

## Forensic Science Educational Programs (VI) — Programs in the US<sup>a,b</sup>

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### Development of Forensic Science Programs in the US

Historically, academic forensic science (FS) programs in the United States tended to be relatively small and were embedded in a criminal justice, chemistry, or biology department. Graduates from an FS program in a criminal justice department would often be lacking in laboratory training. Forensic science programs in chemistry or biology departments were frequently the basic science degree with a few criminal justice courses thrown in. Then, in the early 2000s, interest in FS surged as TV crime dramas migrated from the courtroom to the crime scene. Many colleges and universities responded to student demand by adding FS degrees to their curriculums. However, there were no guidelines or standards in place for education in the forensic sciences. In fact, some state crime laboratories would not hire an applicant with a master of science in FS unless their undergraduate degree was in chemistry or biology.

In response to the proliferation of FS programs, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences established the Forensic Science Education Program Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) in 2002 [1]. Standards were developed based on the guidelines established by the Technical Working Group for Education and Training in Forensic Science (TWGED) and FEPAC began accrediting FS programs in 2004 [2]. Accreditation is available for bachelor's and master's degrees, but not PhD programs at this time. As of 2019, there are 50 accredited programs in 37 colleges and universities and one Canadian university. This number is unlikely to change in 2020.

In the US, virtually all colleges offer associate's and bachelor's degrees, while universities offer bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The Master of Science in

Forensic Sciences is the terminal degree in the discipline, though several universities have recently initiated doctoral programs in FS. The degrees in forensic science offered by colleges and universities are, in descending order, doctoral (PhD), master of science (MS), master of arts (MA), bachelor of science (BS), bachelor of arts (BA), associate of science (AS), associate of applied science (AAS), associate of art. (AA). An MS or BS in forensic science offers more opportunities for employment than an MA or BA, respectively. An MS degree will often result in only a slight increase in starting salary over a BS degree, as the amount of training required before being certified to do casework will be the same, but an MS is often a requirement for promotion to higher positions in the laboratory. An AS is not likely to lead to a job directly, but the student can then transfer the credits into a BS program. Many colleges and universities also offer minors and certificates in FS. A minor usually consists of six courses, with at least two being at the junior or senior level. A minor in FS, in conjunction with a BS in chemistry or biology, will provide a small advantage for applications to forensic crime labs or MSFS programs. Certificates can be applied to annual training requirements for FS positions.

### Searching for Forensic Science Programs for Inclusion in This List

The search for forensic science programs in the US was done online, using primarily the FEPAC list of accredited programs [3] and the CollegeSource<sup>®</sup> Online [4] Google search, Universities.com, [5] and [forensicscolleges.com](http://forensicscolleges.com) [6] as primary sources. The keyword “forensic” and the criterion “any degree” were used with CollegeSource. For other search engines or web pages, disciplines were combined with forensic in the search terms, e.g., forensic biology, forensic chemistry, forensic accounting, etc. This was sufficient to identify FS programs as well as forensic anthropology, nursing, pathology, digital, cyber, and others.

Once a college or university with one or more FS programs was identified, the university's web pages were accessed to confirm that the program was active. The site was searched to find the location, home department, program URL, contact information, degree name,

<sup>a</sup>Editor's note: *Forensic Science Review* has previously published a list of North American programs accredited by the Forensic Science Education Program Accreditation Commission (*Forensic Sci Rev* 27:7; 2015). An updated version of accredited programs in the US has been incorporated in the current list.

<sup>b</sup>Authors' note: A draft version of this report was sent to contacts of all programs (included in the list) for verification. We apologize for omissions (if any) during the compilation process and deeply appreciate the more than 80 responses — mostly requesting minor revisions of entries.

degrees offered, and accrediting body for the institution. For universities and colleges with multiple programs in different departments, each department and its associated degrees is listed separately under the institutions entry. All levels from PhD to certificate programs have been included, as each level serves different FS communities. However, degrees that offer forensic courses as electives are not included.

Only FEPAC is listed for accredited FS programs. Part of FEPAC accreditation is documenting that the institution is accredited by a regional accreditation organization like the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

No attempt has been made to evaluate the quality of the FS programs listed below (**Table 1**). With the proliferation of FS programs since 2001, it is important for potential students to evaluate a degree program carefully before deciding to enroll.

## References

1. Almirall JR, Furton KG: Trends in forensic science education: Expansion and increased accountability; *Anal Bioanal Chem* 376:1156; 2003.
2. [US] National Institute of Justice: *Education and Training in Forensic Science: A Guide for Forensic Science Laboratories, Educational Institutions, and Students*; US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice: Washington, DC; 2004; <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/203099.pdf> (Accessed January 7, 2020).
3. Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC): Accredited Universities; <http://www.fepac-edu.org/accredited-universities> (Accessed January 7, 2020).
4. College Source Online; [https://cso.collegesource.com/CSO\\_Search.aspx](https://cso.collegesource.com/CSO_Search.aspx) (Accessed January 7, 2020).
5. Universities.com; <https://www.universities.com> (Accessed January 8, 2020).
6. Forensic Colleges and Universities; <https://www.forensicscolleges.com> (Accessed January 8, 2020).

**Table 1.** Forensic science educational programs in the US

State	Institution <sup>a,b</sup> ; City, State; Department; URL	Contact information <sup>c</sup>	Program emphasis	Degrees <sup>a,d</sup>	Accred. <sup>e</sup>
AL	<b>University of Alabama, Birmingham</b> Birmingham, AL 35294 Department of Criminal Justice <a href="https://www.uab.edu/cas/criminaljustice/graduate/msfs">https://www.uab.edu/cas/criminaljustice/graduate/msfs</a> School of Nursing <a href="https://www.uab.edu/nursing/home/academics/masters/post-msn-subspecialty-options">https://www.uab.edu/nursing/home/academics/masters/post-msn-subspecialty-options</a> Department of Computer Science <a href="https://www.uab.edu/cas/computerscience/graduate-programs/masters-programs/ms-cyber-security">https://www.uab.edu/cas/computerscience/graduate-programs/masters-programs/ms-cyber-security</a>	Elizabeth Gardner; (205) 934-0668; <a href="mailto:egard@uab.edu">egard@uab.edu</a> Pat Speck; (205) 934-6790, <a href="mailto:pmspeck@uab.edu">pmspeck@uab.edu</a> Nitesh Saxena; (205) 975-3432; <a href="mailto:saxena@uab.edu">saxena@uab.edu</a>	Forensic sci. Digital forensics Forensic nursing Cyber security	MSFS, minor BS MSN MS	FEPAC
AL	Alabama State University Montgomery, AL 36101 Physical Sciences Department <a href="https://www.alasu.edu/cstem/physical-sciences/forensic-science-program">https://www.alasu.edu/cstem/physical-sciences/forensic-science-program</a>	Gulnaz Javan; (334) 604-8130; <a href="mailto:gjavan@alasu.edu">gjavan@alasu.edu</a>	Forensic sci.	MSFS, BSFC, BSFB	SACS
AL	Jacksonville State University Jacksonville, AL 36265 Department of Criminal Justice & Forensic Investigation <a href="http://www.jsu.edu/criminaljustice/undergraduate/forensics.html">http://www.jsu.edu/criminaljustice/undergraduate/forensics.html</a>	Chris Haney; (256) 782-5516; <a href="mailto:whaney1@jsu.edu">whaney1@jsu.edu</a>	Forensic invest.	BS	SACS
AR	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Pine Bluff, AR 71601 Department of Chemistry and Physics <a href="https://www.uapb.edu/academics/school_of_arts_sciences/chemistry_physics/degree_programs.aspx">https://www.uapb.edu/academics/school_of_arts_sciences/chemistry_physics/degree_programs.aspx</a>	Grant Wangila; (870) 575-8382; <a href="mailto:wangilag@uapb.edu">wangilag@uapb.edu</a>	Forensic chem.	BS	HLC
AR	Phillips Community College, University of Arkansas Helena-West Helena, AR 72342 Division of Arts & Sciences <a href="https://www.pccua.edu/academics/career_cluster/safety">https://www.pccua.edu/academics/career_cluster/safety</a>	Robin Bryant; (870) 338-6474 (x1370); <a href="mailto:bryant@pccua.edu">bryant@pccua.edu</a>	Crime scene invest.	CTF	HLC
AR	Southern Arkansas University Magnolia, AR 71753 Biochemistry and Chemistry <a href="https://web.saumag.edu/academics/program/chemistry-forensic-science/">https://web.saumag.edu/academics/program/chemistry-forensic-science/</a>	Tim Schroeder; (870) 235-4277; <a href="mailto:tsschroeder@saumag.edu">tsschroeder@saumag.edu</a>	Forensic chem.	BS	HLC
AR	University of Arkansas Community College Batesville, AR 72503 Division of Business, Technology and Public Service <a href="https://www.uaccb.edu/academics/academic-divisions/business-technology-public-service">https://www.uaccb.edu/academics/academic-divisions/business-technology-public-service</a>	Tamara Griffin; (870) 612-2022; <a href="mailto:tamara.griffin@uaccb.edu">tamara.griffin@uaccb.edu</a>	Crime scene invest.	AAS, CTF	HLC
AR	Northwest Arkansas Community College Bentonville, AR 72712 Criminal Justice <a href="https://www.nwacc.edu/degreecertificates/default.aspx">https://www.nwacc.edu/degreecertificates/default.aspx</a>	Jerry Rose; (479) 619-4344; <a href="mailto:jrose@nwacc.edu">jrose@nwacc.edu</a>	Proficiency in forensic sci.	CTF	HLC

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