Message from the Director

Once again, we find ourselves rapidly approaching the conclusion of another academic year. In particular, this past year has been one of tremendous ups and downs. We all were forced to confront repeated daily challenges and uncertainties, but we overcame and fought our way to the end of a successful semester while learning many valuable lessons along the way.

I sincerely thank all of our faculty and staff for your tremendous and unwavering dedication to supporting our students through the most difficult of times. I congratulate all of our undergraduate and graduate students for your commitment to learning and your perseverance toward reaching your goals and maintaining the high academic and moral standards of the Forensic Science Program. And I applaud those students who will be graduating from the program this year after so much hard work. I wish you much success and fulfillment wherever your path may lead you.

As you can see, the program is going strong and many new things are happening. New courses are being developed, new lab space is being added, and a new scholarship is now available for our graduate students through the generosity of a very kind donor. With your ongoing dedication, we will continue to support each other and enjoy great success together. I wish you all a successful conclusion to the semester and a relaxing and enjoyable summer.

Dr. Brooks
Incoming Graduate Students

We would like to introduce you to our incoming group of first-year grad students. We have an outstanding pool of applicants this year, and we look forward to welcoming the Class of 2024 when they arrive for orientation week in August.

- Briana Alarcon; Michigan State University
- Erin Brownfield; Texas A&M
- Miriam Foster; Penn State
- Olesia Headen; North Carolina Central University
- Jade Korber; Texas Tech
- Andrea Ramirez-Torres; Florida International University
- Erika Sitch; Kent State University
- Mei Smyers; University of Pittsburgh
- Zoe Timothy; University of the Sciences

AAFS Presentations

Congrats to our students who presented their research at the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) Annual Meeting in February! You make us so proud!!

Oral Presentations

Veronica Cappas
- Volatile Organic Compounds Produced by Bacteria Associated with Decomposition
- Determining Human Identity from Leeches

Megan Morris
- Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) Associated with Diseased Human Blood
Poster Presentations

Ashley Smith
- Optimizing Blood Removal Methodology for Visualizing Gunshot Residue (GSR) Patterns

Shannon Palladino
- A Comparison of Meconium, Synthetic Meconium, and Urine by High–Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) and Liquid Chromatography/Tandem Mass Spectrometry (LC/MS/MS) in the Simultaneous Detection of Illicit Drugs and Metabolites

This year’s meeting was in Seattle, WA. Our class of second year grad students were all able to attend, thanks to travel support provided by the Forensic Science program.

Above: grad students at AAFS in Seattle.
Above: Shannon Palladino presenting her poster.

Wieland Scholarship Recipient

Congratulations to Andrea Ramirez Torres for being our first recipient of the Wieland Graduate Scholarship. This scholarship was established by Walter and Lynn Marie Wieland to permit the recruitment and retention of the most highly qualified students into our Forensic Science graduate program. Each scholarship covers the cost of tuition and fees, as well as a stipend for the two years that student is earning their degree. A new incoming grad student will be selected each year to receive this honor.

The Forensic Science program is grateful to have received such a generous gift from the Wielands, and thanks them for their
continued support of our students and Penn State Forensic Science.

Below: Andrea Ramirez Torres poses for a photo with Dexter in the Forensic Science main office, 329 Whitmore Lab, during the prospective grad student visit and interview weekend in February 2022.

Recognizing our Fall 2021 Graduates

We would like to recognize our students who graduated in Fall 2021. Don’t forget to keep in touch! We love to hear about your adventures beyond Penn State!

BS in Forensic Science – Fall 2021

- Amanda Hess
- Katie Hogg
- Sarah Parko
- Erin Seilhamer
Spring 2022 Student Marshal

Every spring, our program selects a Student Marshal to carry the Forensic Science banner onto the floor of the BJC during the Eberly College of Science undergraduate graduation ceremony. Representing us this year is Claire Schweitzer. Claire is pursuing the biology option, with a minor in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. She has served as a course assistant for Dr. Reena Roy since August of 2020. Claire is also member of the Forensic Science Club and has served as both their Treasurer and President in her time at Penn State, as well as being a member of the Orchesis Dance Company all four years here – two of them as a member of their executive board. Each student marshal is asked to select a faculty member to accompany them as they carry the banner in the graduation processional; Claire has selected Dr. Roy as her faculty escort.

Congratulations to Claire on her selection as our student marshal, and congratulations to all our students graduating this spring and summer! You make us so proud!

Below: Claire Schweitzer, 2022 Forensic Science Student Marshal.
Virtual Event

Our first Forensic Science Virtual Program Update was held on January 26th. Remarks from program Director, Dr. Jason Brooks, alumni speakers Dr. Frank Wendt, Alison Carr, and Jessica Hovingh, and current students were given to the 60-plus people in attendance.

If you missed the update, the recording of the event can be viewed here:

Program Update

New Electives

FRNSC 497 – Firearms and Tool Marks Examination is now listed in Lionpath and the Bulletin as FRNSC 419. It will be offered in the Fall semester only.

A new FRNSC 497 course will be offered in Spring 2023. Medicolegal Death Investigation, which will give students perspective on the role of the ME/coroner and forensic pathologist, will be taught by program Director, Dr. Jason Brooks. This course is lecture only. The course will be offered in Spring semester only.

New Lab Space

006 Althouse Lab Acquired
The Forensic Science Program has acquired new laboratory and office space in 006 Althouse Laboratory basement. Mr. Mike Kusluski has moved his office there and utilizes the space for teaching FRNSTC 419 – Firearms and Tool Mark Examination. The space will also be used by other faculty and students for research.

Thanks for being a part of the Penn State Forensic Science Program.