



Paralegal Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Lee County Justice Center, Courtroom 1A
April 15, 2019 - 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

In Attendance: William Shuluk, Library Director, Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW); Mary Conwell, Department Chair of Paralegal Studies, FSW; Matthew Hoffman, Professor of Paralegal Studies and Business, FSW; Jessica Guth, Paralegal, Collier County Sheriff's Office; Richard Worch, Department Chair of Public Safety Programs, FSW; Sabrina Guerin, CP, FRP, Paralegal, Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt; Nickie Stewart, ACP, FRP, Paralegal, Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt; Jennifer Baker, Associate Dean of the School of Business and Technology (SoBT), FSW; Keith Grossman, Attorney; Debbie Psihountas, Dean of SoBT, FSW; Kylie Troyer, CP, FRP, President, Paralegal Association of Florida, Southwest Chapter and Paralegal, Grant, Fridkin & Pearson; Courtney Lovejoy, Attorney, Green, Schoenfeld & Kyle; Bruce Green, Attorney, Green, Schoenfeld & Kyle and Lee County Judge Andrew Swett, 20th Judicial Circuit Court and FSW Adjunct Faculty.

Judge Swett's Opening Remarks: Judge Swett welcomed all in attendance and started the meeting with self-introductions around.

Approval of Fall 2018 Minutes: After a review of the previous meeting minutes, there was a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded. The motion to approve the fall 2018 meeting minutes was approved.

Updating Paralegal Studies Curriculum New Cyberlaw Course: Professor Matthew Hoffman, JD, MBA, has developed a Cyberlaw course which will debut in the spring 2020 semester. This course may serve as a feeder into Criminal Justice, Paralegal Studies, Crime Scene Technology, or Computer programs in the School of Business and Technology. Professor Hoffman has been working with Dr. Teed, Dean of the School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences to promote the course as an elective for Associate of Arts degree-seeking students.

Metrics: Dr. Psihountas mentioned that we have a new brochure which includes student testimonials and is relative to all programs in the School of Business and Technology (SoBT). The department is also developing handouts which will be able to be modified quickly and will be printed in house.

We are also taking a broad look at data from Institutional Research regarding courses with high DWF rates which means courses with a high rate of students receiving a grade of D or F or withdrawing from the course. Unfortunately, SoBT has the highest incidence of any other department at the college. It was mentioned that some students come to the first class only, do not withdraw, and receive an "F" in the course. We cannot force a student to attend class or withdraw from it. The Paralegal Internship class is

one of the courses on the list, which we had discussed in the last meeting. The department is working on developing mentorships as a means to assisting students to complete the course.

Spring 2019 American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) Regional Conference: Professor Conwell recently traveled to Chicago to attend the AAfPE Regional Conference. She commented that the conference was quite informative and intense. The following include some of the discussions of importance from the conference.

Emerging Paralegal Career Opportunities: An emerging opportunity for paralegals includes a trend that the position of legal software vendor and sales representative are filled frequently by paralegals who train law firms and law schools on how to use the software. The software also enables paralegals to freelance their research skills to lawyers and law firms by submitting case briefs, case citations, summaries, and drafted documents via a drop box. This reinforces the need for paralegals to develop technical competence and factual research.

College Students' Food Insecurity: There were discussions at the conference that included food insecurity that students are experiencing. Many colleges have created food pantries on campus to help students with food issues. Professor Conwell mentioned her interest into investigating whether or not the Lee campus could start a food pantry. She also mentioned that in the past, some paralegal students were not able to join the LEX Honor Society because they could not afford the induction fee.

Paralegal Skills Law Firms Seek and Advisory Board Suggestions: A discussion ensued about the skills that paralegals need to acquire. Excellent Word, PowerPoint, and Excel were mentioned plus knowing how to submit documents for eDiscovery. Participants were asked "What do you look for in a new hire?" It was mentioned that the ability to check citations using Westlaw and using the Table of Authorities were mentioned. In this point and time, there is still a need to know how to research, though print materials are becoming more and more obsolete. It was also suggested that soft skills and the ability to speak well with finesse is also important for paralegals. Other suggestions included the following: how to use Adobe, how to redact a document, removing key metadata before e-discovery, and how important it is to be detail oriented.

Participants commented that knowing how to use legal software, including Cleo, Time Matters, Amicus, and Word docs is important. Software systems tend to vary from one firm to the other. Perhaps we need to update Law Office Management to include more technology with software trials. It was mentioned that employers look at soft skills first such as cheerfulness, willingness to work, and enthusiasm and then look at other legal skills. For entry level positions, they assume that they do not have experience concerning legal matters but they are willing to teach them. They stress knowing the basics but the employee must be able to fit in at the firm.

In one of the AAfPE conference lectures, the following were mentioned that employers in the past complained about from job applicants: lack of enthusiasm, not researching the firm, not memorizing their resume, and interrupting the interviewer and as a result, do not answer correctly. Interviewees make the mistake of not knowing their resume's information such as dates or duties performed. It was also discussed that employees need great communication skills. Personal thank you notes for meetings and interviews are expected.

The Paralegal Studies program addresses interview skills in the introduction class and the internship class. Both include resume and cover letter assignment requirements. Perhaps adding mock interviews

would add assistance to student's skills. Dr. Psihountas added that she was hoping to create a career planning and placement research center which would assist students with mock interviews, etiquette, dressing for success, and how to go the extra step and follow through. FSW used to have a career office in the past.

American Bar Association Site Visit by Mary Conwell: Professor Conwell also completed her 2nd site visit for the ABA. She recently traveled to a college in Peoria, Illinois. Since Caterpillar moved their headquarters and other manufacturers left, the Peoria area has lost a significant number of higher paying jobs in the last few years. We are fortunate that Florida has not experienced the loss in paralegal jobs recently.

American Bar Association Interim Report – Summer 2019: The ABA Interim report is due in July 2019. Professor Conwell and Jill De Valk have already been working on completing the requirements.

Upcoming Conferences: Professor Conwell stated that she would be interested in attending the ABA Technology Conference in Chicago, February 2020. The AAFPE National Conference will be held in Detroit, Michigan in October 2019 and the Regional Conference will be located in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in April 2020.

Additional Comments: Professor Conwell stated that she plans on reaching out to more law firms to secure more internships. Mr. Green has offered an internship for students interested in estate and taxing. Some creative ideas for internships were mentioned including the Guardian Ad Litem, Collier County Sheriff's Office, Chicos, Florida Cancer, Lee Memorial, or any of the local school districts. Any of our area big employers have legal departments. We plan on having standing internships to make it easier for students to secure an internship. Henderson Franklin, Matthew Hoffman, Shawn Seliger and Judge Swett have all provided internships for our students. She stated that at the AAFPE conference, it was mentioned that Beacon Hill Staffing in Chicago had recently placed a paralegal with ten years of experience at a salary of \$200,000 in the legal area of estates.

Regarding students not able to join the LEX Honor Society, it was discussed that perhaps we could secure sponsorship from the following: US Legal Support, Veritex, court reporter, or Thomson Reuters (Westlaw).

Judge Swett thanked all for their participation and the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting minutes interpreted and reported by Jill De Valk.