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We Understand How Hawaii Works

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Chaminade leads the way in forensic science study

By **Debbie Sokei**

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There is a growing interest in studying maggots at Chaminade University.

The buzz circles around Lee Goff professor and specialist in forensic science.

How Hawaii Works

The **need** for **specialists** in **forensic science** will grow in the next five years.



When Goff joined the Chaminade faculty in 2001 he started the undergraduate forensic science program.

Since then, enrollment has jumped from 20 students to 90 students enrolling this fall.

"It seems to be taking off not only here but across the country," he said.

Goff said interest in the field of forensic science began to grow following the Miranda vs. Arizona case where the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that police can no longer rely solely on

coerced confessions. The use of evidence to corroborate investigations became more important, he said.

"The emphasis shifted from the confession of the suspect to more reliance on evidence," Goff said.

Also, forensic science-based TV shows such as "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and "Crossing Jordan" made it hip to be in those fields.

But fellow faculty members credit Goff for the Chaminade program's popularity.

"Goff is well respected in the field of forensic science," said Ron Becker, who teaches CSI H2O, an underwater forensic science class, and is the director of the master's in criminal justice program at Chaminade.

Goff's résumé includes working with local law enforcement officials, including the FBI, and he's a consultant for the "CSI" TV series. The lead character in the show, Gil Grissom, is an entomologist, just like Goff, who dabbles in the world of forensics. In fact, several of the plots for the shows came out of the book "A Fly for the Prosecution," that Goff wrote three years ago.

Chaminade is one of only eight U.S. universities to offer forensic science programs, and the number of students graduating every year is not enough to fill the demand. In the next five years 10,000 new entry-level positions will be created. The starting salary is \$40,000, Goff said.

Chaminade's first graduating class won't hit the work force until 2004 or 2005. It takes about four years of courses in chemistry, biochemistry, biology, calculus, physics and statistics to graduate with a bachelor's degree in forensic science.

To support the fast-growing program, Chaminade is renovating the Henry Hall science facilities on campus at a cost of \$5.2 million. More faculty offices, classrooms and lab facilities will be built to accommodate the growing field, said Gary Cordova, vice president of Institutional Advancement.

The dry and wet labs cost from \$350,000 to \$450,000 each.

So far, \$1.1 million of the total renovation cost has been raised through private sources, including a \$600,000 grant from the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, \$100,000 from First Hawaiian Foundation and the balance from an unnamed mainland source.

Reach **Debbie Sokei** at 955-8042 or dsokei@bizjournals.com.



PHOTOS BY TINA YUEN ♦ PBN

Crime-buster

Lee Goff teaches forensic science, advises TV producers and helps the FBI solve crimes. He also is attracting students to his classes at Chaminade University.



Chaminade University professor Lee Goff has a hands-on approach to teaching forensic science that includes a combination of lecture, lab and internships.