**CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION CERTIFICATE**

**INFORMATION & FAQ**

Hollywood programs would have us all think that a CSI responds to crime scenes, documents evidence, analyzes the evidence in a lab, tracks down and arrests suspects (occasionally kicking in doors), interrogates those suspects, profiles serial killers, checks alibis, psychically reconstructs crime scenes, and solves old cases – all while carrying a gun and looking *fabulous* in club clothes.

Shows like CSI are fun to watch but they mythologize the profession. In reality, investigating crimes is difficult, meticulous, and often gruesome work, and it requires intense, sustained effort from many people including police officers, crime scene investigators, detectives, forensic scientists, attorneys, specialists, and others. So the job depicted on tv is really the jobs of at least ten people, rolled into one for the sake of entertainment. Even so, the work a real CSI does is very rewarding… and never dull.

Members of an investigative team whose primary duties involve handling physical evidence can be divided into two categories: lab personnel (called forensic scientists or criminalists) and field personnel (called crime scene investigators or forensic technicians). Below is a breakdown of some of the distinctions between these positions.

**FORENSIC SCIENTIST/CRIMINALIST**

* Requires four-year BS degree in biology, chemistry, or forensic science
* Works in a crime lab, might also visit crime scenes but not usually
* Analyzes physical evidence using lab instruments and scientific protocol
* Writes reports
* Testifies in court

**CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR/FORENSIC TECHNICIAN**

* Requires education/training in crime scene processing, documenting evidence (notes, photos, and diagrams) preserving evidence, developing latent fingerprints, and report writing
* Works in the field (crime scenes)
* Documents evidence and scenes, collects and preserves evidence
* Writes reports
* Testifies in court

**What will I learn in this program?**

The 18-unit certificate in Crime Scene Investigation offers instruction in the areas of crime scene processing and documentation, evidence preservation, fingerprints, photography, report writing, and legal issues relating to physical evidence. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students desiring an entry-level, civilian position working crime scenes or handling evidence, or enhance the credentials of police officers in order to join a sworn CSI unit. Students may earn the certificate as a stand-alone credential or as part of their Associate of Science degree in Administration of Justice.

**Requirements of the 18-unit Crime Scene Investigation Certificate**

ADMJ 52 Concepts of Criminal Law (3)

ADMJ 57 Introduction of Administration of Justice

ADMJ 63 Fingerprints (3)

ADMJ 66 Forensic Evidence (articulates with FS 11 at SJSU) (3)

ADMJ 68 Criminal Justice Report Writing (3)

ADMJ 69 Crime Scene Documentation (3)

**Career Outlook for Crime Scene Personnel**

Until recent years, police officers documented crime scenes and collected evidence, so to become a CSI you first had to be hired as an officer-in-training, make it through the academy and field training and through your first year of probation, and then complete a number years on patrol before you could apply to a special unit such as CSI. If you were accepted into the unit, you might work there only a few years before being rotated out, or you might work there your whole career, depending on the agency.

In recent years, however, there has been a shift toward hiring civilians to handle crime scene work, freeing up police officers for other duties. Some agencies still use sworn personnel, but many do not. If you want to be a police officer *and* a CSI, you should look for agencies that have sworn crime scene personnel (such as San Francisco Police Department), and if you do not want to be a police officer you should look for agencies that hire civilian crime scene personnel (such as Oakland Police Department and City of Petaluma).

There will always be crime, so there will always be jobs in this field. However, due to the popularity of tv crime shows, there are now more college programs, more students, and more graduates in this field than ever before, making such jobs much more competitive. Successful job applicants are those whose qualifications *exceed the minimum requirements* of the job. To increase *your* chances of landing the job you want, plan to:

* Earn a college credential (such as this certificate) and consider continuing your education to obtain a college degree. The more education you have, the better. Maintain a high GPA.
* Get to know your professors and let them get to know you; consider them a resource!
* Join a professional organization (while you are still a student) such as the IAI (<http://www.theiai.org/>), AAFS (<http://www.aafs.org/>), or CAC (<http://cacnews.org>)
* Attend conferences and network with professionals in your chosen field as much as possible.
* Complete an intensive (*many hours*) internship that is relevant and applicable to your career goals.
* Once you complete the Crime Scene Investigation Certificate, apply for *all* the jobs that you are interested in, and don’t be discouraged if you don’t get the first job you apply for (or the second!)
* Jobs openings may be found on city, county, and state .gov or HR websites. Fill out an interest card for the jobs you are interested in even if the agency is not currently hiring; the agency will email you when the job opens up. Interest cards expire after one year so be sure to renew.
* Current job vacancies may also found on professional organization websites, such as the IAI (<http://www.theiai.org/>), AAFS (<http://www.aafs.org/>), or CAC (<http://cacnews.org>).
* Be willing to relocate for your first job – you can always move back here later. The important thing is to get your foot in the door!

**What kind of jobs can I get once I complete the program?**

Students who complete the curriculum satisfactorily may be qualified to take civil service examinations for employment with state, county, city and private agencies for civilian positions such as forensic technician, forensic specialist, crime scene specialist, crime scene investigator, crime scene photographer, evidence technician, or evidence specialist.

**How much do they pay?  What is the expected demand for these jobs?**

Based on all available data, there appears to be an undersupply of Crime Scene Investigation workers compared to the demand for this cluster of occupations in the Bay region and in the Mid-Peninsula sub-region (San Francisco and San Mateo Counties). The field is expected to grow.

Pay will vary depending on the hiring agency. Beginning salary in the Bay Area for these jobs ranges from $50-$65k. Outside of the Bay Area, starting salaries may be lower. The Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains job information on all jobs in the U.S. Here is the webpage for “Forensic Science Technician,” with national job outlook and average salary information.

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/forensic-science-technicians.htm>

**I am more interested in working in a crime lab. How do I get more information on becoming a forensic scientist?**

As stated above, you will need a BS degree in a hard science (biology, chemistry, or forensic science) in order to apply for a job working in a crime lab.

The American Academy of Forensic Science provides information on various forensic science careers: <http://www.aafs.org/students/choosing-a-career/>

… as well as a list of all U.S. colleges and universities with a forensic major: <https://www.aafs.org/students/college-university-listings/>

The nearest universities with a 4-year forensic science bio/chem major are:

San Jose State University

<http://www.sjsu.edu/justicestudies/degrees/fs-program/>

CSU-East Bay

<http://catalog.csueastbay.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=4&poid=1384>

<http://catalog.csueastbay.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=4&poid=1413>

**How do I get more information on this program?**

Email: Instructor Mary Juno, [mjuno@ccsf.edu](mailto:mjuno@ccsf.edu)

Or contact the ADMJ Department, Batmale Hall Room 213

(415) 239-3202