

The CACNews

News of the California Association of Criminalists • Winter 2023 Issue I



1st Place
National Forensic
Science Week
Inter-Crime Lab
Trivia Contest

The President's Desk

Sheltri Gresham



CAC President

"Sometimes I need to remind myself that I am only one piece of a much, much larger operation."

Criminalists in the Ocean of Action

Over the last twenty-two years in this field, I have asked myself on several occasions, "Am I actually making a difference?" and even "I'm only one person, does what I do matter?"

I have found that sometimes after working a stretch of cases with negative or uninterpretable forensic results, I begin to feel as though the work I do is not helping the community nor providing closure to those affected by crime. Granted, questioning my self-worth could be chalked up to a minor mid-life crisis, but more often than not, my feelings about the value of my contributions are caused by the fact that I forget I am not the only person working on the case. It's not just about what I contribute, but rather what so many other people do as part of the same case. Sometimes I need to remind myself that I am only one piece of a much, much larger operation.

Consider this: a crime occurs. A singular incident. That single event causes a ripple effect throughout the community and in law enforcement's response to the incident. Once that first call comes in to a 911 dispatcher, wave after wave of individuals are brought in and tasked with trying to solving the crime, bring the perpetrator to justice and restore the community to a safe state.

The First Wave: The First Responders

Police, Fire, Medical, Child Protective Services, Animal Control

These groups work to render the scene safe while also potentially putting their own lives at risk. Has anyone been killed? Has the perpetrator been captured or are they still on the loose? Are there people with injuries? Are there children in danger? Are there animals in danger, or at risk of causing harm to people? What exactly happened? How many people are involved? Did an officer fire? The start of the case triggers a litany of questions, which we all work towards trying to answer.

The Second Wave: The Scene Processing

Criminalists, Evidence Techs, Detectives, Judges, Coroners/Medical Examiners, and the News

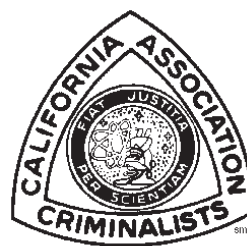
Initially, a judge may be needed to sign a search warrant depending on the nature of the scene. Next, multiple individuals process the scene to try and document the events that occurred and collect evidence that may or may not support or refute any working theories. The scene and any bodies present may be processed with photography, videography, drone footage, 3D Laser Scanning, sketching and notes. A variety of tools are often used as well to detect evidence and determine if it has forensic value. Detectives question witnesses to find out more information about the incident. Any deceased persons at the scene are transported by the Coroner or Medical Examiner, who then examines the body itself for potential evidence. All the while, local news stations are informing the community of what has happened, which can be both helpful and potentially harmful to the investigation.

continued on [page 4](#)

WINTER 2023 ISSUE I

The CACNews

www.cacnews.org



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On the cover:

The National Forensic Science Week Inter-Crime Lab Trivia Contest trophy, awarded to this year's winners: DOJ Riverside's Forensic X,Xperts. Read more on [page 6](#). Photo courtesy of Alanna Dekorompay.

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The CAC is a private foundation dedicated to the furtherance of forensic science in both the public and private sectors.

Please direct editorial correspondence and requests for reprints to the editorial secretary.

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

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*"...you have to realize that all
of our little ripples are part
of larger waves, that when
combined, are an amazing
ocean of action."*

The Third Wave: The Scene Aftermath

Crime Scene Clean-up, Tow-Truck Drivers, Hazardous
Waste Clean-up, and the Community

Once the scene is processed and the members of law enforcement have departed, there may still be remnants of the crime left behind. Damaged vehicles may need to be towed away for additional examination, repair or insurance purposes. Blood, fire debris, property damage and high emotions all need attention. Some agencies have special clean-up crews or make use of their fire departments to help clean up the mess. Community members reach out to those affected by offering support, and sometimes even local chaplains arrive to help calm a grieving, angered community. Injured victims may be undergoing surgery at a local hospital with a team of doctors and nurses working diligently at their bedside.

The Fourth Wave: Forensics and the Continuing Investigation

Forensic Labs, Detectives

Next we turn to the evidence processing, with a wide variety of scientists in various forensic disciplines examining evidence. Not only do we determine if a particular piece of evidence can be linked to a scene or crime, but often times our results can lead to the development of new leads, or even close current leads. It is here that many cases start to slow down. Many of our agencies are short on people and resources to get the tasks done quickly. In addition, we may have state mandates that require certain cases be worked before others. It can become a frustrating time for many of us involved as we wait for the results that will determine the next steps in the investigation. Perhaps the detectives have uncovered new information, or perhaps the forensic results we obtain don't make sense for the working hypothesis and we are needing to think about alternative explanations for the evidence results we have.

The Fifth Wave: Department of Corrections and the Legal Response

Corrections Officers, District and Defense Attorneys,
Judges and Court Staff, Jury

The final step involves the aggregation of all of the results, reports, statements and documentation that determine if there is enough data to hold a suspect for litigation. Arrest warrants may need to be signed, and once the suspect is in custody, they may be incarcerated until such time as they are put on trial. Corrections officers are responsible for the daily monitoring and care of these incarcerated persons. A legal team is assembled for the prosecution, consisting of a District Attorney and their staff of clerks and witness coordinators. A defense attorney for the defendant is either hired or provided, who also has their own support staff as well. Finally, once the trial begins, you now include the presiding judge, bailiffs, court reporters, court clerks and of course a 12-person jury that may also have additional alternate members. Once the trial concludes, more people in law enforcement or the community may get involved depending on the trial's outcome.

The list could go on. I have probably missed some individuals in the massive list above, and for that I do apologize. I chalk it up to the fact that I am just one person, in one lab, in one jurisdiction, serving only five of California's 58 counties. I'm sure some of your agencies may do things a bit differently. Ultimately, there are so many people that get involved in each and every case that we work. It is not just about our individual parts, but how the parts of every person involved interlocks with others. Your individual part may not be the piece that breaks the case wide open, or solves the ultimate question, but it is the combined efforts of all those involved that allow us to work towards finding the answers.

So yes, I can remind myself that even though I'm only one person, what I do, matters. What we all do, matters. Even negative or inconclusive results can mean something when you look at every case as a whole. And yes, I can tell myself that I am making a difference, as are all of you. We all chose to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We each chose to do our small parts with the understanding that it is our combined efforts that can lead to the resolution of even a singular incident. Not only that, but when you consider that most of us are working multiple cases at a time, you have to realize that all of our little ripples are part of larger waves, that when combined, are an amazing ocean of action.

Keep up the great work folks, you are making a difference, and what you do matters!



Jonathan Charron



CAC Editorial Secretary

A Quick Word from the Editor

You may have noticed the distribution of The CACNews has been a little more spaced out than you are used to. We are currently discussing reducing the full publication of The CACNews to twice a year. This discussion is in response to a more limited source of content due to annual seminars versus biannual, limitations in the number of staff members, and a difficulty in sourcing other contributors. To simulate this possible change, our team has spaced this past year's issues out by releasing two issues back-to-back roughly every 6 months. We would love to hear your thoughts about these possible changes moving into 2024! Reach out and let us hear your opinion to help guide us on our decision moving forward. Also, if you are interested in being a contributor, another option we will be exploring is to expand the staff for The CACNews. Enjoy the upcoming 2 issues and we hope to hear from you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Charron'.

Awards Deadline: December 31st



Our members are some of the best and brightest in the field of forensics and deserve recognition! There are some awards that are open to apply for at any time like the Roger Sherman Greene III Memorial Award or W. Jack Cadman Award, but some of the CAC Awards have a deadline in which to submit your application. December 31st is fast approaching and will be the deadline for two of our awards.

ABC Examination Award

The American Board of Criminalistics allows each of its member organizations to choose one individual per year to take an ABC exam without a sitting fee. The CAC will pay the application fee. More information on the ABC exams is available at www.criminalistics.com.

Edward F. Rhodes Memorial Award

Ed Rhodes was a long time criminalist nationally recognized for his trace evidence work, certification effort, and teaching ability. Wherever Ed went, teaching and training were not far behind. He thoroughly immersed himself in the education of forensic scientists, other criminal justice professionals, and students. His ultimate goal was competency in the

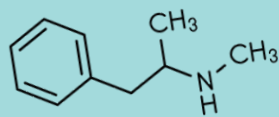
criminalistics profession. This led to the CAC Certificate of Competency program and, subsequently a national certification program run through the American Board of Criminalistics. Ed believed in competency through knowledge, education, and training.

Towards this goal, donations from friends and colleagues were made in Ed's memory and the CAC established the Edward F. Rhodes Memorial Award. The purpose of this award is to give a CAC member who is preparing for a career in criminalistics or is newly employed (less than three years) in the field of criminalistics the opportunity to attend one major forensic or scientific meeting of benefit to forensic practitioners. The award is intended to assist the recipient to pursue educational opportunities outside the normal training activities in which persons in the recipient's situation participate. Examples of forensic meetings can include, but are not limited to, CAC Semi-Annual Seminars, American Academy meetings, International Symposia, or other regional association meetings. Examples of significant scientific meetings are InterMicro and Promega. The award will cover travel, lodging, and registration expenses up to \$1000. This amount may be adjusted by the Board of Directors based on income of the fund and meeting costs.

Both above awards are self-nominating, so get to CACNews.org and put in an application if this applies to you! Links to all awards can be found at:

https://www.cacnews.org/awards/awards_dates.shtml

NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE WEEK



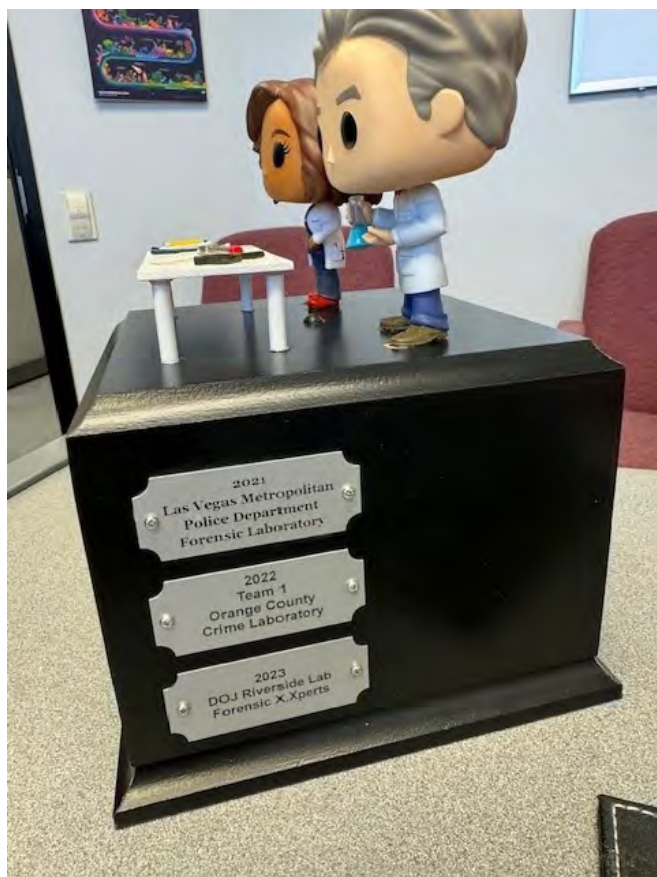
2023

September 18th - 22nd



When starting a new event, it is always difficult to gauge if the event will be a one hit wonder or will morph into an annual tradition with incredible staying power. Three years ago, the latter occurred when the inaugural National Forensic Science Week Inter-Crime Lab Trivia Contest took place. Now a tradition, the 2023 competition saw 21 teams from across multiple states participate and compete for the trophy! The previous year's winner, Orange County Crime Lab, created a 6 round trivia game that included graphics, music, and questions ranging from a wide array of topics.

The competition was fierce once it finally started (apologies for my laboratory's technical difficulties...) but saw one lab victorious. Congratulations to **DOJ Riverside's team Forensic X,Xperts!** They squeaked out a victory over LASD by a single point and now have the honor (and incredible amount of work) of hosting the National Forensic Science Week Inter-Crime Lab Trivia Contest in 2024! Thank you to all the labs who participated this year and I hope that you are all as excited to compete next year as I am.







Get to Know Your Board:

Darlene Espejo



By Jonathan Charron

The most recent addition to the Board of Directors is Darlene Espejo. She took over the role of Recording Secretary from Günther Scharnhorst (who is now the President-Elect).

Jonathan Charron (JC)

First off, thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me so the association can get to know you a little bit better! When did your journey into the field of forensics begin and did you always want to be in this field?

Darlene Espejo (DE)

I would say my journey began when I was attending SJSU as a forensic science major in the early 2000s. It was the forensics booth in the quad that drew me into this world and my love of the game "Clue" and the associated books.

JC *What disciplines have you worked in? Is there a discipline that you would cross train in if given the opportunity?*

DE I have always worked in DNA. First, in the Data Bank unit and now in casework. I would like to do crime scenes at some point but maybe when my kids are older.

JC *What are some of the reasons you feel that criminalists of all disciplines should join the CAC?*

DE They should join to not only be part of a community and to network, but also to stay abreast of any new technology that may not pertain to their specific discipline.

JC *What do feel are some of the bigger challenges to being an association that is not specific to a discipline, but rather a region?*

DE I think one of the challenges is not staying engaged in the community. You may not have the time to learn when you have a million other things pulling you in all directions.

JC *What about the benefits?*

DE The benefit would be a plethora of knowledge from all disciplines that you can tap into. Not only does this make you a better analyst overall, but also helps to develop new relationships that you otherwise would not get outside of your discipline.

JC *What was the inspiration for stepping into a position on the Board?*

DE I was asked and persuaded by Günther. He not only highlighted the benefits of serving the association, but also convinced me that this role was something that I

could do, even when I had doubts about my ability to do it.

JC *Do you have any goals or changes you would like to see happen during your tenure on the Board?*

DE I have no current goals or changes, but who knows? Maybe that will change when I feel more comfortable in the position.

JC *What do you feel are some of the bigger challenges in forensic science that we are encountering?*

DE I think one of the biggest challenges is burn out. There is always this pressure to do everything we can for a case. We just keep going and going until eventually we forget to breathe.

JC *What do you feel is a good way of addressing some of these challenges?*

DE Taking time to do self-care and realizing self-care isn't selfish, but a necessary part of our job.

JC *What do you enjoy doing outside of the forensics world to help you achieve a healthy work-life balance?*

DE I like to hang out with the family, workout, take dance classes, sparring, paint, and read.

JC *Thank you so much for taking the time to give us a little glimpse of your life and thoughts about the forensics world! Do you have any parting words for our membership?*

DE Thank you for allowing me to be part of this community! I hope I can do as good of a job as Günther.



Above: Darlene Espejo (left) with colleagues Daniela Cuenca (center) and Asia Cook (right) at the 2021 CAC Seminar in Santa Cruz.

TAGARNO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TAGARNO Appoints Exclusive US Distributor for Forensic Microscopes

TUCKER, GA — March 2023 — TAGARNO announced a new, Exclusive distributor for its general purpose forensic microscopes throughout the USA. With headquarters in Minneapolis, MN, Leeds Precision Instruments, Inc. has been manufacturing quality forensic comparison microscopes and imaging systems since 2000.

“We’re excited to bring the line of TAGARNO digital microscopes to our forensic customers,” stated Kevin Boulay, Vice President of Leeds, “we believe they will be a great addition to our forensic imaging tools.”

Leeds designs and manufactures powerful forensic instruments by incorporating feedback from firearm and trace evidence examiners worldwide. The result is a line of precision forensic products built with the finest optics, ergonomic comfort, and an intuitive design. The Leeds team takes great pride in pairing its first-class forensic imaging systems with unrivaled customer service and knowledgeable service technicians.

Leeds established its long-standing reputation in the forensic marketplace by manufacturing dependable instruments, listening to our customers to understand their unique disciplines and application needs, and providing top rated field service and preventative maintenance.

With a high degree of routine microscopic examination and high requirement for documentation, TAGARNO’s forensic microscopes are an excellent tool for forensics crime labs to exploit the Locard’s Exchange Principle – regardless of which discipline the labs are specialized in. When used in combination with near-infrared and white ring lights, a TAGARNO microscope can replace multiple traditional systems that are normally suited for one process only.

For Digital Evidence sections of law enforcement agencies and crime labs, TAGARNO’s microscope systems will continued to sold by their existing distributor Teel Technologies.

For more information about Leeds Forensic Systems, visit www.Leedsmicro.com.

For more information about TAGARNO, visit www.tagarno.com.

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ABOUT TAGARNO

TAGARNO’s digital microscopes are used for visual inspection and quality control in a wide range of industries. In combination with high-definition cameras that magnify objects in excellent image quality, user-friendly software applications pave the way for accurate and objective analysis, which can be easily captured and shared with colleagues and supply chain partners.

www.tagarno.com

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www.agilent.com/chem/gcms-solutions

WELCOME TO THE CAC

The California Association of Criminalists would like to extend a warm welcome to all of our new members this year:

NEW AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Mirella Ortega	Sarah Hegenbart	Shou-Chung Ku
Jillian Sonderegger	Jessica Lung	Mark McLellan
Kailani Sullivan	Ariel Mui	Richard Ha
Brisa Victorio Estrada	Paloma Padilla	Ariana Carrillo-Cortez
Alina Revilla	Allysa Tewksbury	Jasmine Nguyen
Mitzi Barroso	Kiara Valencia	Brenda Romero
Kimberly Cen Basto	Tiara Washington	Araseli Saldivar
Alyssa Guerrero	Marissa Licon	Rachel Whitmore
Jacqueline Licoscas	Sabrina Carter	Luz Elizarraraz
Elena Mosham	Irais Lopez	Katie Fong
Karina Salas	Emily Bergman	Naomi Holmes
Mikaylah Johnson	Shayna Gerkin	George Sakellariou
Ashley Fricker	Sarah Guidinger	Travis To

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Colby Duncan	Melissa Suarez	Kevin Piccirilli
Rebecca Greco	Sara Porter	Emy Lynn Sapinoso
Ashley Hall	Theresa Santos	Patrick Shields
Patricia Mazurek	Learden Matthies	Connor Sichler
Nicholas Mercurio	Marissa Ochoa	Scott Zoll
Tessi Sherrin	Leanne Kuwahara	Erin Shew
Lindsay Young	Estefani Luna Granillo	Anasheh Ghazarian-Marutyan

WELCOME TO THE CAC

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Waliana Dieu	Kristen Harty-Connell	Edwin Carranza Lopez
Jesus Cabrera	Dennise Hernandez	Andrew Guerrero
Emilee Phillips	Justin Hubbard	Kayla Patel
Karrine Gilbert	Abigail Starck	Jennifer Wang
Alexandra Harvey	Cui (Tracy) Zeng	Jaimie Valente
Kathryn Camero	Jessica Vazquez	
Krista Froman	Shannon Bourne	

We would also like to recognize those members who have promoted to Full Member status:

NEW FULL MEMBERS

Isaac Eaquinto	Coral Luce	Jocelyn Weart
Melissa Dupee	Mark Lavigne	Patrick Yew
Sara Cohen-Hadria	Krina Carman	

Lastly, a big congratulations to those members who have transitioned to Retired Member status:

NEW RETIRED MEMBERS

Elizabeth Swanson	Carlos Jiron
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California Association of Criminalists

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2024-2025 McLaughlin Endowment Funding

The A. Reed and Virginia McLaughlin Endowment of the California Association of Criminalists is beginning its annual cycle of grant funding. Applications and requests are now being accepted for 2024-2025 funding.

The Training and Resources (T&R) Committee Chair must receive applications for training funds by **Friday, February 2, 2024**. (See Section I below for specific application information). Applications shall be for training events scheduled for July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

The Endowment Committee Chair must receive requests for all scholarships or research funds by **Friday, March 1, 2024**, for consideration. (See Sections II & III below for specific information).

Specific Requirements for Proposals

I. Training

A. General

Requests to sponsor training must be submitted earlier than other requests so that the Training and Resources Committee can review them and coordinate with other CAC training efforts. The T&R Committee shall prioritize these requests where necessary and shall consider how the requested training fits into the overall training needs/desires of CAC members. The T&R Committee shall forward ALL requests to sponsor training together with their recommendations to the Endowment Committee for their consideration.

B. Request Format

The two-page Application for Training Funding should be completed. This application is available on the CAC website (www.cacnews.org) and requests the following:

1. Class title, outline, and description of ownership (public or privately owned).
2. Information (curriculum vitae) on instructors.
3. Class logistics: minimum and maximum size, limitations, and location.
4. Class coordinator/contact person.
5. Student interest/demand supported by T&R Survey and/or the number of applications on file.
6. Course budget including supplies, texts or handouts, instructor fees, travel/per diem, and site costs. Amortize material fees for # of CAC member/class.

7. Student fees.

Send completed Application for Training Funding forms to the T&R Committee Chair by **Friday, February 2, 2024**.

II. Scholarships

A. General

The A. Reed and Virginia McLaughlin Endowment offers scholarships through academic institutions rather than directly to students. Proposals from academic institutions shall set forth their general criteria for student scholarship selection. The academic institution shall be responsible for selection of student recipients of such scholarships and shall report awardees and amounts to the Endowment. Applicants must have a minimum of 3.0 GPA overall and 3.0 GPA in their major. Students receiving funds must be members of, or applicants to, the CAC. Students who are interested should request application information directly from their academic program coordinator.

B. Request Format

Proposals for scholarships must contain both a summary and detail section containing a general description of the academic program, its goals, and information on how the proposed funds would be used. For example, will funds be used for tuition and fee relief, stipendiary support, to underwrite student research, etc? The detailed description should include information on recipient selection criteria and who will perform the selection. Scholarship fund administrators must be named, including who will be responsible for submitting the mandatory annual report of activities to the CAC. As a condition of funding, products of research must be submitted to:

1. CAC Seminar Technical Program Chairperson with intent to present research at a CAC seminar; **or**
2. CAC Editorial Secretary for publication in a journal or newsletter as appropriate.

C. Reporting of Distributions

The Academic Program Coordinator must provide a full accounting of the recipients and how they meet the minimum criteria.

D. Refund of Unused Endowment Funds

Any remaining unused portion of the endowment funding shall be returned to the Endowment fund via the CAC Treasurer.

III. Technical Development and Research

A. General

The implementation of new and more efficient technical procedures related to forensic science requires the investment of time, ingenuity, and resources by those working in the field. The development of new

techniques and technology can benefit the profession by one or more of the following:

1. Permitting the development of new or additional information from the analysis of certain types of evidence.
2. Implementing a mechanism for the analysis of new forms of evidence.
3. Improving the reliability of methods already in use.
4. Increasing sample throughput by improving efficiency.

Resources permitting, the CAC encourages technical development or research for the benefit of the profession and the association. The A. Reed and Virginia McLaughlin Endowment does not generally fund professional level salary for researchers. Incidental funds for students assisting in research projects will be considered. However, neither the CAC nor the Endowment shall act as an employer.

B. Request Format

Requests for funding for technical development or research should contain the following:

1. Project name and purpose.
2. Name(s) and curriculum vitae for each researcher.
3. A brief description or outline of the project.
4. Information on the project facilities, equipment and supplies needed.
5. Information on the project site, including permission to use the site for this purpose where applicable.
6. Information on the adequacy of available space, safety planning, equipment, and supplies.
7. Agreement for responsibility for disposal of products of research, including but not limited to chemicals, biochemicals, biologicals, and hazardous waste.
8. Project budget.
9. Timeline and projected completion date of project.

C. Progress Reports

Progress reports will be required in writing, the frequency to be determined by the Endowment Committee. The recipient must prepare a final project report, including a summary of results and conclusions. As a condition of funding, products of research must be submitted to:

3. CAC Seminar Technical Program Chairperson with intent to present research at a CAC seminar; **or**
4. CAC Editorial Secretary for publication in a journal or newsletter as appropriate.

When problems occur or results are not as expected, funding recipients are expected to use good judgement in reevaluating the course and goals of the project, and in modifying the project approach as necessary to maximize the project results. The project should be terminated when it is determined that the value of the project is minimal. In addition, funding may be terminated by the Endowment Committee if progress is inadequate.

The T&R Chair must receive all proposals for **training** by **Friday, February 2, 2024.**

Send proposals to:

Trevor Gillis
Santa Clara County DA Crime Lab
250 W. Hedding St.
San Jose, CA 95110
Tel: (408) 808-5900
tgillis@lab.sccgov.org

The Endowment Committee Chair must receive all proposals for **scholarships or research** by **Friday, March 1, 2024.**

Send proposals to:

Brooke Barloewen
Santa Clara County DA Crime Lab
250 W. Hedding St.
San Jose, CA 95110
Tel: (408) 808-5960
bbarloewen@lab.sccgov.org

PLEASE NOTE:

Preference will be given to CAC members and California Universities/Colleges with Forensic Science programs.

Applications that miss the deadline dates will not qualify for consideration.

If you submit a proposal and do not receive confirmation from the Endowment Committee that it has been received, call the Chairperson before March 1, 2024.

A CAC Spring Seminar Production

The Los Angeles Police Department Presents:

Once Upon a Crime in
HOLLYWOODLAND

April 15th-19th, 2024

One Showing Only !!

The Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINALISTS
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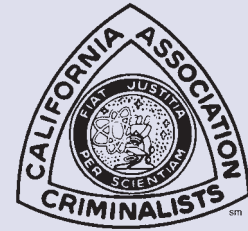


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