



**Paralegal Studies Advisory Committee Meeting
November 13, 2018, 11:30 AM
Lee County Justice Center, Courtroom 1A**

In Attendance: Jessica Guth, Paralegal, Collier County Sheriff's Office; Kylie Troyer, CP, FRP, President, Paralegal Association of Florida, Southwest Chapter and Paralegal, Grant, Fridkin & Pearson; Sabrina Guerin, CP, FRP, Paralegal, Henderson, Franklin, Starnes, & Holt; Nickie Stewart, ACP, FRP, Paralegal, Henderson, Franklin, Starnes, & Holt; Dr. Richard Worch, Department Chair of Public Safety Programs, FSW; Lee County Judge Andrew Swett, 20th Judicial Circuit Court and FSW Adjunct Faculty; Keith Grossman, Attorney; Dr. Mary Conwell, Department Chair, Paralegal Studies, FSW; and Dr. Debbie Psihountas, Dean of the School of Business and Technology, FSW.

Welcome: Dr. Conwell welcomed all in attendance and thanked Judge Swett for hosting the meeting with self-introductions all around.

Honorable H. Andrew Swett's Opening Remarks: Judge Swett stated that he is currently the chair of the canvassing board for the recount of votes in Lee County for the Governor, Senate, and Secretary of Agriculture positions. The deadline for the recount is Thursday, November 15 and Lee County should be able to meet the deadline. He also mentioned that he has been an adjunct in the Criminal Justice and Paralegal Studies programs for the past five years at FSW.

Introduction of Dr. Debbie Psihountas, SoBT Dean: Dr. Psihountas also welcomed everyone and mentioned that she started working for FSW as Dean of the School of Business and Technology in July of this year. She is hoping to breathe new life into the programs of Business and Technology. She mentioned that they are proposing new electives, such as a cyberlaw course that could be included in the Paralegal Studies, Criminal Justice, and Computer programs. She also informed everyone that we will not be able to change the name of the program to Legal Studies due to the Florida Department of Education frameworks, but, we will be renaming the department as the Department of Legal Studies, Architectural Design, Engineering, and Construction Management. Professor Conwell has graciously agreed to include the other programs in her department chair duties. She is also interim chair of the Computer programs until a permanent chair is chosen.

Dr. Psihountas also stated that in the past few years the School of Business and Technology tried an overall advisory meeting with program specific breakout meetings. Since these meetings were not successful or convenient for advisory committee members to attend, we are now going back to the individual advisory committee meetings. Dr. Psihountas said that the program appreciates all of the members' time and is hoping for input and advice on how to educate our students to work in the real world.

Review of Minutes: Professor Conwell initiated a review of the minutes from the previous meeting on April 5, 2018.

There was a motion to approve the minutes.

The motion was seconded.

There were no objections.

Motion was approved.

Updating Paralegal Studies Curriculum: At a recent conference that Professor Conwell attended, she learned that other programs were adding new courses such as bankruptcy, immigration law, and e-discovery/e-filing training. A discussion ensued about adding e-discovery/e-filing to the Law Office Management course or maybe to Litigation. E-filing is fairly easy to learn with videos, manuals, and forms that are already available, so the consensus is that it does not need to be a separate course.

Another topic suggestion to be included in the Law Office Management course was technology and software. Professor Conwell asked the group what software they were using since it was mentioned that there is a movement for the use of client management software. Excel, ProDocs, Cleo, and Panther was mentioned. She also asked the committee members whether they used Westlaw or Lexis Nexis. Most replied that they used Westlaw. One member said that he uses Fastcase that is available through his Florida Bar membership for basic research and hires an independent contractor to research in depth.

There was a discussion about a review course for the NALA paralegal certification which includes five exams. The NALA website includes webinars and mock exams. The format for the exams has changed this year. It was mentioned going through the certification process would help students understand what is required on the job.

Open Educational Resources: One of the sessions Professor Conwell attended at the AAFPE Conference a few weeks ago was about the movement towards open educational resources (OER). Many college bookstores are putting all of the information together for sale to students. This would be considered a custom book. This past summer, Professor Matt Hoffman, redeveloped the Business Law course without a textbook and using cases, statutes, and contracts. He developed the Canvas shell with everything the student needed in the shell which eliminated the need for the student to purchase anything. We have discovered that students here endure economic hardships and they do not buy textbooks or buy outdated editions from discount sellers. The use of OER helps to promote current cases and trends in the legal environment.

Paralegal Certificate: Should we add post AA and post baccalaureate certificates? Students who have previous degrees would only have to complete the paralegal core courses which total 43 credits. They would save 21 credit hours and this would save them time. One question raised was whether they could qualify for the NALA exam to become a certified paralegal with the completion of this certificate?

American Association for Paralegal Education (AAFPE) National Convention: Professor Conwell attended the AAFPE National Conference in Newport, Rhode Island in early November. She attended many sessions including open educational resources, mediation, and implementing student study abroad programs.

Publication in *The Legal Educator*: Professor Conwell's legal research article, "Effectively Teaching Case Briefing" was included in the Fall/Winter 2018 edition of *The Legal Educator*. The article was based on her presentation about the same topic at the 2017 national conference of the American Association for

Paralegal Education in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is quite an honor to have an article chosen for publication in such a prestigious publication and reflects well on FSW.

ABA Site Team: Professor Conwell was a site team member for the ABA Re-approval of a Midwestern college. This was an extremely rewarding professional experience that will enhance FSW's Paralegal Studies Program.

Paralegal Internships: The Paralegal Studies program has a required internship course included in the core courses. All students must complete this course in order to graduate. They are required to complete 18 hours of core paralegal studies courses before they are allowed to enroll in the course. Lately, there has been a high attrition rate of students enrolled in the course and not completing the assignments required. The students are at the finish line but cannot complete the course. Most of our students in the past have found great jobs in their internship.

Our program is ABA approved which gives it a mark of distinction. The ABA requires an internship. Professor Conwell would like to have internships in place to help students who are not able to find an agency or law firm where they could complete their internship. We have a list of law firms and agencies who have helped out in the past which we share with students. Professor Conwell would like to set up a mentor board of paralegals who would be willing to mentor students enrolled in an internship course.

Possible reasons for failing to complete the internship include the student experiencing personal hardships and that the internship is at a law firm which practices and area of the law that they discover that they do not like or enjoy.

Professor Conwell explained that Kylie Troyer of the Paralegal Association of Florida has recently been a guest speaker in 3 of Mary's classes. She was well-received by the students. Kylie introduced students to the Trawicks forms and civil procedures. The experience was outstanding and inspirational to students and some of the more experienced students asked questions. One question was how long should you expect to be in an entry level job and the answer was 2 years. In a discussion regarding guest speakers, it was suggested that a mix of lawyers and paralegals would be helpful to students as well as paralegals specific to the area of law of the course.

Another guest speaker was prominent family law attorney Keith Grossman who spoke to Professor Conwell's Family Law class last week about the complexities of dissolution of marriage and alimony in Florida. Students reported that Mr. Grossman's presentation was an invaluable addition to their legal education.

Paralegal Skills: A discussion on the essential skills for paralegals ensued. Skills the members mentioned that are vital include the following:

- Basic understanding of terminology or legal jargon
- Office skills
- English skills
- Business etiquette
- For litigation, need to know where to find procedural rules
- Knowledge of statutes
- Drafting documents and letters
- Communication skills
- Must be flexible and able to go with the flow

- Ability to prioritize

Closing Remarks: Professor Conwell thanked all for attending the meeting and welcomed any emails regarding suggestions for the Paralegal Studies Program.