MINUTES
FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Date: May 5, 2026

Location: North Carolina State Crime Laboratory (Virtual)

Chairperson Demi Garvin called the meeting of the Forensic Science Advisory Board to Order at 10:00 A.M. EST. Bonita Snow performed Roll Call. A quorum was confirmed.

I. ATTENDANCE

NCSCL Present: Amanda Thompson, Christopher Parker, Elizabeth Patel, Timothy Baize, Timothy Suggs, Tonya Bowlding, Dave Freehling, Michelle Hannon, Zach Kallenbach, Wayne Lewallen, Summer Maffett, Karen Marrow, Patrick Nieman, Katy Schell, Jennifer Slish, Amanda Venable, Jason Caccamo, and Jody West

Board Members Virtually: Michelle Aurelius, Tracey Dawson Green, Brian Dew, Demi Garvin, Jan Hannig, Todd Hughey, Daniel Katz, Christopher Palenik, Rebecca Smith, and Amanda Thompson

Absent Board Members: Kermit Channell, Alka B. Lohmann, and Tracy Walraven

Other Attendees: None.

II. MINUTES

Previous October 7, 2025, Minutes

Request for Amendments - None

Motion to approve October 7, 2025, minutes – approved as presented.

III. NCSCL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE [Director Amanda Thompson]

In Progress:

Personnel:

- -Vacancy FSM Forensic Biology Section was filled by Michelle Hannon, effective December 1, 2025

- -Vacancy FSS Quality Section was filled by Lindsey D'Amour effective April 27, 2026

Budget:

- Request for salary progression funding for Forensic Scientist series
  - FSAB provided a letter of support to DOJ/NCGA
- - SCL has support from key stakeholders

Legislation:

- Request to repurpose available funding to complete feasibility and -advanced planning for Raleigh and Triad Labs
- NCGA reconvened on April 20th

Projects:

- GDAC Portal – Awaiting DOJ approval to move forward with MOU
  - CODIS Hit Follow Up
  - DNA Arrestee Expungements
  - DWI Blood Destructions
  - Stop Work Cases
- SCL maintained District Attorney and LEA CODIS Hits Portal-active and routinely updated.
- Rapid DNA: Awaiting FBI final approval to move forward with implementation
- Continuing to digitize archived laboratory case files as they are pulled from state archives

Stakeholders Outreach:

- NCSL/NCCDA Discipline Seminar Series 2025-2026
- Fall 2025 Open House Events Raleigh and WRL – October -2025
- UNC School of Government (DWI Specific) – October 2025
- Rapid DNA Working Group Meeting - November 2025
- Cold Case Symposium – December 2025
- Quarterly Satellite Lab Visits - March 2026

Upcoming Internal and External Outreach for 2026:

- Regional Evidence Collection Training for LEAS – Q3-Q4 2026
- SCL Legislative Day - Q3-Q4 2026
- Fall 2026 FSAB Meeting-Western Lab -September 2026
- Fall 2026 All Staff In-Person Meeting – October 2026
- SCL Symposium Q4 2026

IV. IT RELATED UPDATE [Tim Baize]

STIMS:

- Kits since 10/1/2018 (as of 4-29-26) – 15,600 named kits (1,159 kits collected since 10-3-25) 2,282 anonymous kits (236 kits collected from 10-3-26)
- Kits outside the 45-day window to submit to lab: approximately 65 kits

FA:

- Currently testing for an upgrade in August (v 25.1)
- Still testing Toxicology updates
- Digitizing more legacy files from Archives into the system (2003-2005)

SharePoint Sites:

- Blood Destruction project: Since November 2025, DA's have reviewed over 3K samples for destruction. Over 1600 have been marked for destruction.
- CODIS hits: 4,464 CODIS hits have been uploaded for LEAs to review; 1,706 (38%) hits have been reported back on by LEAs to the SCL.
- Stop Works: Since October 2025, we have been able to stop 1,152 examinations based on DA's responses

Quality updates:

- New Supervisor for the Quality Management Section
  - Lindsey D'Amour
- Internal Audits
  - Running according to schedule
- External Assessments
  - On-site assessments 4/20-26/26
  - Rapid DNA was not part of the reaccreditation assessment (Still pending FBI's approval)

V. ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS UPDATE [Chris Parker]

Grants:

- Approximately $6.2M active funding
- Total awarded $5.5M

Personnel:

- 2026: 5 hires; 5 internal promotions; 6 separations; Turnover rate ~2.7% and Vacancy rate ~10.5% Prospective employees are declining positions because of salary amounts offered.

- 2025: 12 hires; 11 internal promotions; 10 separations; Turnover rate ~5.3%; Vacancy rate ~13.9%
- 2024: 17 hires; 24 internal promotions; 14 separations; Turnover rate ~7.5%; Vacancy rate ~16.5%
- 2023: 11 hires; 28 internal promotions 17 separations; Turnover rate ~9.0%; Vacancy rate~17.4%

Recruitment and Retention:

GaC (Grab A Coffee) is back for Summer 2026!

- The Grab a Coffee (GaC) program allows the crime lab to host virtual, informal meetings with prospective forensic scientists (a university student, former intern, etc.) These meetings often address questions regarding key academic courses needed to be a competitive candidate and what a typical day is like in each discipline. Scientists provide guidance and inspire students through meaningful conversations.

- Several of these students have applied, interviewed and some have been recommended for employment.

All DILO Forensic Scientist videos have been updated and will be added to the SCL page soon. These remain essential for education and recruitment.

Procurement:

- Due to the large number of services, maintenance, and equipment contracts, the lab is still trying to create a Contracts Specialist position to assist our procurement team.

VI. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS UPDATE – Liz Patel

Technical Operations Highlights:

- Digital Evidence: Hired a Manager for Digital Evidence; FS Manager filled by Patrick Niemann; Currently in LEVA Level I and Level II training
- Filled FSII position; 1 FS position should be filled by end of calendar year

Digital Evidence: FSM Patrick Niemann

- Two processing computer towers purchased and received under Coverdell grant
- Two New Tech Leaders – 1 for mobile forensics, 1 for audio/video forensics
- FSI position filled; has already obtained external certifications (IACIS-Mobile)
- FSIII opening underway
- FSM completed CFM-I certification

Drug Chemistry: FSM Katy Schell

- Agilent Mass Hunter for GCMS data processing transition complete
- Three analysts successfully passed the ABC Drug Analysis Exam
- Several scientists recently attended SAFS
- Benchtop centrifuge received (Coverdell 2024 funds)
- Q1 2026 discipline LT = 68 days; TAT = 28 days

Forensic Biology: FSM Michelle Hannon

- New Technical Leader (Q4, 2025)
- Completed mini-validation Sep&Prep (Q2, 2026)
- Validation of PowerQuant (cross-talk) (Q2/Q3, 2026)
- Named a Rapid DNA Administrator (Q2, 2026)
    - Rapid DNA program - drafting procedures/policies - In Progress - awaiting Federal Standards

- Workflow data process improvements (Q2, 2026)

DNA Database: FSM Zach Kallenbach

- CODIS hit follow-up and DNA Expungement SharePoint site in use
- GeneMapper ID-X software upgrade version 1.7 completed and implemented
- Exploring updated sample tracking software
- 1 scientist taking ABC exam in summer 2026

Firearms: FSM Jenn Slish

- Working all **non-comparison** cases as they are submitted/available – on track to hit this goal by the end of this fiscal year
- Moot Court scheduled in June 2026 for comparison casework

Latent Evidence: FSM Karen Morrow

- One FSIII started FW/TT cross Training
- Purchased new digital cameras with 62mm filters
- March 2026 updated IDEMIA AFIS computers
- Outreach training

<u>Technical Operations Highlights:</u>

Trace Evidence: Dave Freehling

- Purchased a new FTIR Microscope/ATR in 2025
- Purchasing two new stereomicroscopes and a new GC-FID/MS through grant funding in 2026

- New Technical Leader for Hair & Physical Fit disciplines (Effective 5/4/26)

- Maintaining <120 Day Lead Time in 7/8 trace sub-disciplines

Toxicology: Wayne Lewallen

- 5 currently in drug toxicology training
- Updated -LC-MS/MS cannabinoids method to separate isomers in initial instrumental method development

- Extraction Robotics systems validation in progress-transferring SLE-based extractions
- Inhalants analysis expanded to include Mass Spectrometry
- Remote Testimony Update: As of 12/31/2025 – Savings of approximately 31,902 miles of travel (508 hours of driving), over 2800 subpoenas received

IV. Questions/Comments: None

VI. Guests: None

VII. Spring Meeting

- Fall In-Person Meeting Date (Western Lab) – September 15, 2026
- 2027 Spring Virtual Meeting Date – TBD

VIII. Adjournment

- With there being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 A.M. EST.