

# MINUTES

## FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

**Date:** May 20, 2025

**Location:** North Carolina State Crime Laboratory (In-Person)

Chairperson Demi Garvin called the meeting of the Forensic Science Advisory Board to Order at 10:04 A.M. EST. Angie Byrd performed Roll Call. A quorum was confirmed.

### **I. ATTENDANCE**

**NCSCCL Present:** Amanda Thompson, Elizabeth Patel, Timothy Baize, Timothy Suggs, Jason Caccamo, Tonya Bowlding, Dave Freehling, Wayne Lewallen, Summer Maffett, Cori Martin, Karen Morrow, Kathleen Schell, Amanda Venable, Jody West, Dana Quirindongo, Susan Brooks and Bonita Snow.

**Board Members In-Person:** Michelle Aurelius, Tracey Dawson Green, Brian Drew, Demi Garvin, Jan Hannig, Todd Hughey, Daniel Katz, Christopher Palenik, Rebecca Smith, and Amanda Thompson.

**Absent Board Members:** Adam Becnel, Kermit Channell, II, Michael Coble, Alka B. Lohmann, and Tracy Walraven,

**Other Attendees:** Arneatha James, and Angie Byrd,

### **II. MINUTES**

Previous November 19, 2024, Minutes

Request for Amendments - None.

Motion to approve November 2024 minutes – approved as presented.

### **III. NCSCCL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE [Director Amanda Thompson]**

#### **In Progress:**

#### **Personnel:**

- Filled AD of Admin Operations – Chris Parker
- Filled AD of Quality Assurance – Timothy Suggs

- FSM of Grants Management/Lean Six Sigma (new position) – Jody West
  - Need to fill Forensic Biology Management role previously held by Jody West
- FSM Forensic Biology – Completed interviews, summarizing and sending to HR
- FSM Digital Evidence – Filling Timothy Suggs’ role; interviews scheduled for May 21, 2025

Budget:

- Request for Salary Progression for 2 years for FS classification. Presented to the General Assembly upwards of 5 times and AG has requested salary schedule from legislators.
- The Raleigh Lab building is 27-28 years, and the chillers are nearing their age, they have been refurbished 2x’s \$1 million each. Request to DOA/OSBM to fully funding the replacement of chillers; plan to fully fund; gave ½ mil to begin; should be completed within 2 fiscal years.
- Request to do a feasibility and advance planning for Raleigh & Triad labs

Legislation:

- Novel Opioid Control Act (H258) – no movement
- Crime Lab Salary Study (H524) – no movement; likely different bill
- Bill regarding retention of sworn officers
- Stakeholder Outreach – 2 SCL open houses; education/outreach for DA’s Def & gen public; HS & Colleges; CODIS hits and CODIS hit follow-ups – why crime lab would consider one still active; internal platform accessible by DA’s offices/Legal Assistants/Law Enforcement request for point of contact created in ShareFile; reaching out for resolution for open hits; 1<sup>st</sup> time these offices have rec’d summarization of each item held by NCSCL; DA’s can track progress and blood destructions in DUI cases; Raised outreach and great feedback from stakeholders and superior court judges; Lunch N Learn series for CODIS as well.

Projects:

- GDAC Portal – 12 months to complete; automated system for status on CODIS; stop work; DUI blood destruction; expungements
- Grab a Coffee Program – College students & public coming to Open Houses often

**IV. IT RELATED UPDATE**

GDAC Portal:

- Surveillance Assessment focused on drug & toxicology disciplines
- No non-conformities

- Waiting for final report
- Blood Destruction-22k cases being reviewed and about 5500 (25%) for destruction
- 300 agencies; 100 provided a contact; can make adjustments; 3k CODIS hits

Quality updates:

- No non-conformities
- Re-accreditation assessment for 2026 – week of April 20 tentatively set
- ANAB contract expired; need new vendor/hopeful for 4-year contract; 2 possible vendors
- 2025 audits have begun internally; 3 areas; 12 new auditors; trying to get new auditors for ANAB assessments

**V. ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS UPDATE [Amanda Thompson]**

**Grants:**

- Approximately \$6.8M active funding

**Personnel:**

- Declining offers due to salary offers
- Requesting salary adjustments; actually, raised FS salaries internally to \$55,000; since then, we made 20 offers and 17 were accepted; 85% acceptance rate; streamlined process and will continue to do this
- FS salary permanently moved to \$58,000 at the notational rate and would like to fall in-line with the national rate

**Additional Remarks:**

- Open Houses have been successful with good feedback from attendees
- Entire boy scout troop; a lot of children in attendance; 10-15 high schools
- Beer goggles were a hit with attendees
- Teachers in attendance as well
- Updated career page for NCSCL; day-in-the-life video almost every scientific discipline & specialty role

**VI. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS UPDATE [Liz Patel]**

- Main Goal is casework
- New tech & processes
- Intern projects keep going

- Lunch N Learn series – easy outreach across NC – LEOs, Conference of DAs, Defense Attorneys (IDS) Groups
- IDS is doing a series from July-November, learning how, when, why regarding evidence
- Internal training – Lean6, assessment training; level 1 & level 2 becoming cloud training host
- Pending 14,099 exams
- Turnaround time/lead time about the same – lead time went up in 4Q due to getting back to older cases such as DNA cases
- 22 in training – 7 FAs; 7 DNA; areas of high training

### **Technical Operations Highlights**

- Digital Evidence: 2 remaining DVR training – 2 scientists resigned (one to fed govt and one to college)
- Posted one position as FSI and one as FSII due to increased requests from those coming from another agency
- Potentially reclassifying FS positions in Digital Evidence to IT related positions since this is the area they are competing with in the job market
- Demi – Question – IT level salaries are higher than FS salaries for now; if FS begins to move up then question if IT would move up

### **Katie Shell – Drug Chemistry:**

- Turnaround time down to 30 days and lead time to 90 days
- Trying to move cases west to east to get level loading
- Extraction method in chocolate bars – intern
- Demi suggested adding intern projects to slides
- Tablet counter inconsistent – unsuccessful
- Drug Chem is caught up
- Jan Question – intern/what kind – typically college students; this one had graduated
- Christopher Palenik – level loading – put into lockbox and sent to different labs; does it cause problems with testimony – keep distance in mind when moving due to testimony needs

### **Dave – Forensic Biology:**

- EZ2 western lab
- CODIS follow-up portal
- 7FS in training coming out in June/July
- Validating instrument – writing policy and procedures for Rapid HIT and Rapid DNA
- Hopeful public mtg in fall of this year
- Tracey – question – upgraded newest version of rapid HIT
- Corey Martin – DNA Database

- 2 open door handlers – one pre-emp and one post-emp
- CODIS hit follow-up portal

#### **Dana – Supervisor Firearms:**

- Validating Virtual Microscopy – intern assisted with scans
- 7 trainees and recruiting for 1 and then recruiting for FSII
- Demi – question – this is 1<sup>st</sup> trainee in NFEA (ATF) in 20 years

#### **Karen – Latent:**

- FSIS – II is in validation/review process hopefully by the end of the summer it will be done
- 1<sup>st</sup> time since 1937 we went to digital verification; reviews; effective April 1, 2025
- Purchase an additional Dual 77 (laser)
- 2 interns started today – looking at a chemical in which fed govt is taking away ingredients; looking into all digital scanners/cameras
- Daniel – question – upload everything ADAMS to foray and have a bridge that talks to each lab and can log in and take care of review and do mark-up/analysis in system; everything is documented in foray

#### **Corey - Trace Evidence:**

- New Chem Tech
- 6 of 8 sub disciplines have a lead time less than 90 days
- Requesting 2 new FTIR thru grant funding this year
- Daniel – glass discipline is 120 days and hair is about 2 years of lead time – did do training with trace to do 1<sup>st</sup> look at sexual assault kits

#### **Wayne – Toxicology:**

- 1Q – 7% increase in opioid confirmation and fentanyl
- The same extraction for all 3 – cutting down on lead time
- Remote testimony stable – 40 out of 100 counties

#### **IV. Questions/Comments**

- Demi – Testimony – Plea/Stipulations/Continued – how to drive those numbers down – we are not called 10% of time for virtual subpoenas. These are out of the hands for NCSCCL personnel and prosecutors
- Amanda – hosted Mgmt. team – 1<sup>st</sup> succession planning meeting; projected retirements; future for NCSCCL and gauging internal interests and necessary trainings; in the next 4 years the entire executive team is scheduled to retire

- Jan Hannig – tagging onto AG’s comment about AI being brought into SCL processes – infancy state of entertaining the ideas in the scientific world especially in the form of policies; how does it fit into crime lab setting. Some tools being built in Digital Evidence have AI built-in must be reviewed in verification; Symposium in July for AI in Forensics mentioned by Daniel Katz

Consider:

- Flipping fall meeting on-site and spring virtual due to attendance – discuss further in the fall to begin spring 2026

Comments:

- Demi – Letter of service to board members will be sent annually – they will be emailed by Amanda today; Going forward they will be pushed out in January
- Susan Brooks (ombudsman) – Open house very successful

**V. Procedure Review**

- Procedure Reviews – nothing new; more to do
- Anticipate discussion in the fall meeting and will have a date for ANAB

**VI. No Guests**

**VII. Fall Meeting**

- Virtual Meeting – will send a poll for the benefit of those not in attendance
- Note: Last year’s virtual meeting was originally scheduled for October 22, 2024; however, due to Hurricane Helene, the virtual meeting was rescheduled to November 19, 2024.

**VIII. Adjournment**

- With there being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10am.