

The CACNews

News of the California Association of Criminalists • Third Quarter 2020



Spring 2020 CAC Seminar

Hilton Santa Cruz/Scotts Valley

April 27 – May 1

**Hosted By: CA BFS Jan Bashinski DNA Lab and
the CA BFS Central Coast Labs**

The President's Desk

jamie
Lajoie



CAC President

While the future seems to change weekly, my hope is that we will be cleared to move forward with the Fall 2020 seminar. My guess is that we will have a better idea by August, but in the meantime, please email me with any of your thoughts or concerns.

Virtually President

Thank you all so much for allowing me the honor of serving you as your president for the next year. I am not sure where to even start but I will give it my earnest try and start with the easy stuff. I had envisioned my first days as your newly appointed president would have been spent connecting with the board and all of the attendees at the Spring 2020 seminar, followed by joining many of the membership at one of the many study groups provided by the CAC. Then everything needed to change, so we have had an interesting start. I would really like to thank Alice and Mey for showing me what it takes to be a good president through their grace, knowledge, and leadership (I tried to take good notes!). Due to having to cancel the Spring 2020 Seminar we unfortunately missed out on many great presentations, creation of memories, and the passing on of some of the CAC's great traditions. Thankfully technology was there to meet some of the challenges of the times and Alice was able to pass the coconut through a virtual hand off during our first membership wide ZOOM business meeting. I want to thank Adam Dutra (bylaws committee) and Stephen Lu (webmaster) for helping us accomplish this challenge of holding a virtual meeting with the right requirements and tech. I also want to acknowledge our spring meeting committee and chairs. I know you all would have put on an awesome in person conference and while it is disappointing to be so close to putting it on to only cancel it, know that your efforts are appreciated.

One of my goals for my year as president is to bring an awareness to the stress that we experience as criminalists and bring about discussion and information on how to assist in managing that stress. My other goal is to retain our current membership while reaching more people to expand our numbers. I want to hear to what our members want out of the CAC and what can be done to entice new members to join our ranks. I would like to do more outreach on both these topics so you might see a lot of surveys coming your way. As any scientist would, I need to collect data prior to making any conclusions.

On to the harder stuff. We know with COVID-19, there has been a lot of loss throughout the world; economic and financial loss, employment, and the most significant being a loss of human life. And mixed in there, on a smaller level, is how this virus has affected our profession. How do criminalist deal with going to an essential job every day? There are child care issues, there are elderly care issues, and there are personal medical issues that all must be dealt with. The new norm has seen many of us needing to adjust our work schedules. There are criminalists working weekends, working from home and working very odd hours. These changes introduce a high level of stress, and apparently, I have found that all criminalists don't necessarily make good 2nd grade teachers. Here's a hint if you are still struggling with this new role: send an email through to your crime lab and someone there will know the answer. As I see us do with cases, I am seeing us band together to support our colleagues where needed. Taking on calls, switching a day off so people can have six feet, helping with your fellow criminalists 8 year old's homework... Ya'll are doing great and we can get through this.

While the future seems to change weekly, my hope is that we will be cleared to move forward with the Fall 2020 seminar. My guess is that we will have a better idea by August, but in the meantime, please email me with any of your thoughts or concerns. If I do end up a virtual president only, I will make sure that Günther gets me an awesome Zoom background for the next meeting.

I would like to end my first message on the hardest note, but I will keep it simple. Just so there is no question, I am obviously against police brutality, I would take a knee, and black lives do matter. I think that it is important that we all take the opportunity to speak out against injustice when we see it. There are always improvements that can be made to all facets of the criminal justice system, and as with our profession, we should always strive to do better.

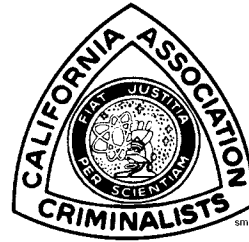
Please stay safe and healthy everyone, and I will see you (virtual or otherwise) soon.

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jamie'.

THIRD QUARTER 2020

The CACNews

www.cacnews.org



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Submissions should be made in the form of Windows compatible files on CD or by e-mail. Alternatively, text files may be saved as plain ASCII files without formatting codes, e.g. bold, italic, etc. Graphics, sketches, photographs, etc. may also be placed into articles. Please contact the editorial secretary for details.

The deadlines for submissions are: December 1, March 1, June 1 and September 1.



On the cover:

The Spring 2020 seminar is canceled and a virtual business meeting is held: Photos inside this issue.

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jonathan
Charron



CAC Editorial Secretary

While the virus causing this pandemic continues to force changes in countless lives, a different type of “viral” pandemic seems to continue to thrive and gain traction in this modern world: Misinformation.

“Stay Safe and Healthy”

It Means More than Just Words

To say that the past few months have been unprecedented is not giving the first half of 2020 the proper credit. In the matter of weeks, we witnessed the world go from “business as usual” to a large portion of the world shutting their doors and sheltering in place. COVID-19 quickly became the buzzword of the year and changed how we as humans interacted with the world around us.

Not only have our personal lives needed to adjust to this pandemic, many of our work situations saw an adjustment as well. Some of our agencies are requiring different PPE (the DNA folk are laughing as everyone else is struggling to work with a mask on), while other organizations may be changing our work schedules to minimize the number of people in the lab at any one point in time. There are also the logistics of how the court system must change due to social distancing requirements. I personally had my very first Zoom testimony the other day. Some advice: Check that all the Zoom functions work prior to testifying, make sure you know where the most tech savvy person is during the testimony, and always wear your full court attire. I encourage you to ask me at the next conference or study group meeting about that entire story if you want a good laugh.

While the virus causing this pandemic continues to force changes in countless lives, a different type of “viral” pandemic seems to continue to thrive and gain traction in this modern world: Misinformation. While the action of spreading misinformation is not new, the ease and ability for half-truths, incomplete stories, and outright lies to be disseminated to the masses by way of a “share” or a “tweet” is unprecedented. Social media and the internet provides a constantly updating stream of information, but these platforms are also effectively being used to make inaccurate information go viral. How does this viral trend affect us as criminalists? And what steps should we take to combat this?

I think that the first step in this issue is to admit that our culture has changed, which ultimately means that the jury pool has changed. I feel that with so much misinformation being presented as fact, that a good portion of the population is beginning to no longer trust what is reported to them. While I am not opposed to people fact checking anything and everything they read, I fear that many are not willing or able to pour through multiple sources for the ground truth. Is this doubt going to carry over to our justice system? Will there be a portion of the jury that does not believe our conclusions we present on the stand? Perhaps... but we can also take steps to prepare for just that.

I was going to finish this editorial with a contemplation about the importance of how a criminalist documents their analysis and how going the extra step in taking clear photographs, detailed notes, and writing reports that are not able to be misinterpreted... (I had to at least get those talking points out there) but I feel that the end of this editorial needs to focus on wellness during these challenging times.

I have been saying “Stay safe and healthy” nowadays as I say goodbye to someone, but what does that even mean? Of course, part of that means that I hope everyone doesn’t get sick or injured at work, but that is only part of my intended meaning. I also mean that I want everyone to stay mentally healthy. I have personally struggled with the overconsumption of headlines, looking at grim statistics, and processing angry arguments between people with different philosophies on a subject. I spend too much time thinking about how broken the world feels, especially right now, and get caught up in the fact that there is little I feel I can do to help. And that is where I am wrong. The work we do helps to give a voice for a victim and provides the analysis of evidence to help in proving a suspect’s innocence or guilt. Our work does change the world, and this is why we all must practice self-care so that we can continue to do so.

I urge you all to take some time and think about the things that makes you happy. Yoga, hiking, reading, or just having a glass of wine with a dear friend... whatever it may be, seek it out and make time for it. I was given a tip from a wise friend about pursuing mental happiness when I said I don’t have a lot of free time to do the things that bring me joy. She advised that I need to schedule the activities, and even if I am unable to make it happen each time due to time constraints, I still get some happiness in knowing that there is always something in my schedule to look forward to. In fact, I recently placed the Fall 2020 conference in my schedule, and I am very much looking forward to reconnecting with many of you who are also planning on attending. And if the world is still not ready, we can at least all smile as we put Spring 2021 in our books. With that, and the understanding all that it means, I hope that you are all staying safe and healthy.



“Where’s my newsletter?”

If you’re wondering where your envelope is, this issue of the newsletter is not being printed and mailed, but is posted online at www.cacnews.org. The cancellation of the May seminar left us without our two largest features: the seminar photos and abstracts. We faced the difficult decision of going ahead with what would be a very thin edition, costing thousands of dollars, or just posting online. We are already planning an awesome 4th Quarter issue that you can touch.

—Editorial Staff



Mind, Body, Forensics

A Holistic view of Criminalistics

Thinking about taking care of ourselves and thinking what’s best for our cases (multidiscipline view) and the profession.

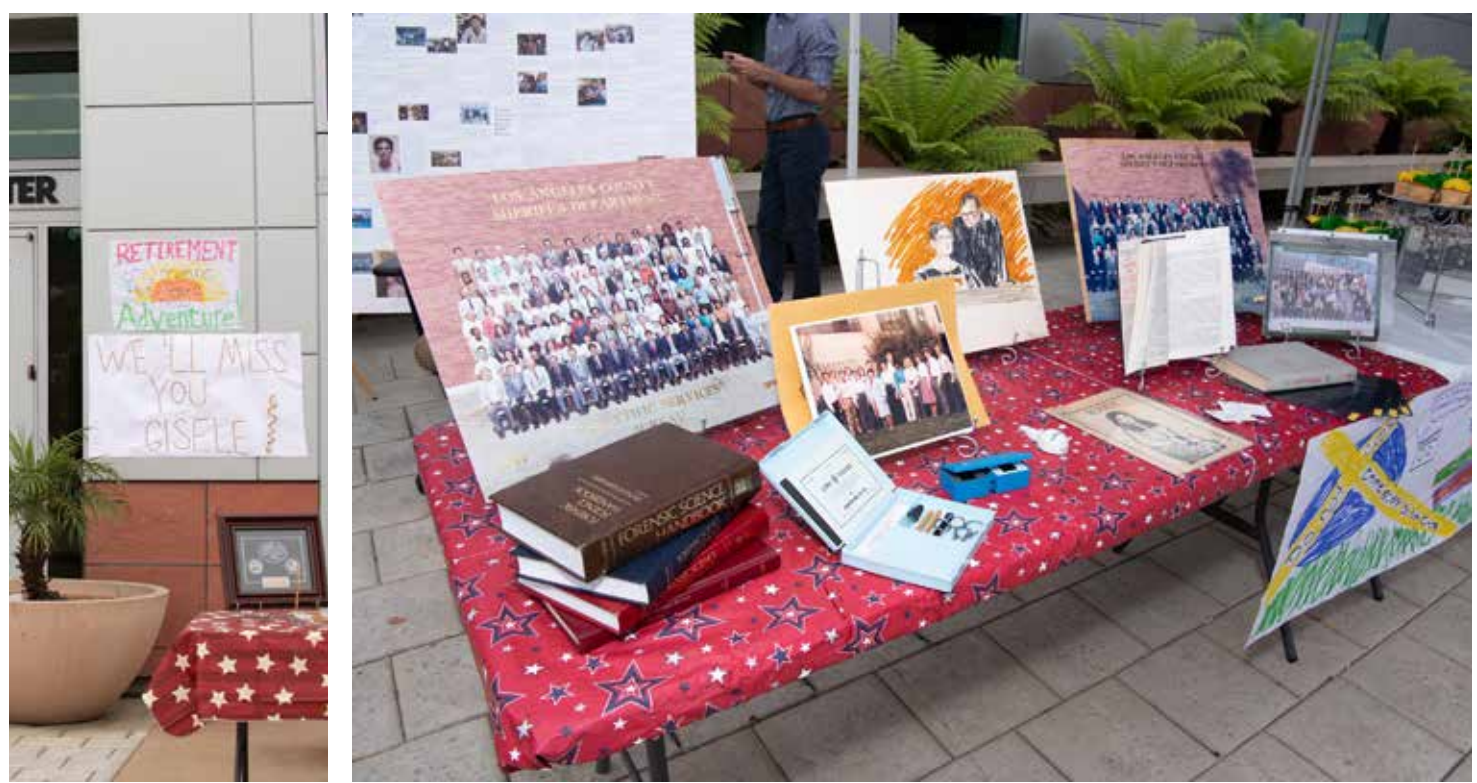


GISELE LAVIGNE'S GRAND SEND-OFF

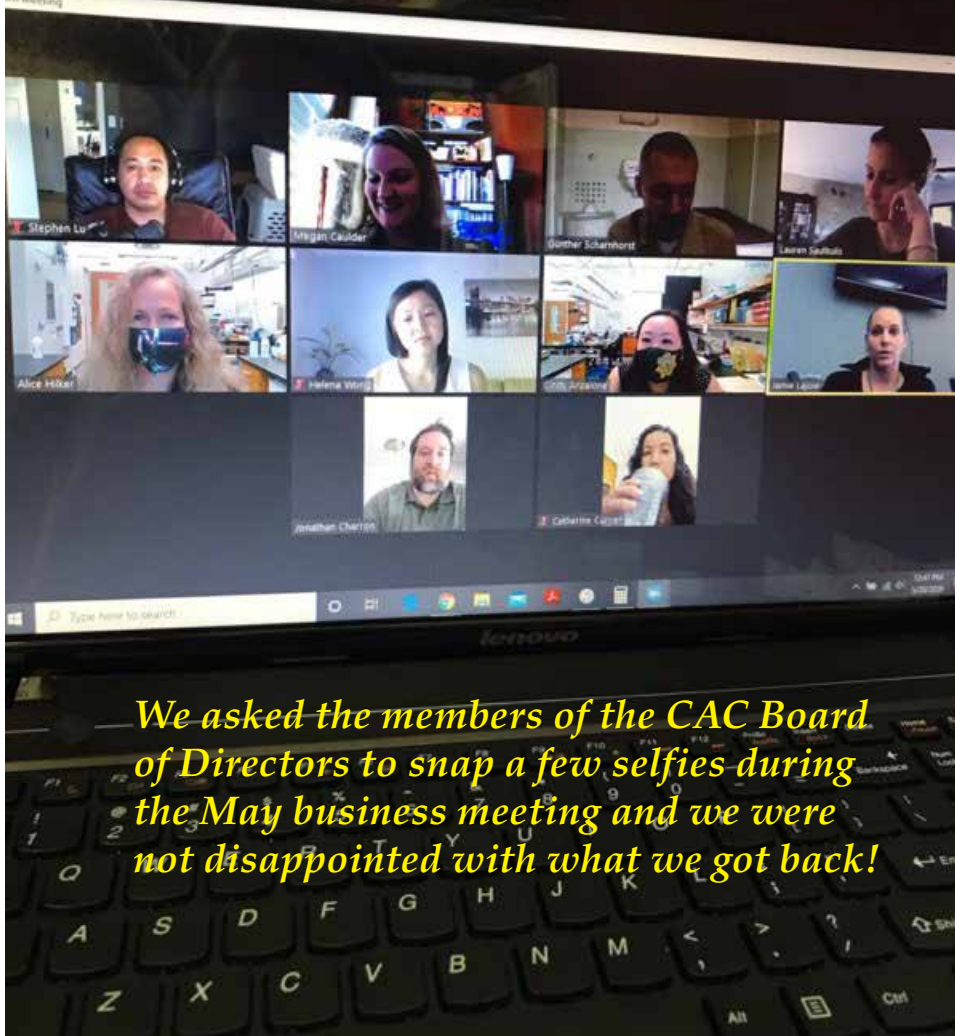
Gisele LaVigne has retired after over 37 years of dedicated service at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Scientific Services Bureau. Gisele, a former high school chemistry teacher, made the transition to forensic science when she was hired on as a criminalist in 1982 and started out in the Narcotics Section of the lab. In 1984, she transitioned over to what was then the Serology Section. She was part of the early DNA analysis group which at the time was utilizing RFLP DNA analysis methods. Since then, she has been a part of each and every DNA technology advancement the lab has undergone and has also been one of the lab's CODIS administrators. Through the years, Gisele has also contributed greatly to many momentous cases, most notably, the 1980s Richard Ramirez "Night Stalker" case and the 1976 murder case of Karen Klaas, LASD's first homicide cold case solved by the use of familial DNA analysis. On May 29, 2020, the lab held an outdoor "COVID-19 compliant" retirement celebration event to pay tribute to her tremendous career and to bid her a fond farewell.

—George Hou

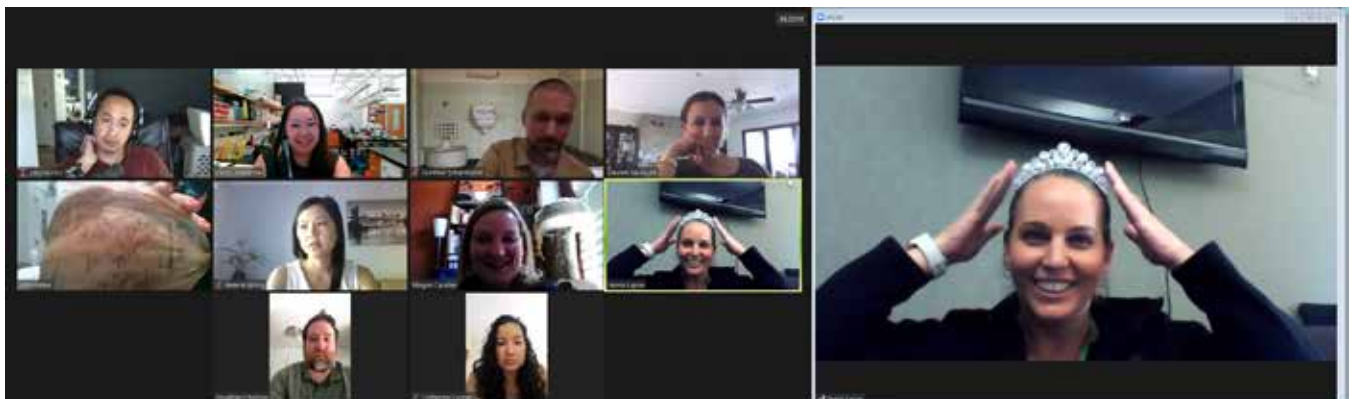




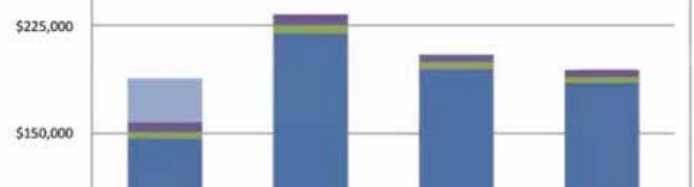
Virtually A CAC Business Meeting

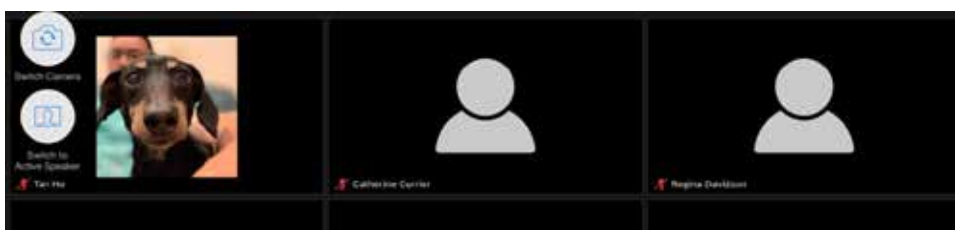
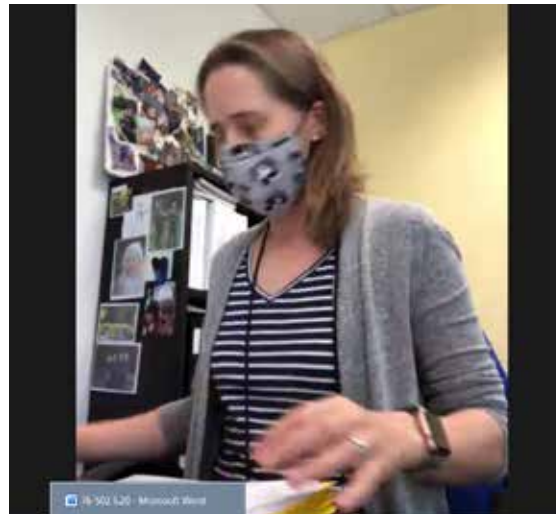


The CAC presidential coconut gets passed to incoming President Jamie Lajoie. (below)



DRAFT Minutes of the CAC Business Meeting, May 28, 2020





Recertification Task Group Update

In the fall of 2019, the Recertification Task Group sent a survey to all certificants and affiliates, approximately 1100 individuals. We received 478 responses! We appreciate everyone taking the time to complete the survey. Most of the survey responses indicated that our certificants agreed with the point structure that we were proposing. A few questions required further discussion by the task group and the Board.

Is 2 points/year for full time forensic work adequate?

Approximately 73% felt this is fair in assessing continued competence and 25% of respondents believed that this should be higher. The ABC determined that the points allocation would remain at 2/year. Attaining 2 points per year for full-time employment would account for up to 20% of a certificant's points. The ABC feels that the point structure should encourage individuals to seek professional engagement opportunities beyond normal casework duties.

Is 1 pt/day adequate for an Internal Audit of a Technical Specialty?

Approximately 76% felt this is fair in assessing continued competence and 21% of respondents believed this should be higher. This was reviewed in comparison to the 2 points/day allocated for External Audits (approximately 81% agreed with this allotment and 21% felt this should be higher). The ABC determined that the points allocation for internal audits would remain at 1/year. Internal audits are not as formal as external audits, do not require the same level of preparation work and do not require as much work on the overall quality system.

Is 1 pt/day adequate for a Technical Training Presentation?

Approximately 71% felt this was fair in assessing continued competence and 28% of respondents believed this should be higher. The ABC felt that the respondents may not have been clear on what this category was trying to capture. As a result, more examples were added to the comments of the points chart and the points chart was re-ordered to try to make it clearer. This category was added to allow certificants an opportunity to earn points for providing training that did not fit in other categories. Examples include: an examiner who attends a training and returns to the laboratory to provide an overview training to other laboratory staff or providing discipline-specific training to attorneys or law enforcement. This is not designed to encompass general laboratory capability training or laboratory overview training.

Certificants will be required to attain 50 points over 5 years.

Approximately 72% felt that this is fair in assessing continued competence and 22% of the respondents felt that this number should be lower over the 5-year recertification cycle. The ABC feels that the 50-point requirements is fair. Certification is an extra level of professional recognition and should require an additional level of professional commitment. We do recognize that continuing education and professional in-

volvement opportunities are limited. We do want to ensure that recertification is attainable. We have reallocated points and anticipate that recertification will be easier to attain for most of our certificants.

Certificants will be required to attain 15 points for each specialty over 5 years.

Approximately 72% felt that this is fair in assessing continued competence and 17% of the respondents felt that this number should be lower over the 5-year recertification cycle. The ABC feels that the 15-point requirement is fair, for reasons similar to those stated above.

There was not a clear consensus on whether the revised point structure will make it easier to earn recertification and complete your recertification paperwork. I can say that the Recertification Task Group is well aware of the difficulties associated with our current recertification process (we are certificants and have to complete the paperwork too). We are working hard to deploy a new recertification reporting process for next year. I realize this has been a slow process and it may seem as if we are not taking this seriously. What may not be apparent is that we have been focusing on work within our own organization to improve the review process, the quality and timeliness of the reviews. A simplified reporting process should further improve the review process. Further, the ABC will be completing a comprehensive review of our recertification process every 4-5 years. We are aiming to keep the process stable in between review cycles.

One question appeared to cause a significant amount of confusion, which I hope to clarify briefly. The ABC has been looking at the future of Fellow status. Because we do not provide the proficiency tests, the accreditation body has indicated that we may not be able to attain accreditation for our Fellow status. This is regardless of the accreditation status of the proficiency testing provider. Many of you commented that this should be a non-issue if proficiency tests come from an ISO/IEC 17043 or ISO/IEC 17025 accredited provider. While this may be true under ISO/IEC 17025, it is not true under ISO/IEC 17024 (our accreditation document). These conversations were had with the accreditation body prior to any discussion ABC had about the future of the program. Further consideration is the cost of the accreditation. Under ISO/IEC 17024, the certification scheme is accredited, not the certification body. Each certification scheme requires additional assessing, therefore additional costs. Each status (Diplomate and Fellow) would be a separate certification scheme for each type of examination. ABC currently offers 6 certification examinations, each with the option of Diplomate and Fellow. That amounts to 12 separate certification schemes, each with an associated cost of accreditation. To be clear, ABC was not suggesting that we would be providing proficiency testing to allow for Fellow testing. What we were trying to determine was how important the Fellow status is to our certificants and if we should try to get Fellow status accredited and if our certificants would be willing to incur the costs for us to do so.

Thank you to all of our certificants for your patience during this lengthy process. I have attached the new point structure document. It will be available on our website soon. Please note that this structure is for points earned in 2020 and cannot be used this year if you still need to submit packet this year (which you can do until June 1). Additionally, the full survey summary will also be made available on our website.

—Gretchen Lajoie, Accreditation Manager

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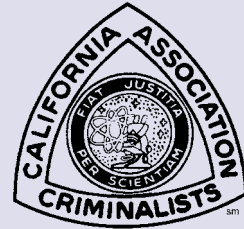


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2020 Fall-Seminar

MIND • BODY • FORENSICS: A HOLISTIC TAKE
ON CRIMINALISTICS



October 26 - 30, 2020

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