



# ABFDE News

September 2012  
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## THE GAVEL

KIRSTEN SINGER, PRESIDENT



The summer is rapidly coming to a close, although not cooling off fast enough for those of us in the DC area; maybe it's all that hot air wafting down from the Hill. And with the holidays around the corner, many of us will begin to reflect on the past year, both personally and professionally; we lost two of our cherished colleagues this year; Daubert has slowed to a simmer, while "graphos" vs. "docos" testimonies are multiplying exponentially; forensic document cases seem to be thinning around the country, and as a result we are poised to adapt and redefine our profession. Throughout all of the recent changes, the ABFDE Board of Directors continues, like a quiet, reliable engine, to serve our Diplomates and go about Board business. Our work on the ACT project continues with question writing, practical test development, and syllabus updates. Thanks to ASQDE for enabling QDAD to be available to FDEs entering the ABFDE Certification process. QDAD access will make the search for technical articles much easier.

Congratulations are in order for Dr. **Linton A. Mohammed** for receiving the New Horizon Award by unanimous BOD vote. This award is given to the Diplomate who has made a significant contribution to Forensic Document Examination through research. The award was presented by ABFDE Treasurer, **Jim Green**, at the ASQDE AGM in Charleston, SC.



In the May 2012 ABFDE Newsletter, I stated that the BOD had decided to expand the Board by two additional Directors, and

*(The Gavel continues on page 3)*

Re-Accredited by FSAB  
in 2012



## 2012 NEW HORIZON AWARD WINNER: LINTON A. MOHAMMED

By James Green, D-ABFDE

At the annual meeting of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners in Charleston last month, I had the honor of presenting the ABFDE New Horizon Award to Dr. **Linton A. Mohammed**. Normally, the presentation would have been made by ABFDE President **Singer** but due to a conflict, she was unable attend the conference.

As you recall, the award is given to a Diplomat who has made a significant contribution to our profession by their research. Linton has worked with Dr. **Michael Caligiuri** over the past few years, exploring the interaction between the brain and handwriting. Their work culminated in a book recently published entitled, "The Neuroscience of Handwriting: Applications for Forensic Document Examination".

The research resulted in the acceptance of Linton's thesis and he was awarded his Doctorate earlier this year.

Congratulations, **Linton!**



**ABFDE**  
**logo Coffee**  
**Mug**



Available now for \$15. To order, contact  
Kirsten at [Kirsten.singer@va.gov](mailto:Kirsten.singer@va.gov).

*(The Gavel continued from page 1)*

that a Special Edition Newsletter would be issued in June listing the candidates. Sadly, we received too few candidates to even hold an election. Please consider running for a position on the ABFDE BOD next year. It is extremely rewarding to contribute to strengthening the profession. And if you cannot manage the time to be a Director, please consider working on one of our Committees. If you are interested, contact me or a Committee Chair.

ABFDE Vice President and Testing Chair **Lisa Hanson** has now successfully conducted two ***Certification 101 – Demystifying ABFDE Board Certification*** workshops. The first one was held at last September's MAFS meeting and the second was at the ASQDE AGM. Thank you to the Diplomates who assisted. Both workshops received very positive feedback. Check the ABFDE.org website for future workshops.

One of our Diplomates asked that a reminder be sent to all Diplomates that ABFDE recertification points accumulate very quickly when you attend a professional meeting, and even more so when you present. Check the Continuing Education page of this newsletter for upcoming meeting opportunities to accrue those points.

The Meeting Minutes for the Board of Directors' annual meeting in May 2012 are included in this newsletter, and will also be posted on the ABFDE website. Feel free to give any of the Directors your feedback on topics described in the Minutes.



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## ***Report of the Continuing Education Committee***

Frank Hicks: Chairperson

The recent ASQDE meeting in Charleston, SC, had two workshops on the program which were granted ABFDE recertification points. Both "The Individuality of Inkjet Printing" workshop and the "Kinematic Features of Signature Writing in Persons with Alzheimer's Disease" workshop were granted 3 recertification points.

Please forward all inquiries about recertification points for workshops to **Frank Hicks** at [afhqde@yahoo.com](mailto:afhqde@yahoo.com). Keep in mind that in order for a workshop to be approved for recertification points it must, among other criteria, require significant participation by the attendees. This is an important differentiation between a presentation and a workshop.



## Continuing Education

### September 2012

**24-28**     **MAFS Annual Meeting**  
Hilton Milwaukee City Center  
Milwaukee, WI  
Sandy Koresch, Program Chair  
[koreschsm@doj.state.wi.us](mailto:koreschsm@doj.state.wi.us)

### November 2012

**12-17**     **NEAFS Annual Meeting**  
Saratoga Hilton  
Saratoga Springs, NY  
[www.neafs.org](http://www.neafs.org)

### February 2013

**18-23**     **AAFS**  
Washington Marriott Wardman  
Washington, DC, USA  
<http://www.aafs.org/aafs-2013-annual-meeting>

### May 2013

**6-10**     **MAAFS Annual Meeting**  
Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, VA  
[www.maafs.org](http://www.maafs.org)

**Many Diplomates are members of multiple organizations. You can help spread the word about workshops and meetings relating to forensic document examination by e-mailing these events to the ABFDE News Editor, Diane K. Tolliver.**

**Let's hope this page will be completely filled with events in the next issue. Continuing our education is necessary to maintain ABFDE certification. Please help the editor with this information.**

**Meeting announcements may be submitted to the editor at [TolliverD@aol.com](mailto:TolliverD@aol.com).**

**Subject line: CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR ABFDE NEWS.**



## STATE OF THE STATE: SWGDOC SEPTEMBER 2012

BY TED M. BURKES, D-ABFDE

As a result of the effort to reorganize and standardize all of the Scientific Working Groups (SWG's) by the National Institute of Justice and the Subcommittee on Forensic Science (SoFS), two things occurred for the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Document Examination (SWGDOC).

First, we instituted bylaws for the first time. Second, we are no longer required to publish through ASTM. When SWGDOC's first reorganization occurred in 2001, we were required to publish through ASTM. At that time, it worked very well and SWGDOC was able to get twelve new standards published in a span of three years. Unfortunately, a block of individuals determined how to bog down the process, and we were only able to publish four standards in the next five years. It got to the point where SWGDOC was spending more time on frivolous ASTM appeals than drafting necessary standards. As a result, SWGDOC notified ASTM E30.02 (the subcommittee on questioned documents) in January of 2012 that we would no longer be providing draft documents for publication through ASTM. SWGDOC decided that, like most of the other SWG's, we would publish our own standards.

Prior to SWGDOC leaving ASTM, we were only one of three to four SWG's (out of approximately twenty) who were using the ASTM process. Another reason for leaving ASTM (and frankly the one we were most attracted to) was that the standards did not have to be purchased by users or stakeholders if we were publishing them. As you know, you had to be a member of ASTM (\$75 a year) to get the standards, and then there were limitations as to how you could share them (for instance, to an attorney, had to pay \$35 a standard that you

*“SWGDOC will now publish our own standards, strengthening them over the ASTM versions...This requires five prongs...openness, balance of interest, due process, an appeals process, and consensus.”*

(As a side note, this really struck home when **Ken Melson**, one of the SoFS co-chairs, was questioning me as to why SWGDOC was leaving the ASTM process and he tried to look at our

standards and was asked for his credit card. As a result of that interview, both of the SoFS co-chairs attended the E30.02 meeting in Atlanta (2012) and got a taste of what we had to deal with in ASTM.)

Anyway, SWGDOC will now publish our own standards, strengthening them over the ASTM versions. We will be publishing in accordance with **OMB Circular A119**, which is titled "Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities". This requires five prongs, which we have included in our documentation for publishing. They are: openness, balance of interest, due process, an appeals process, and consensus, (which is defined as general agreement, but not necessarily unanimity, and includes a process for attempting to resolve objections by interested parties, as long as all comments have been fairly considered, each objector is advised of the disposition of his or her objection(s) and the reasons why, and the consensus body members are given an opportunity to change their votes after reviewing the comments). You can easily find Circular A-119 on the Internet, if you'd like to read the whole document.



## *SWGDOC Draft Standard*

BY TED M. BURKES, D-ABFDE

A new draft standard for forensic document examination has been posted on the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Document Examination (SWGDOC) website for a 60 day review and comment period. Anyone who wishes to comment on the draft document may do so. There are no membership requirements or costs to comment. Identifying information of the commenter will be removed from the comments prior to their review by SWGDOC. All comments will be fully considered.

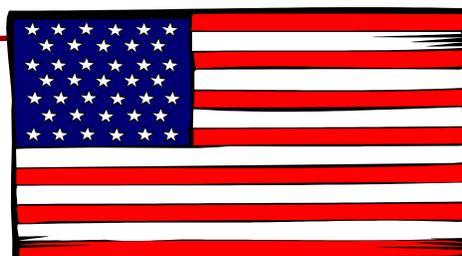
If substantive technical changes are made to the draft based on the recommendations received, a revised draft will be placed on the SWGDOC website for another 60 day comment period. If this occurs, you will again be notified that it is posted. After consideration of all of the comments received, SWGDOC will vote to accept or reject the draft as a standard. Approved standards will be available to all, free of charge, through the SWGDOC website.

This Draft for Comment may be found at [www.swgdoc.org](http://www.swgdoc.org).



**REPEATING** BREAKING NEWS  
FROM THE MAY 2012 ABFDE NEWS:

***Australian and New Zealand FDES Are Now  
Eligible For ABFDE Certification***



## *Demystifying ABFDE Certification Workshop*

Lisa Hanson, Testing Chair, ABFDE

The ABFDE Certification 101 Workshop (which is now officially named “Demystifying ABFDE Certification Workshop”) was held in Charleston, SC the Saturday before the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the ASQDE. This is the second time the workshop has been offered and like the first, it was well attended. Ten Forensic Document Examiners from Private Laboratories, Government Laboratories, and Laboratories from outside the United States, were in attendance!

If you have not read about this Workshop before the following information will help catch you up. The ABFDE offered the first workshop in the fall of 2011 at the MAFS Conference in Chicago. This workshop was developed to provide information and help for future ABFDE Certification Candidates and give them a hands-on experience to be familiar with what the entire process entails.

The workshop is divided into two half day workshops. The first half provides information and discussion about the history and details of the ABFDE, as well as all the various organizations that are extremely important to our profession. The second half walks the Attendees through the ABFDE Certification Process, beginning with a practice Written Test that is given during class. In addition, the Attendees receive 2 Practical problems, approximately one month before the workshop, that they must complete within two weeks time. Each of the Attendees must complete their Practicals, take detailed notes and produce a report that is returned to the Workshop Coordinator one week prior to arrival at the Workshop. These Practicals are then forwarded to the “Volunteer” Diplomates who are present during the Workshop. These Diplomates are the instructors that give each Attendee the experience of an “Oral Board Examination” by using one of the Attendee’s Practicals. This practice “Oral Board Examination” has been highly praised during “Workshop Critiques” collected from workshop Attendees.

I would like to give a Big Thank You to this year’s Workshop “Volunteer” Diplomates **Todd Welch, Grant Sperry, Jeff Taylor, Kathleen Nicolaidis, Marie Durina and Peter Tytell**. And I also want to add that I completely agree with the opinion of the Workshop Attendees: it is the work, done by our “Volunteer” Diplomates who really make this Workshop spectacular! This year we had an additional bonus as **Peter Tytell** added many new historical factoids to the timeline involving TWGDOC, SWGDOC and ASTM.

All in all, a great time was had by all and just like the last Workshop, I walked away with all sorts of new information to use during the next Workshop. Now I just need to make sure to add all this information into the Workshop slides before I forget!

Thanks again to all the Diplomates who have supported the past two Workshops. Please note: ABFDE is always looking for new “Volunteer” Diplomates who may be interested in this type of work in the future! If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please contact Lisa Hanson and I will add your name to the Call List. The ABFDE does attempt to use “Volunteer” Diplomates who are already attending the meeting where the Workshop is being held to keep the costs down for the ABFDE; thus the title “Volunteer” Diplomates. To date, the only costs to the ABFDE for these workshops have been for the room rentals and lunches for the “Volunteer” Diplomates. We hope to keep this trend going!



## *Minutes of the 2012 BOD Annual Meeting*

*Submitted by Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides, Secretary*

The ABFDE Board of Directors met for their Annual Meeting May 4 – 6<sup>th</sup> in Phoenix, Arizona. Present were: President **Kirsten Singer**, Vice President **Lisa Hanson**, Secretary **Kathy Annunziata Nicolaides**, Treasurer **Jim Green**, **Frank Hicks**, **Jim Josey**, **Bonnie Beal**, **Marie Durina**, **Rick Horton**, **Rosalind Spencer**, and **Bill Riordan**. Director **Grant Sperry** was unable to attend.

**Treasurer's Report (Green):** As of 3/31/12, ABFDE had \$20,839.57 in its Regular Checking account, \$338.69 in its Savings account, and a CD valued at \$7,552.89. The CD, which expires 5/14/12, will be renewed. Three payments totaling \$2,372 were made to FSAB in 2011. Payment in the amount of \$92.69 was made to the Corporate Service Company on 1/3/12 to maintain statutory representation in D.C. (corporation documents were initially filed there). Payment in the amount of \$525 was made to the Hobbs Group on 11/25/11 for filing of IRS 990-EZ, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax. Gross receipts were reported in the amount of \$39,357. Form BRA-25 was completed and filed with the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs on 2/8/12. This submission is required every other year. A list of current members on the BOD, as well as the filing fee payment of \$80 was sent with the form. A payment of \$3,960 was made to CFM Insurance Company for BOD liability insurance. The cost of this insurance has remained the same for the past three years. During the past year, interest in the amount of \$70.10 was added to the Ames Fund, bringing the current balance to \$4,580.17. 2011 – 2012 dues payments totaled \$31,230.45. This amount includes prepayment of two members for the 2012 – 2013 period. A payment in the amount of \$17,162.67 was made to ACT, Inc. on 5/27/11. ABFDE is slowly digging out of its financial hole. The ACT testing validation has cost approximately \$60,000. They recommend conducting a validation process every 3 – 5 years. Jim recommended saving up for it.

An audit of the ABFDE finances will be conducted in the next few months. This audit, which is scheduled every three years, will cost approximately \$3,000.

The PayPal payment option implemented earlier this year has been working well. The foreign Diplomates find it particularly convenient. With regard to the associated fees, PayPal collects \$7.55 for a \$250 payment. The cost seems reasonable because of the assured payment, the ease of making a payment in US dollars from a foreign country, as well as providing an expedient manner of payment common to other organizations.



**Credentials Committee Report (Nicolaides):** The Credentials Committee received 3 applications this year. Two of the applicants have passed into the testing phase; all of the third applicant's documentation has yet to be received. For one applicant, a committee member recused him/herself due to a possible conflict of interest. **Marie Durina** graciously assisted the Committee by reviewing and voting on the credentials of this applicant. In August 2011, the ABFDE Board of Directors voted to award diplomat status to candidates **Jeffrey Payne** and **Andrew Barton**. The ABFDE Testing Committee Guidelines for Credentials

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Evaluators was updated to include more detailed criteria for the evaluation of an applicant's training. Clarification was made to the Credentials Committee SOP to include the 5-year period of validity on new Diplomate certificates.

**Continuing Education Committee Report (Hicks):** There were 11 workshops approved for a total of 66 re-certification points. The workshops were held across the country and in Canada, at national, regional, and local meetings.

**FSAB (Nicolaides):** Carl McClary, previous Secretary and FSAB Committee Chair, submitted ABFDE's application for reaccreditation on April 18, 2011. On November 29, 2011, FSAB's (Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board, Inc.) Application Review Committee sent an initial report to me which assessed the application and listed a number of points needing rectification before reaccreditation could be approved.

**Forensic  
Specialties  
Accreditation  
Board, Inc.,  
(FSAB),  
reaccredits  
ABFDE.**

The ARC committee conducted an exhaustive review of our documentation; in addition to the handful of critical concerns, the report included numerous comments. In speaking with the ARC chair, one reason for their close review was the complaint concerning ABFDE filed in 2010. Each comment and critical concern was addressed in two separate responses submitted December 30, 2011 and January 19, 2012. Changes to the RPG which would bring ABFDE into compliance with FSAB standards were proposed and voted on by the ABFDE BOD prior to the FSAB Annual Meeting held February 19, 2012. Although I was available by phone to answer any questions FSAB had when discussing our application at their meeting, no questions were asked, and FSAB reaccredited ABFDE.

FSAB requires an Annual Report from all accredited organizations. ABFDE's 2011 Annual Report was submitted on March 27, 2012.

**Public Relations / Website (Durina):** Major portions of the first version of the Legal Library have been posted on the ABFDE website. It is hoped that the Legal Library will become a "one-stop shopping" site for FDEs who wish to quickly access information on a variety of QD-related topics. There is a disclaimer in the beginning section of the Legal Library allowing for peer review and the submission of additional topics from FDEs. Many thanks to **Kathleen Nicolaides** and **Laura Hammond** for their invaluable assistance in the editing process, and to **Laureen Leaver** for her work in posting the sections to the website. You can view the progress made so far by visiting: <http://abfde.org/legallibrary.html>

The Speakers' Bureau PowerPoint presentation has been used during the past year by **Peter Tytell**, **Dennis Ryan**, and **Ellen Schuetzner**. **Jim Josey** is also planning to use it. All presentations were given to groups of attorneys. **Ellen Schuetzner** commented that she found it immensely helpful, especially the Daubert-related portions of the presentations. **Dennis Ryan** commented that he found it helpful and relevant, except for the Daubert-related portions. (Dennis stated this is because Daubert does not apply to the State of New York, where most of his casework originates.) A request to use the Speakers' Bureau presentation was received from **Darla McCarly-Celentano** of Aurora PD but denied because **Darla** is not

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an ABFDE Diplomate. **Lisa Hanson** volunteered to help develop slides for the presentation that would address Frye/Mack issues. These slides would not replace the Daubert slides, but would be added to assist those states with Frye/Mack standards.

In December, 2011 a PayPal link was established on the ABFDE website. The link is located on the bottom left-hand corner of the "Contact Us" page.

On Feb. 9, 2012, a letter jointly signed by **Linton Mohammed**, ASQDE and **Kirsten Singer**, ABFDE was submitted to the editor of the JFS. The letter was written in response to two articles that appeared in the JFS, both authored by **M. Page**, **J. Taylor**, and **M. Blenkin**, and both involving forensic identification science evidence since Daubert. The joint letter expressed disagreement with conclusions set forth in the Page articles and outlined in detail the empirical research undertaken since the Daubert ruling to support the validity and reliability of forensic document examination. The letter also added a recommendation that judges thoroughly evaluate credentials of every expert witness. The letter will be published in the July issues of JFS.

In February, 2012, an editor from the National Forensic Science Technology Center requested assistance in writing a primer on the subject of Forensic Document Examination. This is part of a larger project the NFSTC is working on, putting together primers for each of the forensic science disciplines submitting material. The goal of the project is to create a series of concise forensic guidebooks for the Bureau of Justice Assistance that will be easy-to-read, useful resources for non-scientists (such as policy-makers, law enforcement officers, potential jurors, attorneys, students, and the public.) This was considered an excellent opportunity to educate the public about what FDEs do, qualifications of legitimate FDEs, and to articulate research done in our profession in response to challenges. The timeline for this project was originally very short (one month) and Mr. **Cote** submitted a questionnaire which **Durina** completed prior to a verbal phone interview. The primer has undergone several edits with the help of **Kathy Nicolaidis** and **Kirsten Singer** and turned out so well that it is being used as the "model primer" for the other forensic science disciplines. **Durina** was informed the completion of the project was delayed due to fact that the other disciplines have not submitted their input on a timely basis. While this material was not submitted on behalf of the ABFDE, information about ABFDE certification was included, and the ABFDE was acknowledged and thanked for its input. In an e-mail to **Durina** dated April 12, 2012, the editor wrote: "*...The official title is still in flux – it will likely either be Basics of Forensic Science or Forensic Science Basics. We're a little behind schedule ...primarily because not all subject matter experts have been as forthcoming with information as you and your group J. Without a doubt, you and your colleagues at ABFDE were our most helpful, responsive experts! If all goes well, we will be wrapping up the editing/drafting by mid-May and will then be delivering the information to our artist/web designer who will create a site and the companion pdf eBooks. BJA will have to bless everything of course before it goes live, and this could take some time. I would hope to see the website launched in late summer/early Fall if all goes smoothly.*" This website will be available to the public. When the site goes live, a link to NFSTC will be put on the ABFDE website.

In April 2012, the PR Committee began drafting a letter on behalf of the ABFDE for **Kirsten's** signature to

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## *Minutes of the 2012 BOD Annual Meeting*

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the DOJ EOUSA (Executive Office of US Attorneys) to explain legitimate versus not-so-legitimate FDEs. We are going to request distribution be made to attorneys nationwide.

In April 2012, ABFDE received an e-mail request to participate in a series of 3 magazine articles that will be appearing in *Fraud Magazine Online*, a publication of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. The author, Mr. **Bob Tie**, wished to interview ABFDE-certified FDEs to obtain “practical insights on how Certified Fraud Examiners can best gather and preserve evidence for referral to a forensic document examiner to investigate cases.” **Farrell Shiver** has volunteered to be interviewed for the first article, and **Jim Green** has kindly volunteered to be interviewed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> articles, which will appear in June.

**Recertification (Horton):** As of March 30<sup>th</sup>, the ABFDE has 118 active Diplomates. Two (2) new Diplomates completed the testing process, and were issued an ABFDE Certificate of Qualification and Membership Card. Twenty-one (21) Diplomates met the recertification criteria for the next five (5) year period and have received, or are in the process of receiving, their Certificate of Recertification and new Diplomat Membership card. Six (6) Diplomates who are up for recertification this period are pending receipt and/or review of their recertification application. Two (2) Diplomates retired/resigned (**Jan Johnson** and **Bob Muehlberger**). One (1) Diplomat passed away (**Matt Falco**.) Based on discussions with Diplomates who are aging or changing direction, many are on the fence about recertification. These are examiners who are approximately 60 years old. Since the average age of QD examiners in AAFS is mid-50s, it is possible that we will lose a large number of Diplomates in the coming years.

**Test Preparation and Validation Committee Report (Spencer):** The Test Preparation and Validation Committee expects recommendations on what the requirements for new questions and tests will be, before new tests can be prepared. The Chair of the Committee also expects to receive a number of old practical test submissions which must be reviewed and possibly revised in the light of these new practical test requirements. The Chair has been approached by some Diplomates volunteering to create new practical tests, and their offer of help is gratefully appreciated. Brainstorming amongst small groups of volunteers has begun, for ideas on how to keep the practical tests relevant and challenging.

The hope is that when created and validated, these new tests will have a clear purpose, be multi-faceted, relevant and in accordance with ACT guidelines and the new test blueprint. The aim is to create a number of new tests each year for the foreseeable future to maintain a pool that is current and fit-for-purpose.

**Workshop Committee Report (Josey):** On September 21, 2011, a full day workshop titled “ABFDE Demystifying Certification 101” was held at the MAFS meeting in Chicago, IL. This workshop was borne as a result of requests by FDE Trainees and newly trained FDE’s to provide more information regarding preparing for ABFDE certification. The workshop was organized and presented by **Lisa Hanson**. Diplomates in attendance to lend support to the workshop included **Ellen Schuetzner, Todd Welch, Jim Ross, Fred Panhorst, Larry Olson, Dave Sexton, Andy Syzmanski, Richard Picciochi** and **Richard Theis**. Feedback after the workshop has been very positive and additional workshops are planned for the 2012 MAAFS

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meeting in Maryland and the Saturday before the 2012 ASQDE meeting in Charleston, SC.

Our information with Grants.Gov was updated to allow ABFDE to remain registered and qualified to apply for federal grants. **Josey** remains on the automatic notification list for government grants and monitors the grant listing regularly.

**Courtney King**, with the Indiana State Police Crime Lab, has been very helpful in keeping **Josey** updated on the number of QD trainees in the field and the type of supplemental training they would like to have.

**Josey** is researching the possibility of an ABFDE-sponsored course for trainees or newly trained examiners conducted by an organization such as MFRC or NFSTC. Subjects offered would be in areas which polled trainees requested additional training. ABFDE would select instructors and the organization would handle the accounting. Funding for this program would come from a government grant, which would require its own accounting and a manager.

**Testing Committee Report (Hanson):** Two (2) candidates successfully completed the certification testing program and achieved Diplomate status: **Jeffrey Payne** and **Andrew Barton**. There are seven (7) candidates currently in the testing process. One candidate withdrew from the testing program due to uncertainty about whether s/he will remain in the field.

Written examinations and Oral examinations will be offered at all upcoming national and regional meetings in accordance with the needs of the candidates and the availability of ABFDE Directors.

The mentorship program begun last year is working well.

There are approximately 20 current practical problems used in the testing program. Additional tests are needed.

**Nominating Committee Report (Hicks):** No Directors resigned during the 2011-2012 year. Two Directors, **Jim Josey** and **Frank Hicks**, will come to the end of their first terms as Directors with the May, 2012, meeting. Since both Directors have indicated a willingness to serve a second term, no nominations were sought for other candidates to fill these positions.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**ACT Project Update (Singer for Sperry):** The ACT test blueprint, compiled from the Diplomate survey response, divides types of FDE exams into frequencies. ABFDE needs 2 written tests (with 123 questions each) that mirror the percentages on the test blueprint. ACT has approved 123 questions; a pool of 250 questions is needed. Work remains in categorizing questions and identifying what types of new questions are needed. The next step is to validate approved questions by having 50 Diplomates take the test. Pilot

## *Minutes of the 2012 BOD Annual Meeting*

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testing will be scheduled at upcoming regional or national meetings.

an ABFDE Diplomate. **Lisa Hanson** volunteered to help develop slides for the presentation that would address Frye/Mack issues. These slides would not replace the Daubert slides, but would be added to assist those states with Frye/Mack standards.

The BOD voted to award 5 recertification points to Diplomates who participate in the pilot testing.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Syllabus:** **Bill Riordan** is updating syllabus with current articles. He has compared syllabuses from other agencies to the ABFDE syllabus to further assess changes to be made. He asks for help in reviewing content. The syllabus must also adhere to the ACT blueprint.

**RPG Changes:** Changes to the Rules and Procedures Guide were proposed and approved by majority vote of the BOD. These changes will be detailed in the forthcoming Outline of Substantive Changes.

**“...if a case was accepted as pro bono, then the examiner was obligated to work the entire case as such and could not accept payments of any kind.”**

**Ethics Directive Regarding Contingency Fees:** The BOD discussed whether the ABFDE should consider any exceptions to the contingency fee prohibition stated in paragraph 7 of the Code of Ethics, such as reimbursement of normal course of business expenses should an indigent client prevail in a case. Concerns were expressed that there may be nuances to case work that our Code of Ethics does not cover. The BOD decided its position was that if a case was accepted as pro bono, then the examiner was obligated to work the entire case as such and could not accept payments of any kind.

**ABFDE Certification for Australian and New Zealand FDEs:** The BOD was approached by examiners from Australia, requesting that the BOD consider opening the certification process to examiners in this region. ABFDE certification was desired because there is currently no certifying body in Australia and examiners believe that ABFDE credentials would help Australian courts differentiate them from inadequately trained “experts.” Their training programs are similar to US programs and they use the ASTM standard for conclusions. Debate ensued about the opportunities and the limitations of certifying Australian and New Zealand examiners. The active participation of a number of Australians in ABFDE workshops, ASQDE, and the “doceexam list” as well as a common first language (English) mitigated fears about compatibility and communication. After much discussion, the BOD voted to allow qualified examiners from Australia and New Zealand apply for ABFDE certification, under the following conditions: the written test and oral board phases would be conducted in person and must take place in the US or Canada, preferably at a professional meeting; should an AUS/NZ forensic document examiner choose to appeal any phase of ABFDE testing, and select the option of an oral presentation, this must also occur within the US or Canada; while the application fee would remain the same, an additional \$50 USD would be charged to offset administrative costs such as mailing; and a liaison would be established to assist the Credentials Committee in answering any questions regarding equivalencies in education or training.



**Administrative Office**

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[www.abfde.org](http://www.abfde.org)

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**ABFDE Testing Schedule**

The written and oral boards will be offered at the following national and regional forensic document conferences:

**September 2012      MAFS, Milwaukee, WI**

Testing may also be available at other regional conferences during the year. If interested, contact Testing Chair Lisa Hanson at [Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us](mailto:Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us).

