



## Criminalistics Section – 2011

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### A37 The Path Forward: Two Years Later

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be knowledgeable about what the forensic community has accomplished since the National Research Council (NRC) report was issued in February 2009.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a detailed synopsis of what the forensic science community did in response to the NRC report and what may be on the horizon.

On February 18, 2009, the National Research Council (NRC), an arm of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), published "*Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward.*" This report had been commissioned by Congress in 2005 and concluded that forensic science, as a whole, produces valuable evidence contributing to the successful prosecution and conviction of criminals, as well as to the exoneration of the innocent. However, the report also identified what the committee considered to be systemic weaknesses in the use of forensic evidence that can and have led to wrongful convictions. The report contains 13 recommendations designed, in the committee's opinion, to remove or ameliorate these systemic weaknesses.

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss what has been done since the NRC report. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice and is dedicated to researching crime control and justice issues which impact our Nation's ability to fight and prevent crime. NIJ has been a strong funding source to the forensic science community for research, training, laboratory improvement, and increasing forensic technology capacity. Since the NRC report, NIJ has awarded grants in fundamental research to improve understanding of the accuracy, reliability, and measurement validity of forensic science disciplines. As well, NIJ provides financial support to numerous scientific working groups and has collaborated with other agencies in creating new working groups to examine human factors in latent print analysis and questioned document examination, preservation of biological evidence after it leaves the forensic laboratory, AFIS interoperability, and the use of methods for the reporting of probabilistic statements on forensic evidence in court.

There has been a significant effort to address the recommendations put forth in the NRC report, but has it been enough?

**Forensic Science, National Institute of Justice, NAS Report**