Student Resource Guide

Live Panel Discussion:
4 November 2020 @ 2:00 PM EST

THE MAIN EVENT

Washington, DC, is home to roughly 27 Law Enforcement agencies with overlapping jurisdictions, which often require cross-agency collaboration to solve the nearly 34,000 crimes that occur in the District each year. Processing much of this evidence requires the expertise of trained scientists, and that is where the DC Department of Forensic Science (DFS) plays a crucial role.

Known as "The People's Lab," DFS is the largest publicly funded forensics lab in the United States and operates independently under the local DC government, as it serves every law enforcement agency in the district. DFS exists due to the need for simpler cross-agency collaboration and the need for clear communication regarding evidence during the investigation process.

This special virtual panel event will detail the practice of many different kinds of forensic scientists who work for DFS, and show off the marvel that is our country's largest independent forensic lab.

Meet the Speakers

DR. JENIFER SMITH, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

Dr. Jenifer Smith is the Director of the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS). She was appointed Director of DFS in 2015. Dr. Smith is a retired Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Special Agent, having served for 23 years, and was a former faculty member at Pennsylvania State University from 2010-2015.

At the FBI, Dr. Smith oversaw DNA analysis, implemented numerous analysis methods and testified in hundreds of cases. As a member of the US Government Senior Executive Service, her final assignment with the FBI was Chief of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Intelligence Analysis Section. Dr. Smith also led the CIA's Biological Technology Center and has served on several federal advisory groups that support national security entities concerned with microbial forensics.

Initially, Dr. Smith joined DFS as a consultant sharing her expertise in assessing the findings of an Independent Audit of the Forensic Biology Unit and providing her recommendation for trainings on DNA mixture interpretation. As a direct result, the Assessors from ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) in their follow- up assessment in June 2015, accepted all the Department's corrective action responses.

Throughout her tenure, Dr. Smith has guided the District's Public Health Laboratory during the testing of COVID-19 and guided the Crime Scene Sciences and Forensic Science Laboratory Divisions to ensure evidence submitted to the lab undergoes the highest quality of testing and analysis.

Dr. Smith holds a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from Pennsylvania State University, a PhD in Physiological Chemistry from Ohio State University and Post Doctorate from Harvard University.

Meet the Speakers

WAYNE E. ARENDSE, DIRECTOR OF THE FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORY

Wayne E. Arendse is the Director of the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) with the District of Columbia's Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS).

Mr. Arendse has 28 years of international experience in the public safety divisions of government. He holds a master's in forensic sciences from the University of South Africa and continues to be an active researcher.

Mr. Arendse is a sworn commissioned officer and held the rank of Captain Senior Investigator for the elite team, the Emergency and Disaster Unit with the South African Police Service.

He is a Certified Auditor for the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) and Standard Council of Canada and has published materials in professional and major trade publications.

Mr. Arendse is currently working towards earning his PhD.

Meet the Speakers

CHRISTOPHER LOJACONO, DIRECTOR, CRIME SCENE SCIENCES DIVISION

Christopher LoJacono is the Director of Crime Scene Sciences Division with the District of Columbia's Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS).

Mr. LoJacono joined the DC Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) in 2018. As Director of the Crime Scene Sciences Division, Mr. LoJacono leads the Crime Scene Sciences Unit (CSSU) and Central Evidence Unit (CEU).

The 67 scientists, supervisors and managers that make up CSSU process all major crime scenes throughout Washington, DC. CEU is comprised of nine specialists and supervisors who are responsible for the intake and distribution of all evidence that enters DFS, and the transfer of evidence to the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD's) Evidence Control Branch for long-term storage.

In addition to internal strategic and operational leadership, Mr. LoJacono is also responsible for creating and maintaining strong working relationships with the Division's key stakeholders.

Prior to joining DFS, Mr. LoJacono was a founding partner of Columbia Process and Investigative Services. He provided expert strategic and critical analysis of evidence and documents in a variety of criminal and civil cases. His clients included several prominent law firms in the DC metropolitan area.

Mr. LoJacono retired from MPD in 2013 as a Commander/Deputy Chief. His career spanned nearly 30 years, working for seven police chiefs and five mayors. Before retiring, as head of the Internal Affairs Division he successfully oversaw 400 or more internal criminal and/or serious misconduct cases annually.

During his career, Mr. LoJacono led several departments and was frequently sought after for his investigative and management skills. In 2008, he successfully planned and executed the largest and most complicated National Special Security Event in the history of the United States for MPD, the 2009 Presidential Inauguration. This event brought more people to one place in one day than ever before in the history of the United States. Mr. LoJacono oversaw a $24 million budget and a sprawling, multifaceted operation that utilized federal, state and local police resources from across the nation.

Mr. LoJacono also commanded the Forensic Science Division where he oversaw an $11 million budget, centralized the crime scene investigation units and was the MPD lead on the development and construction of the Consolidated Forensic Laboratory from 2002-2008. He was widely known in the Department for employing principles of loyalty, commitment, and dedicated teamwork. He enjoyed a strong reputation as an ethical leader and mentor of junior personnel.

Mr. LoJacono earned a master's degree in Management from Johns Hopkins University in 2003. He is married with three adult children and two grandchildren.

WHAT IS FORENSIC SCIENCE?

Forensic Science is the application of scientific principles and techniques to matters of criminal justice especially as relating to the collection, examination, and analysis of physical evidence.

Merriam-Webster

THINKING QUESTIONS

1. When you think of Forensic Science, what terms come to mind?

2. What kind of evidence do you think is most useful in an investigation and why?

3. What different kinds of evidence do you think you would find at a crime scene? List them.

4. What are physical and chemical properties?

5. How many different areas of Forensic Science do you think there are? Can this number change over time?

6. What are the responsibilities of a Forensic Scientist? How are they different from a Law Enforcement Officer?

7. What kind of education do is required to be a Forensic Scientist?

8. How do you think that Law Enforcement Officers and Forensic Scientists work together?

9. How does the practice of Forensic Science compare to its perception in pop culture?

10. What skills do you think are important for a Forensic Scientist to possess?

NOTES

During the event, use this space to take notes and write down any questions to ask the speakers during the Q&A!

POST-EVENT ACTIVITY

The field of Forensic Science is wide-reaching and ever evolving. From what you learned during the Scientific Justice event, what aspect of Forensic Science interests you most? Could you see yourself pursuing a career in Forensic Science? How do you see Forensic Science evolving in the future? Write a short essay answering these questions.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

GRADES 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts, attending to the precise details of explanations or descriptions.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.7
Translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically (e.g., in an equation) into words.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.10
By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend science/technical texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

GRADES 11-12

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts, attending to important distinctions the author makes and to any gaps or inconsistencies in the account.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.4
Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 11-12 texts and topics.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.9
Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.10
By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend science/technical texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Thank you for joining us for Scientific Justice: Solving Crimes in "The Peoples' Lab."

For more information regarding educational programs at the National Law Enforcement Museum, please contact:

Anna Muckenfuss,
Education Program Specialist
amuckenfuss@nleomf.org

National Law Enforcement Museum
at the Motorola Solutions Foundation Building