

Young Forensic Scientists Forum Newsletter

A Letter from the YFSF President

The August 1 abstract submission deadline has come and gone and with it the summer has left us too. Just like the changing of the leaves in the fall, the Young Forensic Scientists Forum (YFSF) is going to be undergoing some beautiful changes as well.

First, I would like to draw your attention to the message from the Assistant Secretary, **Brianna Bermudez**. Please note all the deadlines for the upcoming YFSF events: the Bring Your Own Poster and Bring Your Own Slides Sessions. These deadlines are coming up fast. For more details on these events, please contact the associated chairs of these events.

Second, I would like to describe some of the changes the YFSF Committee will be making to our newsletter. We will still provide information about our upcoming events and call for speakers for our special session. While it is still very important to us that we fulfill our goal of providing a special session for students and young professionals during the Annual Meeting, we all felt that our main goal of educating and connecting with our very own generation of young forensic scientists was not being met. Our goal is not to provide information for three days, once a year, but to engage and provide guidance and support to our generation of students and professionals throughout the *entire* year. Therefore, we have decided to add more pertinent sections to our newsletter. You will note that this newsletter has two new sections “Things Every Young Forensic Scientists Should Know and “YFSF General Information.” The latter will be the usual discussion of YFSF events and activities, whereas the former will be articles and interviews performed by our own YFSF Committee. This month we have information on interviewing and a personal account from one of our committee members who went from an established career in law to entering graduate school for forensic science.

We would eventually like to include different types of information and to include interviews from professionals throughout the fields of forensic science. If there is a topic, question, or issue you would like to see discussed in future YFSF newsletters, please do not hesitate to contact me at lafra86@gmail.com.

Lara Frame Newell, MA
YFSF President

A Note from the YFSF Assistant Secretary

Fall has begun and that means it is time to consider joining us February 16-21 for the 2015 Annual Meeting in Orlando, FL! Additional and updated information regarding the conference hotels and schedules can be acquired at www.aafs.org/meetings/2015.

For those who meet certain criteria, the Forensic Sciences Foundation awards travel grants to students to assist with travel costs. The YFSF encourages all to apply, as the deadline is October 15th. More information can be found at fst.aafs.org. The Young Forensic Scientists Forum is excited to be celebrating its 20th Anniversary at the 2015 Annual Meeting and we hope to see you there!

Brianna Bermudez
YFSF Assistant Secretary
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Things Every Young Forensic Scientist Should Know

Techniques for Interviewing

Interviewing for a job can be both an exciting and nerve-racking process. There is no magic formula to having the perfect interview and no matter how hard you prepare you will still be nervous. However, there are things that you can do before and during an interview that can help you.

One of the first things to do is to find out what type of interview it is going to be; is it an interview with a single person or a panel interview? You do not want to be surprised when walking in. Find out if there will be a short quiz or test, as well. Some jobs will require you to take a short quiz/test before you are interviewed, so they have an idea of your knowledge base. Typically, the short quiz/test is on knowledge about the field you are interviewing for. Additionally, some jobs require you to demonstrate your skills and they may have you perform a task during the interview.

Second, make sure you dress appropriately. A nice suit in a neutral or muted color is always a good choice. Even if you are interviewing in summer months and it is unbelievably hot, make sure to wear the suit jacket in the interview and if wearing a long sleeved dress shirt do not have the sleeves rolled up when you enter the interview. This does not look professional and can be distracting to the interviewer. You also do not want to wear overly bright colors as

the interviewers may spend more time looking at your clothing choice than listening to you. You want to look nice, but professional at the same time, and want the interviewer to pay more attention to what you are saying, not what you are wearing. Ladies, the same can be said about makeup, jewelry, and hair. You want muted colors and no exaggerated eye makeup, as the interviewers may spend more time thinking about why you did your makeup like that and less time actually listening to you. If you have tattoos, attempt to cover them up to the best of your ability. You do not want your interviewer to stare at your tribal design or try to read the words on your arm instead of listening to what you are saying.

Third, make sure you have a basic knowledge of the agency or company you are interviewing with. Interviewers like to ask questions about what you know about them. Know who is the current director, CEO, president, etc., what the agency or company's mission/purpose is, and how the organization is structured. If you are applying for a job in a section make sure you know the section manager's name. Know about the history of the agency/company. If they have been in the news for some reason make sure you know about these things. The agency or company may not have made national news but a quick internet search will provide you with good information. If applying to a laboratory, look up whether they are accredited and whether you will have to go through the certification process as you may be asked about this.

Fourth, when asked questions about what you would do in a situation, answer honestly and use examples. Interviewers like to see that you can handle yourself. The example does not have to be in the forensic field you are applying for, and you should never include any names, but make sure it is appropriate and has substance to it. The example can be from a previous job or experience you have had.

Be honest. If they ask you if you have ever had a speeding ticket, answer honestly. Many places of work in the forensic sciences run background checks on prospective employees and you do not want them to catch you in a lie as, more than likely, they will decide not to hire you.

There are other things that you can do, like taking several copies of your resume or CV. Sometimes the interviewers will have this from when you applied for the job but it is good to have an up-to-date copy with you, especially if anything has changed since you applied. It could be months between when you applied and when you are interviewed. Arrive early, you do not want to make the interviewers wait, it is better that you wait for them.

If you have questions, do not be afraid to write them down and take them with you. This shows you are interested in the job. I typically take a notebook in to an interview with me, sometimes I have notes about the agency/company in there, but mostly, it is questions I want to ask, such as what my duties would be, expectations, benefits, and so on.

It is all right to be nervous during an interview. They expect you to be nervous. You want to sell yourself but not come across as overly confident and arrogant. Be yourself when interviewing, trying to be someone else can make you seem stilted and awkward.

Interviewing is hard but with the right level of preparedness, the process can be easier, but not easy.

Sarah Ellis, MS
YFSF Secretary Chair
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From Law School to Forensic Anthropology

My route to forensics has been a strange one. I graduated with a BS in Biological Science and Zoology with a minor in Biomedical Science. Following graduation, I worked at a few jobs ranging from mortgage filings to working on molecular epidemiology for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. My work at the CDC was very interesting, but only lasted a single year. Not knowing what else to do, I followed the suggestion of my lab partner and went to law school. I focused on pharmaceutical patent law, as this required a scientific background. After three years of law school, I worked as a patent litigation attorney for four years.

Almost from the start of my legal career, I knew that I would eventually return to graduate school. My work involved reading a lot of scientific literature and I immediately missed actually practicing science. I had always been fascinated with forensic anthropology and applied for the Master's program at Mercyhurst University. It seemed like a perfect way to return to the biological sciences and had the connection with forensics that would make use of my legal education.

So, while I no longer actively practice law, I have no regrets about attending law school. Law school is tough and I would not recommend it for the faint of heart. However, those three years of graduate school helped me develop many skills that are applicable to forensics. Most obviously, I have familiarity with the criminal legal process, the impact of forensic science, and how scientific experts can be utilized to strengthen a case. Beyond that, law school tremendously helped develop my critical thinking and writing skills.

Changing careers has certainly been challenging at times. I am the oldest person in my program and I had to learn to live without a steady salary again. But the rewards have been more than worth the changes. Like most of the people in the forensics field, I am not in it for the money. However, I get more satisfaction from being an active participant in a scientific field than I ever did as an attorney. For anyone questioning where they are headed or considering a change to forensics, I would encourage them to follow their passion.

Kate M. Lesciotto, JD
YFSF BYOS Co-Chair
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YFSF General Information

Financial Liaison

Each year, during the AAFS meeting, the Young Forensic Scientists Forum organizes a Special Session geared toward students and young professionals in the forensic science field. This special session includes a full-day session with speakers, a breakfast session with a resume review panel, a Bring Your Own Poster Session, and a Bring Your Own Slides Session. Attending these events can motivate and guide those wishing to pursue a career in forensic science. The Young Forensic Scientists Forum is able to hold these sessions each year because of the generous support and financial contributions that we receive from the forensic community.

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Young Forensic Scientists Forum cont.

The YFSF receives monetary and educational support from FEPAC accredited universities, forensic science vendors, the AAFS sections, and AAFS members each year. We have recently mailed out letters and contribution forms to FEPAC accredited universities. In the Fall, we will begin contacting vendors and the AAFS sections. This continued support is essential to the educational and professional successes of young forensic scientists across the country.

If you or your organization is interested in contributing resources to the 2015 YFSF Special Session, please contact **Katie Knurek** or **Betsy Maldonado**.

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YFSF Special Session

The theme for the 2015 YFSF Special Session is *YFSF 20th Anniversary: The Past, The Present, and Our Future*. This theme aims to show students and young professionals how far forensic science has come and to acknowledge the contributions individuals have made in forensic science. Additionally, this session will focus on looking to the future, at how the young forensic scientists will impact the field, and to inspire them to make a difference with their own careers.

The speakers at this year's session will reflect on their personal experiences, improvements made during their careers, and contributions they have made to the different fields of forensic science. We have speakers from a variety of disciplines, including Criminalistics, Toxicology, Pathology/Biology, Odontology, and many more. The YFSF is very excited for all of the speakers who will be presenting. More information about the speakers will be available in the November Young Forensic Scientists Forum's newsletter.

If you have any questions about this year's Special Session, please email yfsfss@gmail.com.

Christina Hayes, BS
YFSF Special Session Chair

Jessica Smith, BS
YFSF Special Session Co-Chair

YFSF Breakfast Session

The 2015 YFSF Breakfast Session theme, "*Getting There: Unique Professional Journeys in Forensic Science*" is centered on providing inspiration and professional tools to achieve success in the sometimes daunting and difficult job market. Two keynote speakers will share unique and engaging journeys of a successful career in the forensic sciences. **Christine Funk**, General Counsel for the Washington, DC, Department of Forensic Sciences, will present "How To Blossom Where You Are Planted - And Figure Out How You'll Grow." She will be joined by **Ann Ross**, a board certified forensic anthropologist and professor at North Carolina State University, who will present "Succeeding in Forensic Science: Not an Oxymoron."

In honor of YFSF's 20th Anniversary, former YFSF Presidents and committee members will join our speakers in an open Q&A session before breaking out into a one-on-one résumé review session. If you

are an experienced forensic scientist or supervisor, please consider serving as a résumé reviewer for the next generation of forensic professionals.

Contact yfsf.breakfast@gmail.com with any questions or to volunteer. See you in Orlando, FL!

Alicja K. Lanfear, PhD
YFSF Breakfast Session Chair

Tiffany B. Saul, MS
YFSF Breakfast Session Co-Chair

YFSF Bring Your Own Slides

The YFSF Bring Your Own Slides Session offers the perfect opportunity for students and young professionals to present their research and casework studies at the 2015 AAFS Annual Scientific Meeting in Orlando, FL. This is a unique opportunity where one can present student research in a stress-free environment, and where you are not being graded for your content or performance! Many of the audience members will not have experience in your particular field; thus, you will be teaching them. This is a wonderful opportunity to add presentation experience to your résumé!

You can present as much or as little as you would like in the given time slot. YFSF BYOS is currently accepting resume and curriculum vitae submissions through December 15. If you are interested in presenting at the AAFS 67th Annual Scientific Meeting, please submit a one-page abstract and CV to yfsf.byos@gmail.com. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact **Lindsay Saylor** or **Kate Lesciotto**.

Lindsay Saylor
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YFSF Bring Your Own Poster Session

Bon Jour, aspiring forensic scientists! The YFSF Bring Your Own Poster (BYOP) Session is looking for presenters for the 67th Annual Scientific Meeting in Orlando, FL. Undergraduate and graduate students, as well as young forensic professionals who wish to present their research, case studies, and other topics that are relevant to forensic science are invited to present. The YFSF BYOP Session offers young, aspiring scientists, a great opportunity to gain experience in the professional world by presenting relevant research to the forensic community. For those individuals who are interested in the BYOP Session, please submit a one-page abstract and curriculum vitae to yfsf.postersession@gmail.com by December 1.

If you have additional questions about your submission, please contact the BYOP Session Chairs at yfsf.postersession@gmail.com. We look forward to reviewing your submission for the 2015 YFSF BYOP Session!

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