

A NOVEL APPROACH TO DELIVERING FORENSIC SCIENCE EDUCATION

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The Arizona Forensic Science Academy was established by the Forensic Science Advisory Committee of the Arizona Attorney General's Office in response to a recommendation in *Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, a 2009 National Research Council publication, to provide forensic science training to legal professionals. The Academy was designed to increase criminal justice practitioners' understanding of forensic principles, scientific methodologies, and evidentiary concerns. Courses in the Academy are taught by scientific and medical experts and provide practical and technical training to prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges. The Academy also provides specialized training for forensic scientists and law enforcement professionals. Four primary training programs have been developed for criminal justice practitioners: a Basic Academy, an Advanced Academy, a "3-D" (Domestic Violence, Drugs, & DUI) Academy, as well as a Forensic Science Lecture Series. Since the Academy's inception in 2011, more than 600 criminal justice professionals have received more than 6,000 hours of continuing education. One of the most unique aspects of this program is the collaboration between various criminal justice stakeholders to deliver training programs to practitioners—regardless of their role in the criminal justice system. In the past, this type of training was offered exclusively to prosecutors or defense attorneys and it was rare for prosecutors and defense attorneys to attend the same training event. The collaborative nature of the Arizona Forensic Science Academy's training programs has resulted in improved relationships between the various stakeholders, a greater understanding of forensic science principles in the Arizona criminal justice community, and increased access by trial attorneys to the resources available to them in the crime labs in the state of Arizona.