership reaches 3,500 persons at which time the incubation period will conclude and the position of executive director may be filled and/or occupied with any individual approved by 7 out of 9 members of the executive board.

### Section 2 - Term Limits

Members of the executive board shall serve three-year terms. Additional terms do not require election but must be approved by the President and two additional board members. Except as stated in this article, Section 1, members of the executive board may serve for a maximum of 9 consecutive years. A member of the executive board who serves 9 consecutive years may never again serve as a member of the board. If a member of the board in good standing vacates his or her seat prior to serving 9 consecutive years, he or she may not again serve on the executive board for two full calendar years, and when reelected, may not serve a period of time that would make greater than 9 years his or her total number of years seated on the executive board. No person shall ever serve more than 9 years on the executive board, whether consecutive or not.

### Section 3 - Eligibility for Service

Every member of the executive board shall be clearly and convincingly distinguished as having credentials of professional service and stature relevant to the business of the organization and its members. Every member of the executive board shall also have a record of past accomplishment in which knowledge, skills, and abilities of value to the organization have been previously demonstrated. At any one time, at least 5 of 9 members of the executive board must be Ambassadors or Professional members of the association in good standing with a minimum of five years of experience working in an FLSA-exempt position within a forensic science laboratory.

### Section 4 - Elections to the Executive Board

At such time that a vacancy occurs or will occur on the executive board, notice of the vacancy shall be announced in writing to both the membership and the executive board. For a period of not less than 30 days but no more than 60, the president shall accept nominations and letters of interest. At the end of the nomination period, a new candidate may be seated with the approval of seven members of the executive board, including the president.

### Section 5 - Termination of Executive Board Members

A member of the executive board, with the exception of the initial board outlined in Section 1, must vacate his or her seat on the board when each of the following conditions have been met:

- he or she receives letters from 6 current board members requesting his or her resignation and stating the reason(s) for the request, and
- when notice of the potential unseating is sent, in writing, to the current ACFSL membership, and
- when the total ACFSL membership is advised that they can overturn the unseating with a ballot initiative prior to the seating of a replacement, and
- when at least 2/3 of the total ACFSL membership does not vote (with their names, addresses, signatures, and dates of vote) to overturn the unseating

A member of the executive board must also vacate his or her seat when at least 3/4 of the total ACFSL membership votes, in writing, with their names, addresses, signatures, and dates of vote on a ballot initiative to request the unseating of the member.

### Section 6 - Officers

In accordance with the election provisions stated in this article, the election of a President to the executive board shall be made with 6 votes of the executive board and the approval, within one year, of a simple majority of the membership of ACFSL. Each new president shall appoint a Treasurer and Secretary of Operations from among the members of the executive board who shall also serve as officers of the organization. Their appointments shall be approved by a vote of at least 6 members of the executive board.

A member of the executive board may serve as an officer for no more than 6 years, and may vacate their officer position at any time.

### Section 7 - Non-Voting Members of the Executive Board

Additional non-voting or ex-officio members are not permitted on the executive board.

### Section 8 - Lobbying and Legislative Advocacy

Members of the executive board are not required to support or participate in any lobbying or legislative advocacy. Furthermore, a seat on the executive board will not be construed as a form of support for any lobbying or legislative advocacy undertaken by ACFSL, The Forensic Foundations Group, or any of their affiliates. Members of the executive board may abstain from any advocacy that may create a conflict of interest or other professional hardship.

## Article VI - Meetings and Quorum

### Section 1 - Meetings

An assembly of the membership, either in person or in a suitable virtual congregation, shall occur at least once annually. A meeting of the executive board shall also occur at least once annually.

### Section 2 - Membership Quorum

Business requiring the involvement of the organization's membership may occur when a quorum of 20% of the total voting membership is present and/or available to vote.

### Section 3 - Executive Board Quorum

The executive board may conduct legitimate business on behalf of the organization, except where specific vote requirements are stated elsewhere in these articles, when 5 members of the executive board are present and/or available to vote.

### Section 4 - Open Meetings and Executive Sessions

Meetings of the Executive Board are open to members in good standing, and are also open to members of the public who are invited and welcomed by the president. The president, at his or her discretion, may opt to hold a portion of a meeting in executive session, where only members of the executive board are present and only when the business under consideration is of a sensitive or confidential nature.

## Article VII - Amendments

Amendments to the constitution must be approved by 7 out of 9 members of the executive board and a 2/3 majority vote of members in good standing.

## RENOVATING FACILITIES

# What requirements should be designed into modern office space?

JUNE 25 2015 BY KEITH FENTRESS

Designing modern, mobile offices that facilitate collaboration requires more than the right furniture and floor plan. We must design these offices within the context of basic human needs, as well.

Last week, we explored nine human needs guidelines that might serve as the basis for planning modern offices. I concluded that, when we consider the dichotomies inherent in several of these guidelines, it becomes obvious that there may be no single, perfect office environment solution. Instead, multi-faceted office environments, specifically tuned to the functional needs of individual organizations, may offer the best solutions. This is a key fact that has significant implications in the earliest stages of planning for modern offices.

When planning a new office environment or retooling an existing office, the first step should be the creation of a clearly defined “program of requirements,” which lists the type and number of spaces needed in an office. In determining this information, the program of requirements should take into account how work is performed in an office. The types of questions that should be addressed in the program of requirements include: How much time do employees spend in individual work that requires concentration? How much time do employees spend in collaboration? How often do employees participate in phone calls versus meetings? What sizes are the meetings? Do employees routinely work outside the office through telecommuting and/or on business travel? Do the employees have any special requirements or unique equipment needs? Through considering these types of questions, the program of requirements can be used to customize the office layout so that the office supports employee work patterns and processes.

The program of requirements should also take into account basic human needs (addressed in the previous blog) in addition to how the employees work. For example, the outcome of one office’s requirements might include the need for a high proportion of collaborative spaces that avoid red tones, allow some background noise, and offer less rigidly arranged, but highly comfortable seating. King Arthur’s round table may have been an early version of a successful collaborative space

that incorporated most of these characteristics.

Accommodating basic human needs, including the use of taller, protected, sunlit spaces containing plants would apply throughout an office, regardless of whether employees are working independently or in collaboration. As with any planning process, the more these considerations are understood and adopted by the employees, the more the employees will feel they have a stake in making the outcome work successfully.

### Modern Office Space Defined

When we initially think of the term modern office, especially when it refers to a mobile office, we tend to focus on the concept of flexibility in workspace location made possible by today’s technologies. As discussed above, there is more to the modern office that just mobility. As we move away from the one-size-fits-all model of the traditional office, we must also focus on the concept of flexibility in workspace design.

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# HR Management in Forensic Science

## Forensic ‘scientist’ is a fair and accurate job title, if . . .

OCTOBER 31 2015 BY JOHN M COLLINS JR, MA, SHRM-SCP

There is absolutely nothing wrong with a forensic science professional being called a *scientist*.

But with the unprecedented, disproportionate power that legal reform advocates have gained in nearly all matters related to forensic science, the title of scientist is now being challenged, mainly because of the term’s propensity to enhance the title-holder’s appearance of trustworthiness.

It is unfortunate that forensic science professionals are so often regarded as adversaries, but that is the nature of the American criminal justice system. Witnesses play on one team or the other.

If you play on *my* team, you are my friend—and I would prefer that you be called a scientist.

If you play on the *other* team, you are my enemy—and I demand that you be called something less impressive.

The debate is rooted more firmly in politics than reality.

Despite whatever persuasive leverage the term *scientist* may afford, in the HR realm, job titles are critically important tools for properly classifying employees and distinguishing levels of responsibility so that job requirements and compensation packages can be equitably assigned.

In the forensic sciences, it is a professional custom to assign the term *scientist* to persons who, as part of their normal job duties, conduct scientific laboratory testing AND present their findings in the form of sworn expert testimony in courts of law.

This creates a necessary distinction between scientists, technicians, field investigators, and so forth. In some laboratories, the terms criminalist, analyst, and examiner are still used, which are also entirely appropriate.

Richard Saferstein, in his first volume of Forensic Science Handbook, noted that “the forensic scientist has two equally important roles. First is that of scientist who performs investigatory examinations and laboratory tests to reach a conclusion. Second, the forensic scientist is a communicator and interpreter of those findings.”

Consider it a far more important priority to train and develop forensic science professionals to earn the title of scientist rather than stripping it away out of adversarial spite.

“Consider it a far more important priority to train and develop forensic science professionals to earn the title of scientist rather than stripping it away out of adversarial spite.”

Unfortunately, there is the small matter that perhaps not all professionals wielding the title of forensic scientist actually deserve it.

Science is an institution that becomes weakened and ineffective when people allow their egos, loyalties, personalities, and sense of entitlement to affect their work.

Science should have a selfless quality to it. True scientists don’t create personal attachments to their observations and opinions. They are not beholden to an overly inflated sense of loyalty to persons for whom they may be working. They are not afraid to discuss limitations and potential weaknesses in their methodologies. And, without a doubt, they are the first to admit that all scientific work is vulnerable to error or misinterpretation.

Those of us who have worked in the forensic sciences for many years know that our profession is still being limited by people who have either forgotten what their role is supposed to be, or were never taught in the first place. These individuals sometimes make headline news.

So, yes, it is perfectly acceptable for a forensic science professional to be called a scientist. But only if it’s a title that has been earned.

*John M. Collins Jr. is the president and founder of the Forensic Foundations Group, a consulting and training company dedicated to developing talent and trust in the forensic laboratory sciences. Collins is a 20-year veteran of forensic science and a Senior Certified Professional in Human Resources. Please visit [www.forensicfoundations.com](http://www.forensicfoundations.com).*



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