

FSW Paralegal Studies, Architecture, Construction Management, and Engineering Technology Programs
Breakout Meeting – September 11, 2020 2 pm – 3 pm

In Attendance: Elizabeth Schott, John Montoya, Mary Conwell, Matt Hoffman, Sandi Towers, and
Caroline Siefert

2020-21 Assessments

Professor Conwell stressed the urgency because of the upcoming SACS deadline for the need to collect assessment data during the Fall 2020 Semester from classes in the Paralegal Studies, Architecture, Construction, & Engineering Programs. To focus on the two selected competencies of Investigate and Evaluate, Law Office Management from the Paralegal Studies Program and some Architecture, Construction & Engineering (ACE) courses will be chosen this semester. Professors in these courses will select the assignments to be assessed.

Because the regular ACE assessments relate to particular questions embedded in assignments/exams, data has been difficult or impossible to collect. A meeting has been scheduled with Dr. Van Gaalen, Professor Montoya, and Department Chair Conwell to address these issues.

Professor Conwell reminded those in attendance about updating and/or creating new rubrics for the Litigation, Paralegal Internship, and Legal Research & Writing 1 courses in the Paralegal Studies Program. Input from full-time and adjunct paralegal faculty is welcome for this project.

Bookstore Issues

Across all disciplines, students during the Fall 2020 Semester have had problems purchasing their textbooks from the FSW Bookstore. Sometimes the FSW Bookstore cannot give a date when the textbooks will be available. Students are turning to other sources for their textbooks. Professor Conwell requested that professors email her with any bookstore issues.

Library Liaison

Librarian Bill Shuluk is the assigned go-to librarian for SoBT. SoBT professors are encouraged to reach out to Librarian Shuluk for their resource and research needs. Within SoBT itself, Jill De Valk is a librarian who can meet faculty resource and research needs as well, especially in the Paralegal Studies area as she has an undergraduate degree in Legal Studies and has been integral in ensuring compliance with ABA approval standards.

Responding to Students

All faculty were reminded to respond to student emails and telephone calls as soon as possible.

Increasing Paralegal Studies Program Enrollment

SoBT Retention & Student Services Coordinator Caroline Siefert was invited to attend the breakout meeting to provide her perspective and offer advice on increasing the enrollment in the Paralegal Studies Program. She informed everyone that the general academic advisors have been informed about directing prospective students into the A.S. in Paralegal Studies Program. She pointed out that paralegal

students are generally older and working in law offices. Ms. Siefert said the ABA approval status of FSW's Paralegal Studies Program is a big seller and very important to attracting students. The flexibility of the AA appeals to many students versus an AS degree. That said, there is very healthy enrollment in the PLA courses as acknowledged by all the Paralegal Studies professors at the meeting. Professor Matt Hoffman observed that it is hard to figure out which students are AA and AS. Coordinator Siefert emphasized that to promote the A.S. in Paralegal Studies program, SoBT needs to utilize social media more. She provided SoBT's Instagram handle, fwsobt. It was agreed that Instagram is one of the main sources of information for students under 30. Professor Conwell wants the A.S. in Paralegal Studies Program aggressively promoted on Instagram. She also wants advisors and Paralegal Studies faculty to steer students into the A.S. in Paralegal Studies. The success of the Paralegal Real Estate Certificate and e-Discover Certificate for the Fall 2020 Semester was discussed with an eye to incorporating the Legal Technology Certificate from legal studies innovator Doug Lusk into a course during the Spring 2021 Semester.

Coordinator Siefert advocated increasing the number of Paralegal Studies students from Collier and Charlotte counties. One approach that she suggested was contacting law firms in those two counties and having them email her regarding their needs. She also said that she has been heavily promoting the mini-B online Business Law course that will be taught by Professor Conwell later this semester because there are few mini-B paralegal courses available. Perhaps increasing the number of mini-B paralegal classes should be explored if there is a need and demand by students.

It was noted by Professor Schott that ACE enrollment has been going down significantly for some time. There is renewed optimism that this will turn around with the arrival of full-time Professor John Montoya. Also, Al Nault, who advises the ACE students, will be invited to the next breakout meeting to share his impressions about recruiting more students into the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering Programs. For all SoBT associate degree programs, there needs to be much more promotion of the bachelor degree programs offered by SoBT.

Miscellaneous Matters

There was brief mention that Professor Hoffman, Program Support Specialist Jill De Valk, and Professor Conwell will attend the national American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) conference in November. For the first time, the conference will be virtual.

The meeting was promptly adjourned at 3 pm.