



CALIFORNIA **October 20, 2011**

STATE
UNIVERSITY,
FRESNO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael Caldwell, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Marilyn Wilson, Chair *MW*
University Graduate Committee

RE: **Discontinuation Professional Science Master's in Forensic Science**

On August 30, 2011, the University Graduate Committee received a memo from the Department of Biology requesting discontinuation of their Professional Science Master's in Forensic Sciences.

MSC to accept the recommendation of the Department of Biology to discontinue the Professional Science Master's in Forensic Science due to staffing shortfalls.

MW/vb

cc: James Prince, Chair
Department of Biology

Andrew Hoff, Dean
College of Science and Mathematics

William Covino, Provost

Office of the
Academic Senate

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CALIFORNIA
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July 6, 2011

Dr. Sharon Brown-Welty
Dean – Division of Graduate Studies
California State University, Fresno

Dear Dr. Brown-Welty:

At your request, subsequent to our 7/5/11 meeting wherein Provost Covino and Dean Rogerson were also present, I am writing to inform you of the Chemistry faculty's decision regarding the fate of the Master of Science in Forensic Science (MSFS) Program.

As you are aware, Dr. Kevin Miller, an Assistant Professor of Chemistry, presented me with a letter of resignation on 5/17/11, which became effective on 5/21/11. Subsequent to that development, I called for an emergency faculty meeting on 5/19/11 in order to discuss the future direction of the Master of Science in Forensic Science (MSFS) program in our department. A majority of Chemistry faculty members (10 of 11: Attar, Choi, Frank, Golden, Goto, Hasson, Maitra, Mayer, Ng, and Person) were present.

It was clear that the MSFS program would not be able to continue with just one faculty member in it (i.e. Dr. Person). Therefore, the question before the faculty was whether the department wants to immediately search for a DNA specialist to replace Dr. Miller in order to continue the program, or to gradually phase out the MSFS program. There was significant and constructive discussion on the pros and cons of several options. The Chemistry faculty generally agreed upon the following conclusions:

- a. It is possible, but very challenging to continue the MSFS program.
- b. It will be difficult to recruit and retain an expert in forensic DNA analysis, particularly one with significant forensic experience.
- c. It will be difficult to get the existing Chemistry faculty involved in mentoring forensic research projects. As such, meeting research needs of students will be problematic in the long term.
- d. Continuing the program will be an ongoing distraction from our efforts and ability to meet the core mission of our department, particularly in the current funding climate for research.
- e. Based on feedback from forensic professionals and the MSFS advisory board, it is possible to meet the career needs of students interested in forensic science through our existing BS and MS Chemistry programs, as our department has done for the past 30 years.
- f. The crime lab on campus and their staff are a valuable resource for our students and we should continue to involve them and our students.
- g. One promising possibility for the future is a "*Forensic Science Certificate Program*" that could be completed independent of, or along with, a typical CSM bachelor's degree (BS Chemistry, BA Chemistry, BS Biology). Such a certificate program, which would be very appealing to our undergraduate students, could

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cover the core content from the MSFS program and would strengthen our core programs and would keep the involvement from the crime lab.

- h. The department will need to replace Dr. Miller and his contributions to biochemistry instruction and research in order to meet the needs of students interested in forensic biochemistry, for our existing BA Chemistry, and our planned BS Biochemistry programs (hopefully commencing in Fall 2012). We should search for a faculty member with expertise in biochemistry and/or bio-analytical chemistry, with a particular interest in nucleic acid techniques. This new faculty member could use the existing equipment and lab space that has become available after Dr. Miller's departure. This, in turn, would greatly offset the startup cost of such an appointment. A primary or secondary interest in forensic DNA topics would be appropriate.

As a result of the above discussions and subsequent conclusions, the Chemistry faculty has unanimously recommended the following actions:

1. The current MSFS program should be phased out.
2. The department must remain committed to helping the current MSFS students graduate within the next 2-3 semesters (through Fall 2012 or Spring 2013, if needed).
3. Starting Fall 2011, the department will not admit new students to the MSFS program.
4. The department will explore the possibility of a "*Forensic Science Certificate Program*" in the near future in order to help meet the needs of students interested in forensic science.
5. During the 2011-12 AY, the department should search for a faculty member (as a replacement for Dr. Miller) with expertise in biochemistry and/or bio-analytical chemistry, with a primary interest in nucleic acid techniques, and a secondary interest in forensic DNA (if appropriate).

Thank you for your time and attention in this matter. Please let me know if you have any questions in this regard.

Sincerely,



Saeed Attar, Ph.D.
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