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Note: Photos of the forensic science lab were provided by Nicole Wood (woodn@ecu.edu), director of external affairs for the College of Human Ecology.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ECU’s Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Implements New Multidisciplinary Studies B.S. with Focus in Forensic Science

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Feb. 18, 2014) — Have you ever watched an evening television show on crime scene investigation and thought that would be an interesting career? East Carolina University students now have this opportunity with the introduction of the Multidisciplinary Studies B.S. with a focus in forensic science, which is being offered through the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences and created with the support of Dr. William Bloss, professor and chair of the College of Human Ecology’s Department of Criminal Justice.

The newly designed, 123-credit-hour program provides students with a broad education in chemistry (30 credit hours), with additional courses in biology (17 credit hours), criminal justice (18 credit hours), anthropology (7 credit hours) and other humanities and social sciences (51 credit hours), which are designed to supplement the skills required in a forensic laboratory setting.

According to Dr. Anthony Kennedy, Harriot College professor of chemistry and director of the forensic science program, a Multidisciplinary Studies BS with a focus in forensic science is an appropriate degree for students considering a career in a state, federal or private forensic lab, or for those individuals interested in obtaining an advanced degree in a related forensic science field.

Forensic science technicians help investigate crimes by collecting and analyzing physical evidence. At a crime scene, technicians take photographs; sketch the crime scene; record and collect evidence, including weapons, fingerprints or bodily fluids; and catalog and preserve evidence to be transferred to a lab. In the lab, technicians may perform chemical, biological and physical analysis on evidence taken from the crime scene; explore links between suspects and criminal activity; consult with experts in related fields, such as toxicologists; and reconstruct the crime scene.

Many technicians specialize in either crime scene investigation or laboratory analysis, and most spend some time on written reports. A forensic science technician must be able to explain their reports to lawyers, detectives and other law enforcement officials. In addition, they may be called to testify in court about their findings and methods. Therefore, effective communication skills are essential.
Other North Carolina universities offering a degree in forensic science include Appalachian State University, Fayetteville State University, St. Andrews University and Western Carolina University. North Carolina State University has a forensic science institute where students may learn more about forensics. However, ECU’s degree program offers more credit hours in chemistry and criminal justices than any other program in the state.

“Salaries for those with chemistry backgrounds are higher than those trained in biological sciences or other specialty areas,” said Kennedy. “This means our graduates will be able to compete for the top salaries.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, forensic science technicians earned a median annual income of $52,840 in 2012, and employment in the field is expected to grow six percent through 2022.

“With 18 credit hours of criminal justice, which is substantially more than Fayetteville State’s 6 credit hours, I would argue that our students are better equipped to work in state and federal labs as a result,” said Kennedy.

ECU students seeking to work in labs, or perform internships, may not have to look far while completing their degree. Greenville is now home to a state-of-the-art forensic DNA laboratory. Genome ID Group, LLC, established the facility, known as The Center for Advanced Forensic DNA Analysis (CAFDA), in the fall of 2013. The company is known for developing practical applications and methods to create unique solutions in the field of forensic human identification. The project was a joint effort of Pitt County and the City of Greenville, with support from the NC Biotech Center. More information may be found online at http://advancedforensicdnalab.com.

While Kennedy seeks students interested in ECU’s Multidisciplinary Studies BS with a focus in forensic science, he also plans to apply for accreditation of the program through the American Academy for Forensic Science. Currently, only one other North Carolina institution, Fayetteville State University, is seeking accreditation.

For additional information about ECU’s forensic science program, contact Kennedy at 252-328-9816 or kennedyan@ecu.edu. You may also want to visit the program website at http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/chem/old/Forensics.cfm. Details about the Multidisciplinary Studies Program are available via the university undergraduate catalog at www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/registrar/catalog.cfm.

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