

06 April 2015

Letter from the American Board of Criminalistics (ABC) President,

The American Board of Criminalistics (ABC) primary goal this last year continues to be to transition the organization to ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation. ABC continues to maintain its recognition by Forensic Science Accreditation Board (FSAB).

The ABC voted in Chris E. Taylor (ASCLD Representative) as the President and Margaret (Meg) Aceves (CAC Representative) as the Vice President of the Board of Directors at the AAFS Meeting in Orlando, Florida in February 2015 for second terms. Long serving Secretary Beth Horton, SAFS representative, retired and Chris Hamburg of NWAFFS was elected as the new secretary.

In support of our ISO accreditation efforts the ABC hired a contractor to fill the role of an Accreditation Manager to assist with the preparation. Gretchen Lajoie, retired Maine Forensic Laboratory Accreditation Manager, was selected to fill this position. The main duties include aligning the policy and procedures for the ABC with the ISO/IEC 17024 standards and acting as the lead quality manager. Gretchen has played a significant role in keeping the ISO project moving forward. Although our initial aggressive timeline has slid from the fall of 2015 we are now on track for a potential application process in the spring of 2016. This will result in an approximately two year development process for a mostly volunteer organization.

The accreditation manager is also responsible for managing the newly purchased document control system, PowerDMS. PowerDMS is a low cost but powerful document control web-based management tool. All protocols, forms, templates, and guidance documents and archived records are managed within the system. The system is also used to actively conduct document reviews showing almost real time edits, comments, and discussions. PowerDMS sends routine reminders of actions due and also notifies you when comments are made to the document or any responses to your specific comments or edits. Finally the ABC is using the software to also record votes to organizational decisions and final document authorizations.

Marie Samples, ASCLD representative and chair of the Examination Committee, gave a presentation at the AAFS titled "Demystifying the ABC Examinations" The presentation covered the formation of examination questions, managing test and question performance in a master question database, and metrics that included specialty test pass rates, national regional performance, member origination performance, and study time success rates.

Mike Healy, ABC Registrar, presented at the FEPAC and COFSE meetings on ABC activities and clarification of the use and intent of the Forensic Science Aptitude Test (FSAT). Some educators have been concerned the test was too broad and how scores were generated sometimes did not meet their needs. The ABC explained that the scoring is being redone to meet the educator's needs. Those schools that teach

more forensic science discipline specific programs can simply remove the scores for those technical sections that do not apply to customize for their specific use. The ABC will continue to offer the FSAT to those interested. There was a plea to both organizations to have more FEPAC and COFSE educators submit questions to help populate the database for future question rotation. At the 2016 AAFS meeting the ABC will conduct its three year FSAT review. Three representatives from both FEPAC and COFSE will work with the ABC Database Manager and Registrar to develop the next version of the FSAT test.

Future Plans:

The ABC is in the process of revamping its website. ABC-EC member Laura Silva has a strong background in web design and has found a less than \$20 a month solution. This new site will afford the ABC to update and modernize its web page, save costs, and improve customer interaction and accessibility of certificate holder needs when visiting the site. The website may be ready to go live before the summer ABC meeting.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been developed and will soon be solicited to several testing bodies that evaluate test questions. The testing bodies have experience with question structure, particularly with common problems associated with item/response theory such as evaluating the structure of answers and distracters. The new questions will be evaluated to determine that each is free from bias with respect to race, gender, and culture. In addition, all questions will be reviewed and edited as necessary in order to meet currently accepted design standards for assessments and sensitivity. Once reviewed, the questions can then be piloted in the ABC examinations to test performance. Those questions that show success can then be added to the database for use and grading in future examinations.

There have been a few expressed interested in the forensic science community to create new forensic category of testing examinations. We have had interests in explosives, gunshot residue, technician examinations, and forensic science management/leadership. ABC is researching the feasibility of creating additional tests; however, we know our primary focus is on our operations and obtaining ISO accreditation at this time.

Other activities and milestones:

The Texas Forensic Science Commission announced a practitioner mandatory licensure (certification) Bill in March 2015. We have already seen the impact of the Texas Commission's efforts to move toward mandatory certification as Texas has been the largest customer base for ABC over the last year.

The ABC recognizes that other means of recertification points need to be considered as training funds are shrinking and more opportunities for distance learning are

being created. ABC has accepted webinar training but evaluations have been fragmented and a clear process was required. Webinar course training content and formats can vary drastically and have resulted in challenges on how to accept these courses. The ABC has a draft protocol that we feel will help address these types of courses. Based on the review of the requirements of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and International Learning Units (ILU) the ABC will evaluate items such as course content, learning objectives, and instructor qualification to evaluate the course for continuing education points toward recertification.

Recently the ABC Board's Public Member stepped down after three years. There is currently a Public Member volunteer position solicitation advertised on various forensic science websites that closes in May 2015. This public member serves as a disinterested person on the Board and cannot be certification eligible. A legal background is highly desired.

Sincerely,
Chris E. Taylor, F-ABC
ABC- President