

Paralegal Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Lee County Justice Center, Courtroom 1A
November 20, 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; Nickie Stewart, ACP, FRP, Paralegal, Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt; Jennifer Baker, Associate Dean of the School of Business and Technology (SoBT), FSW; Debbie Psihountas, Dean of SoBT, FSW; Kylie Dror, CP, FRP, President, Paralegal Association of Florida, Southwest Chapter and Paralegal, Grant, Fridkin & Pearson; Shawn Seliger, Law Office of Shawn Seliger; 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. Professor Conwell expressed special thanks to Judge Swett, Shawn Seliger, Henderson Franklin, and Matt Hoffman for taking on our students as interns. She added that Henderson Franklin has donated the funds to sponsor two Lex Honor Society candidates in the Spring semester.

Approval of April 15, 2019 Minutes: After a review of the previous meeting minutes, there was a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded with no objections. The motion to approve the spring 2018 meeting minutes carried.

Proposed Real Estate Paralegal College Credit Certificate: The Real Estate Paralegal CCC is on the Curriculum Committee schedule on December 6, 2019 for approval. This certificate is 12 credits and includes the following courses: Introduction to Paralegal Studies, Business Law, Real Estate Law, and Wills, Estates, and Probate Administration. This would be an option for experienced paralegals who may not want to complete an Associate degree.

Mentoring Paralegal Students: In order to encourage paralegal students and show them what it's like to be a paralegal, a discussion ensued about partnering students with law firms. Kylie Dror mentioned that the Paralegal Association of Florida, Southwest, would be happy to provide the opportunity.

SoBT Career Fairs: Jennifer Baker stated that SoBT recently hosted career fairs on November 7 and November 14. On each night a total of 18 businesses or agencies signed up to attend. The November 7 fair consisted of law enforcement agencies, law firms, architectural and engineering firms. November 14 hosted Insurance, computer, and general business companies. This career fair was the first such job fair hosted by SoBT for our students. Based on feedback, in the spring 2020 semester, we will schedule the fair on one day to expose other disciplines to all industries. We are hoping for more participation by businesses and students.

Internship Opportunities: Currently, we have Paralegal internships and opportunities along the hallway in the first floor of K Building. It was mentioned that perhaps we could add all internship opportunities to the electronic boards.

AAfPE National Conference: Professor Conwell recently attended the AAfPE National Conference in Detroit, Michigan. She learned that our paralegal studies program is in good shape. The typical enrollment is 90 to 100 students. One of our problems is that the students have not declared that Paralegal Studies is their primary degree. One of the sessions that Mary attended was Teaching Law and Fake News. It was stated that younger students have a more difficult time distinguishing from fake news.

ABA Site Team Visit: Professor Conwell has been honored for the fourth time as part of a site team to visit a large college in the Houston area in the spring semester 2020.

Major ABA guideline changes: All courses can be online but 9 hours must be synchronous. Currently, 10 hours must be traditional. The general issue is that the younger students need to learn how to compete with older students who have been working in the field.

Dr. Psihountas mentioned that we need to retrain these different generations. The first day of class, hand out fake emails and have them determine what not to do. Perhaps by role playing as part of the grade in the class. Perhaps mentors could help build the social and communication skills of the students. It was mentioned that we have a duty to communicate their way. Professor Hoffman stated that he initially reaches out to his students by text. It was discussed that students prefer hybrid courses the best with the exception of first time in college students and first-generation college students.

FSW Advising Issues: General advisors steer to AA programs. To help correct this problem, AS advisors are educating the general AA advisors, which is a work in progress.

Mental Health Services – The lack of mental health services available to students in the state of Florida is not good. There is a great stigma that if you go to counseling there is something wrong with you, so students choose not to seek help. They are afraid to be labeled as crazy. It is mandatory at Broward that each student seek 20 hours of mental health training. Florida is 49th in the nation for mental health. Lee Health has teamed with the Home Front for Veterans and their families. They are able to seek free health assistance. Judge Swett mentioned that the Rapid Response Court is quick to get veterans with real mental issues into treatment.

AAfPE Conferences: Professor Conwell mentioned that she will be attending the following AAfPE conferences in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and Seattle Washington next year.

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

Meeting minutes interpreted and reported by Jill De Valk.