



# NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General  
**Catherine Leahy Scott**

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## **NEW YORK STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL SCOTT ISSUES FINDINGS REGARDING ALLEGATIONS THAT SUNY ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES AND FORESTRY COLLEGE OPERATED AN UNACCREDITED FORENSIC LABORATORY**

*Investigation finds no impropriety by SUNY ESF, recommends tightening oversight to prevent unauthorized work by adjunct professors*

As part of her ongoing work to ensure the integrity of crime laboratories across New York State, Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott completed her [investigation](#) of the State University of New York College of Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF), which found that the college did not operate an unaccredited crime lab in violation of state law. Her investigation was in response to allegations referred to her by the New York State Commission on Forensic Science (Forensic Commission) that SUNY ESF was conducting gunshot residue tests at its Syracuse facility without proper accreditation or authorization.

In the course of her investigation, however, Inspector General Scott found that a Syracuse police detective Terrance McGinn – serving as adjunct professor to the college – conducted forensic casework on 11 cases from 2006 to 2011. McGinn ceased casework at the lab after Onondaga County District Attorney William Fitzpatrick raised concerns about McGinn’s work. The use of the SUNY ESF facilities to conduct such casework may have violated New York State Executive Law. A lab director who knowingly operates such a forensic lab without accreditation is subject to a fine of up to \$7,500.

The Inspector General’s investigation found that SUNY ESF was not officially connected to the casework and issued a memorandum to all faculty members that forensic casework should not be conducted without proper accreditation – and that the SUNY ESF lab did not have that accreditation. The designation of McGinn as an adjunct professor afforded him no legal rights or privileges at SUNY ESF.

Inspector General Scott also found that SUNY ESF should not have given the detective adjunct professor status without first conducting due diligence identifying the legal implications of his work.

“Recognizing how critically important forensic science is to the integrity of the criminal justice system, my office gave this matter lengthy and careful review and found that SUNY ESF did not violate state law when it permitted a police detective to use its facilities to conduct his own analyses,” said Inspector General Scott. “However, because the college gave the detective adjunct professor status, it created the mistaken appearance that it was sanctioning his work.”

As a result of her investigation, Inspector General Scott recommended that SUNY ESF review its current adjunct professor appointments to ensure that no such appointee is performing work that requires accreditation or any other authorization required by law. SUNY ESF has agreed to the recommendation, and has implemented it.

Forensic labs in New York State are subject to accreditation requirements established by the Forensic Commission and must be accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB). Pursuant to federal law, the New York State Inspector General's Office is designated to conduct independent investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct affecting the integrity of crime labs in New York State.

Inspector General Scott has referred her findings to the Forensic Commission and the Office of the New York State Attorney General for review. A copy of the report can be found [here](#).

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