Hail and Farewell….

I have completed my three-year term as chair of the Department of Forensic Sciences. I have to say that it has been quite an experience. In the past three years the department has moved from its cramped quarters in Samson Hall on the Foggy Bottom campus to renovated space in Somers Hall at the Mount Vernon campus. The Department has also been accepted for consideration for accreditation by the Forensic Education Program Accreditation Commission (FEPAC). The FEPAC site visit was in mid October. Hopefully, the Master of Forensic Science degree program will soon be FEPAC-accredited. In order to be eligible for FEPAC accreditation the Department had to create separate degree programs for what had been the crime scene investigation and high technology crime investigation concentrations in the Master of Forensic Science degree program. We now have a Master of Science in Crime Scene Investigation and a Master of Science in High Technology Crime Investigation. The Fall 2011 semester got off to a good start with the largest body of new graduate students we have seen in a number of years.

I am teaching the recently instituted graduate seminar course, ForS 6292. Last year guest speakers included Rebecca Webb of the Office of Human Research at GW, Robert Ramotowski, the chief research scientist for the United States Secret Service, Pete Vallone of National Institute for Standards and Technology and Dr. Fenella France, the chief research scientist of the Library of Congress. This year Ms. Wedd, Bob Ramotowski and Dr. France will again speak. Todd Bille of BATF will also talk about the activities of BATF’s DNA unit.

I would like to appeal to our alumni/alumnae for help with several matters. The department continues to search for a full-time or interim chair. We would appreciate hearing any suggestions for potential candidates. The position is a tenure-track one at the associate or full professor level. For the present Professor Randall Packer is acting chair. Professor Packer will be asking the Dean of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences for more funds for the purchase of new instruments and for maintenance of existing instruments. If you can contribute (even if only in a small way) you donation will be put to good use. We would also like to hear about any older instruments that could be surplus to the department. And as always, the department is always looking for strong graduate students. If you encounter any likely candidates steer them our way.

“...continue to search for a full-time or interim chair. We would appreciate hearing any suggestions for potential candidates.”

Prof. Rowe
Faculty News

Professor Daniele Podini
Professor Podini was an invited speaker at the 2011 NIJ conference during the session titled: “The Evolution of Single Nucleotide Polymorphism Research and (Possible) Implementation Into Practice”.

He also was invited to talk about his research on Ancestry and Phenotype markers at the NIJ General Grantee R&D meeting held during the American Academy of Forensic Sciences meeting in Chicago, Illinois, February 21-26, 2011.

Ms Katherine Butler, PhD student in Dr. Podini’s lab, gave an oral presentation at the International Society of Human Identification meeting, Vienna Austria, September 1-4, 2011, titled “Molecular Eyewitness: Forensic Prediction of Phenotype and Ancestry”.

Dr Podini also gave a talk on typing SNPs on microfluidic devices as part of a workshop held at the International Symposium on Human Identification, Washington DC, October 1-4, 2011.

Professor Ted Robinson
Professor Robinson is writing a new book, An Introduction to Crime Scene Photography. This book will target the high school and community college market.

Professor Robinson recently met with the Supervisory Special Agent (Deb LaPrevotte, one of our alumna) for the local FBI ERT (Emergency Response Team). He is trying to create an memorandum of understanding with them to provide CSI type courses, a certificate or an master of science degree for a cohort of FBI Special Agents. He has also asked them if they could earmark us for their surplus or outdated equipment.

Professor Walter Rowe
Professor Rowe completed his three-year term as department chair on June 30, 2011. He presented or co-authored three papers presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists at Virginia Beach, Virginia, May 25-27, 2011:

“Evaluation of Analytical Techniques for Comparing Trace Soil Samples” (with graduate student Adam Kutnick).

“Does the ‘Scientific Method’ Apply to Forensic Science? Should It?”

“The Differentiation Among Black Permanent Markers by TLC, UV-VIS-NIR, FTIR and GC-MS” (with graduate student Allison Fuchs).

Professor Rowe also co-authored two papers presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in Chicago, Illinois, February 21-26, 2011:


“Differentiation of Black Permanent Marker Inks by Ultraviolet-Visible-Near Infrared Spectrophotometry and Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometry” (with Allison M. Fuchs).

Professor Rowe also hosted the annual alumni reception that takes place in conjunction with the Academy meeting.

Professor Moses S Schanfield
Professor Schanfield, along with Professor Podini, Katherine Butler and graduate students Jessica Hart and Michelle Peck continue to work on DNA assays to determine ancestry and physical characteristics of participants in crime scene evidence.

Professor Schanfield with graduate student Daniele Tiesma continues to work on X chromosome STR loci as extension of the work reported at the AAPA meeting in April.

Professor Schanfield is serving his third and final year on the Dean’s Council and is continuing on the Appointments, Salaries, Promotion Policies committee of the Academic Senate.

Professor Schanfield was Co-Program Director, International Society of Biological Sciences, 7th ISABS Conference in Forensic, Anthropology and Medical Genetics and Mayo Clinic Lectures in Translational Medicine, Bol, Island of Brač, Croatia, June 20-25, 2011.

Professor Schanfield spoke at the National Youth Leadership Forum-Forum on The Law and CSI: Plenary presentation “Introduction to the Field of Forensics,” June 29, 2011 450 high school students, July 6, 2011 370 high school students, July 13, 2011 430 high school students.
I have been serving as acting chair since the beginning of July and expect to continue in this position at least through the end of this fall semester. I'm not a forensic scientist but I feel like I go back a long way with this program. After I joined the faculty in 1971, the Department chair at that time, Dr. Alton Desmond, became my mentor and ultimately a good friend. Al and his colleague from chemistry, Ted Perros had formed the Department just a few years earlier. I was introduced to the forensic sciences department then and over the years a number of students did thesis Masters degrees in forensic sciences working with faculty in the biology department. I read one or two of their theses. So although my interactions with the department have been limited, I have always taken an interest in it and I am very happy to be associated with the program. I am just now feeling that I am getting up to speed on the department's programs and activities. I am enjoying getting to know the current full-time faculty of the department and I look forward to meeting more of the student's, as well as alumni.

The faculty are a great group who all care deeply about their students, their colleagues and the future of forensic sciences at GW.

Before I became associated with the department this summer, Walter Rowe, who just stepped down as chair at the end of June, did a lot of work with his colleagues on a document that was presented to FEPAC, the national body that accredits forensic science programs. We just concluded a two-day visit by Dr. Keith Morris, head of the forensic sciences program at West Virginia University and Noelle Umback from the chief medical examiner's office of New York City. They were here as FEPAC representatives to inspect our facilities and talk to our faculty, students, the Dean of the College and the Provost of the University. When I spoke to them yesterday before they left they seemed very positively impressed and I am optimistic that the Masters of Forensic Science programs in chemistry, toxicology and molecular biology will be accredited. I want to congratulate the faculty who worked very hard to make this happen and thank the students who participated in the review.

SAVE THE DATE

GW Alumni Reception at the AAFS Annual Meeting
February 20 - 25 | Atlanta, GA

GW Forensic Sciences alumni will be gathering for the American Academy of Forensic Science Annual Scientific Meeting in this February. Join us for our annual alumni reception, in conjunction with the meeting, for the opportunity to network with your fellow alumni and reconnect with the GW Department of Forensic Sciences.
They look like what you might find in Wednesday Addams’ playroom: Dollhouses with overturned furniture and tied-up bodies. As class projects, students in Ted Robinson’s Crime Scene Investigation courses have been constructing models of actual crime scenes to be used as teaching tools. The idea is not a new one. In the 1940s Frances Glessner Lee (1878-1966) combined her twin passions for criminal investigation and dollhouses by constructing eighteen dioramas of crime scenes to be used to teach police detectives how to investigate homicides. Ms. Lee believed (and probably correctly) that many murders went unsolved because of inadequate police investigation. By the time Ms. Lee began to build her dioramas she had already helped establish Harvard’s Department of Legal Medicine in 1931. She had followed up by contributing a library and an endowment to that department, the first of its kind in the United States. Ms. Lee also held the position of captain in the New Hampshire State Police. Her dioramas still exist and are in the possession of Maryland’s Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. More recently, one of our alumni, Tom Mauriello, who teaches forensic science at the University of Maryland has had similar dioramas constructed for the benefit of his students.

Last spring, for the first time, three students chose to construct crime scene doll houses for Ted’s CSI I course. In the past, students have just done 2D and 3D computerized crime scenes, but every now and then it is good to go into court with a scale model. Scott Roeske (red sweatshirt) made a replica of John Wayne Gacy’s home at 8213 Summerdale Ave., Chicago IL. After police recovered twenty-seven bodies from twenty-six burial sites in the crawl space beneath the home, the home was demolished (the Romans called it damnatio memoriae). Gacy was convicted of thirty-three murders, sentenced to death, and was subsequently executed in May 1994. Theo Kouts created a crime scene doll house based on a crime he knew about from his hometown. Two victims were strapped to chairs back-to-back, and smothered with plastic bags put over their heads. They were in the kitchen, but since there were no exterior windows in the kitchen area, when the police initially responded to a ‘suspicious circumstances’ call, they could not see the victims, and cleared the call and left. This house has its roof removed, and the second floor can also be removed to reveal the first floor and the victims. The third house, created by Kristin Urgo, was damaged and is awaiting repair.

Ted hopes that in the future he can use his students’ constructions to create 3D CAD computer files for the edification of future generations of our crime scene investigation students. These files can be used to create ‘crime scene’ photos from different perspectives, as well as ‘videos’ of walk-throughs of the crime scenes.

Further Reading:
During the Summer of 2011, we had a pre-college group of students come to Mount Vernon for a two week CSI-DC experience. After a week and a half of theory and practical labs, the students were split into four groups and each group had to work one of four bodies at a quadruple homicide scene. Our first Quad on the Quad. The entire program was well received, and it is expected to be a regular feature in summers to come.
Presentation of the first Lindsey Marie Ferris Crime Scene Investigation Prize
May 20, 2011

Heather Charron, MFS ’11, was the first recipient of the Lindsey Marie Ferris Crime Scene Investigation Prize by the Department of Forensic Sciences. She was recognized for outstanding academic achievement and exceptionally high-quality research.

Donors
Special Thanks to the following donors who recently provided generous support to the Department of Forensic Sciences:

- Mr. William B. Andrews MS 1996
- Mr. Alan F. Boehm MS 1988
- Ms. Shannon Wilson Bruce MS 2006
- Dr. Todd W. Burke MS 1984
- Mr. Damon Lamont Burman MS 2003
- Mr. Michael D. Coble MS 1997
- Ms. Joanna Lynn Collins MS 2003
- Mr. Keith D. and Mrs. Pamela K. Ferris
- Mr. Nicholas and Mrs. Beverly Ferris
- Ms. Diana L. Freas-Lutz MS 1994
- Mr. Steven Victor Gilbert MS 1991
- Mr. William E. Harward, Jr. MS 1971
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- Mr. Paul A. Hojnacki MS 1983
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- Dr. Daniele S. Podini
- Dr. George Edward Reed MS 1988
- Mr. Robert Alan Relick MS 1980
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- Mr. Wesley Rory Thomas MS 1983
- Ms. Jennifer L. Tommervik MS 2005
- TruForensics, LLC
- The Vanguard Group Foundation
- Mr. Robin Dennis Williams MS 1981
- Mr. Roger C. Woods MS 1973
Faculty News, continued

High Technology Crime Investigations has moved!

Professor Eva Vincze

Professor Eva Vincze coordinated the move of the High Technology Crime Investigation Program to the new Arlington campus site.

She was also invited to speak as a Plenary presenter at the Army’s Distributive Learning Conference in Norfolk, VA. Her Topic was Cybersecurity and E-Learning.

Professor Vincze is continuing to serve on the Appointments, Salaries, Promotion Policies committee of the Academic Senate.

In May, 2011, the Arlington Graduate Education Center along with the High Technology Crime Investigations Program moved to its new location at 950 North Glebe Rd. Located three blocks from the Ballston Metro, the new facility now provides us with two dedicated forensic lab spaces.

950 North Glebe Rd.
Arlington, VA

Main Forensics Lab

Reception Area

Student Lounge Area

Open Lab area
The Department of Forensic Sciences Lindsey Marie Ferris Crime Scene Investigation Prize recognizes a current CSI student in memory of Lindsey Ferris, BA ’01, who earned her Master of Forensic Science degree in 2003, and died suddenly of an illness while serving as a civilian Special Agent with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. The recipient of the Prize will have demonstrated both academic excellence and the ability to conduct high quality research.

Applying for the Prize:

The Lindsey Marie Ferris Crime Scene Investigation Prize will be awarded by May 1st each year. Applicants for the Prize should submit a copy of their research completed during the previous twelve months, a resume, and an unofficial transcript. These materials should be turned in by March 15th. Applications will be reviewed by at least three full-time faculty members.

Eligibility: Must be a current student in the GWU Forensic Science Department with a concentration in Crime Scene Investigation.

Support: The Prize offers $1,000 for the most qualified student each year.

Gifts

Gifts to the Department of Forensic Sciences allow us to provide support for faculty and student research and academic travel, graduate student fellowships, and student enrichment activities including guest speakers, visiting faculty, and symposia. Each gift, no matter how large or small, makes a positive impact on our educational mission and furthers our standing as one of the nation’s preeminent liberal arts colleges at one of the world’s preeminent universities. You can make your gift to the Department in a number of ways:

- Securely online at www.gwu.edu/give2gw. Just choose —"Other “ under designation and type in the name of the department.

- By mailing your check, made out to The George Washington University with “Forensic Sciences Department” in the memo line, to:

  The George Washington University  
  2100 M Street NW, Suite 310  
  Washington, DC 20052

- By phone: call the GW Annual Fund at: 1-800-789-2611

Thank you!