

**Illinois Forensic Science Commission
 Training and Career Development Subcommittee
 Open Meeting
 Monday, August 12, 2024, at 11:00 a.m.
 Meeting Minutes**

- I. Call to Order
 - a. Meeting called to order at 11:01 a.m. by Caryn Tucker

- II. Roll-call

Subcommittee Member	Present (X)
Jillian Baker, Commission Member	X
Jeff Buford, Commission Member	X
Judge Art Hill (ret.), Commission Member	X
Jodi Hoos, Commission Member	X
Phil Kinsey, Commission Member	X
Jeanne Richeal, Commission Member	
Caryn Tucker, Commission Member, Subcommittee Chairperson	X
Amy Watroba, Executive Director-Forensic Science Commission	X

- III. Approval of Minutes
 - a. May 20, 2024, meeting minutes: Jillian Baker made motion to approve minutes. Second by Art Hill. Minutes adopted by unanimous vote.

- IV. Old Business
 - a. The informational video projects are still in progress. Ms. Watroba indicated that she should have an update on the B-roll footage for the first video in a few weeks. Ms. Watroba and Ms. Tucker noted that work on these videos may temporarily take a back seat to other projects depending on how the subcommittee decides to proceed on the main topic that will be addressed during the New Business portion of the meeting.

- V. New Business- Discussion of strategic planning for educational programs for lawyers and judges.
 - a. Introduction: Ms. Watroba opened the discussion by summarizing the ways in which the topic of pushing out education to different groups has previously come before the Commission and the presentations that have been given thus far to judges and at conferences by the Commission. The subcommittee also previously

reviewed a draft curriculum for a 40-hour course referred to as “forensics and the law certification program” which would involve collaboration between the Illinois State Police (ISP) and the University of Illinois College of Law (UICL). Ms. Watroba attended a meeting with the ISP Director and a law professor from UICL at the end of July and the goal of today’s meeting is to summarize Ms. Watroba’s research on educational initiatives from other jurisdictions, to summarize the meeting with ISP and UICL, and to begin discussion on topics related to ideas that came up during that meeting.

- b. Arizona Forensic Science Academy: Ms. Watroba summarized background information she gathered about Arizona’s Forensic Science Academy, which started in 2011 and which has been nationally recognized for their training programs. Ms. Watroba compiled materials from the Arizona Academy and had a phone conversation with an individual who has been involved in the Arizona Academy since its inception for background information, suggestions, and lessons learned. The Arizona Academy was created by an Academy Board, which was a separate outgrowth of Arizona’s Forensic Science Advisory Committee (which is similar to Illinois’s Commission). It took several years to get the Arizona Academy up and running and it evolved and changed over time as far as the programs it provided. Separate training was provided for judges due to hesitation and issues with having judges trained concurrently with prosecutors and defense attorneys. The main programs offered were an annual Basic Course and Advanced Course. The offerings of the Arizona Academy have been fluid and driven by what works best for lawyers as far as location for in-person trainings and on-line offerings. The Basic Program was geared towards lawyers with a few years of experience practicing criminal law. The Arizona Forensic Science Academy’s courses were tuition-based.
 - i. Ms. Baker and Judge Hill asked if Arizona has done any kind of follow-up to get feedback on the usefulness of the training and whether it assisted prosecutors and defense attorneys in their practice of law and specifically trial advocacy skills (such as conducting direct and cross examinations of forensic science experts). Ms. Watroba indicated she will inquire as to whether Arizona has any survey or anecdotal information about the impact of their training programs on the legal community. Mr. Buford asked if Ms. Watroba could also inquire about whether the training program helped with communication between lawyers and forensic operations on topics such as forensic services abuse. Ms. Tucker asked if Ms. Watroba also could inquire about the logistics of obtaining CLE credit for lawyers who participated in Arizona’s courses.
- c. Meeting at University of Illinois College of Law: Ms. Watroba summarized what she described as a “brainstorming” meeting involving her, the ISP Director, and a professor from UICL. It appears that ISP and UICL are interested in a collaborative effort to push out education about forensic science to lawyers, judges, and law enforcement personnel. Ms. Watroba explained during the meeting that she would

take the ideas that were discussed back to the subcommittee and full Commission to see what, if any, involvement the Commission wants to have in any such programs. Two programs were discussed: a fundamentals course covering the basics of core forensic science disciplines that could be recorded at the UICL or recorded online, and an advanced course for a smaller group of individuals that would be held in-person at the UICL and that would cover topics beyond basic principles of the core forensic science disciplines. Lab tours were discussed as an option for either course. If the participation in the program was application-based, discussion was held about how and who would screen the applications of possible attendees. If the advanced course followed a “certification” type model, the target audience of that course would likely be higher-level law enforcement and prosecutors/defense attorneys. ISP could possibly subsidize the cost of the in-person program.

- i. Ms. Watroba noted that the Commission’s enabling statute says that it can provide educational opportunities that comport with the sound practice of forensic science and, thus, collaborative educational projects are within the Commission’s statutory scope. As the Commission’s structure grows in the future it may be able to expand the type of educational projects the Commission is involved in and determining the appropriate role of the Commission in any current educational programs should align with the Commission’s current structure.
- ii. Ms. Watroba explained that she felt the Commission should decide if and how they wanted to be involved in any collaboration between ISP and UICL. Discussion then took place regarding how the Commission could be involved from a practical standpoint since the full Commission only meets quarterly. The Commission could decide the scope of their involvement and if/how the Executive Director and Training and Career Development Subcommittee would be involved (specific tasks, logistics, etc.). Issues that would need to be addressed include: would the Commission be a co-host or official collaborator in any project, would the Commission’s seal be used for the project(s), would the Commission need to enter into an IGA with ISP and UICL to collaborate on the project(s). The Training and Career Development Subcommittee could make recommendations to the full Commission about involvement and the scope of involvement in any project(s).
- iii. Advantages to partnering with an educational institution were discussed. Subcommittee members assumed that the UICL probably has the mechanisms in place to handle administrative logistics such as tuition collection from participants (if applicable), CLE credits for lawyers, etc., which the Commission is not currently equipped to handle.
- iv. The importance of keeping in mind that the Commission is separate from ISP, even though it is administratively housed within ISP, was discussed.

Ms. Watroba noted that other state-level commissions are housed within larger agencies (such as the judiciary, attorney general's office, etc.) so the concept of maintaining neutrality and balance is not unique to Illinois's Commission. She observed that the proposed collaboration with ISP and UICL, however, might be the first time that the Commission may decide to agree to a project but set clear limitations on the extent of the Commission's involvement. Ms. Watroba stated that she wanted to ensure that the Commission decides what, if any, level of involvement to have in projects and that she would then work on behalf of the Commission in accordance with their directives. Members discussed how the Commission brings a lot to the table for an educational project because it is a neutral convenor of all the crime labs in Illinois and other criminal justice stakeholders. Given the delicate balance of neutrality for the Commission in any initiatives that originate from ISP, the subcommittee discussed how the Commission should seek clear guidance from ISP and UICL on what insight or role they are asking the Commission to have in any projects. The Commission is certainly poised to step into a project that the Commission feels is beneficial in an advisory capacity. The Commission must enter into any collaborative projects with the clear understanding that the Commission is neutral and should also encourage inclusion of all three state lab systems.

- v. Ms. Watroba stated that she appreciated the subcommittee's feedback from a planning perspective since she is the only staff member of the Commission. She indicated that she envisions the Commission discussing and providing guidance to her on what the Commission feels is appropriate for her to do with respect to the project with ISP and UICL since the Commission is a neutral stakeholder body.
- d. Fundamentals of Forensic Science Modules: The idea of recorded modules for a fundamentals course were discussed. Recorded modules would reach a broader audience, whether they are open access or part of an online program available at a certain time. The recorded modules could also be used again, so they should be created with longevity in mind and reviewed annually for content. Subcommittee members discussed the importance of allowing NIRCL and DuPage Labs to partner with ISP on the substance of modules. The subcommittee discussed a condition of involvement being that the Commission (or subcommittee) have the opportunity to review the content of recorded training modules. Ms. Watroba opined that a basic course that only addressed forensic science, not legal issues, where defense attorneys and prosecutors could view the same recorded content would be wholly consistent with the mission and statutory scope of the Commission.
- i. Subcommittee members discussed whether there is a need for and interest in forensic science educational programs like those discussed and noted that the Commission's efforts to push out similar material through State's Attorneys, defense attorneys, and judges' groups, thus far have not been

successful. The idea of pushing out a survey to assess general interest and content preferences was discussed as were possible ways to identify possible roadblocks. The idea of a test module also was discussed, where the Commission would create a module on one core discipline and push that out to gauge interest before creating additional recordings. Ms. Hoos indicated that she believed there is a need for educational modules on basic forensic science topics and suggested that we will have more success pushing out training to target groups once we are more well known and established as a Commission. The idea of having training modules available via the Commission website was then discussed as a possible means of pushing out content while at the same time creating an opportunity for exposure as a Commission because open-source videos could reach a larger audience. The subcommittee discussed the fact that prioritizing creation of educational materials as part of a collaborative project would likely mean de-prioritizing the current informational video projects, which were intended to help market the Commission. The subcommittee discussed how the Commission should decide how to prioritize these 2 projects if they decide to collaborate on an educational initiative with ISP/UICL. The collaborative educational project was discussed as a “heavy lift” because of the time investment required.

- ii. If the educational videos are the result of a collaboration, the subcommittee discussed how the issues of content ownership would need to be addressed so all parties are clear on who and how the videos can be used.
 - iii. The topic of the proposed time frame for the ISP/UICL projects was discussed. If the time frame involves recording videos in the Spring of 2025 that might require the subcommittee to delay other existing Commission projects, such as the informational video projects, if the Commission collaborates on the project. The subcommittee discussed a realistic time frame for creation and review of recorded videos as 6 months to a year because the modules would have to be created and then reviewed by the subcommittee and re-reviewed if changes are made. The subcommittee members expressed a preference to set a timeframe that is not overly ambitious especially because this would be the first project of this nature and magnitude that the Commission has undertaken and the Commission should recognize that the project may encounter unexpected issues. Ms. Watroba referenced the NAFSB best practice documents for state-level commissions which included a recommendation that Commissions take on projects/responsibilities commensurate with their resources and suggested that the subcommittee consider what types of projects the Commission’s current infrastructure supports.
- e. Advanced/In-person training program: The subcommittee discussed that the Commission should separately address considerations for an advanced course, including what content would be delivered, in determining whether the

Commission should collaborate on such a project at this time. The subcommittee would also like more information regarding ISP/UICL's administrative and logistical plans for an advanced in-person course to assess in what capacity the Commission might want to get involved. The subcommittee discussed that Commission involvement in a collaborative, in-person course addressing material beyond the basic of core forensic science principles might be something the Commission could do down the road once the Commission is more established and once the Commission has put out basic content via recorded modules. However, if ISP and UICL plan to move forward with an advanced course then the Commission should certainly review their plans and see if there is a way to collaborate or help facilitate the project within the Commission's scope and capabilities. The idea of reviewing the content and presentations for an in-person course and advising ISP and UICL on the project was discussed as a possible option for how the Commission could be involved in such a project.

- f. Prior to the next meeting, Ms. Watroba will compile and organize ideas and talking points from this meeting for further discussion and organization at the next subcommittee meeting so that the subcommittee can bring the general topic before the full Commission at the September meeting to start discussion at that level.

VI. Public Participation

No public comment was offered.

VII. Next Meeting/ Adjournment

- a. Next meeting will be scheduled via a Doodle Poll.
- b. Motion to adjourn by Jillian Baker. Seconded by Art Hill. Motion passed.
- c. Meeting adjourned by Chairperson Tucker at 12:33 p.m.