FSW PARALEGAL STUDIES, ARCHITECTURE, CONSTRUCTION, & ENGINEERING PROGRAMS BREAKOUT MEETING FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2024 1:30 PM – 3 PM ZOOM

In Attendance: Professor Mary Conwell; Professor Matt Hoffman; Professor Munir Al-Suleh; Professor Leah Miller; Professor Sandi Towers

The following topics were discussed at the January 2024 breakout meeting.

1. Increasing enrollment and retention. For the Paralegal Studies Program, one way of increasing enrollment and retention is to put all Paralegal Studies courses online. The doctoral dissertation of Kristine Farmer, Ph.D., on this topic convinced the American Bar Association to allow all online paralegal programs several years ago. It may not be appropriate, though, for all the classes in the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering Programs to go totally online because of the hands-on nature of these areas. Professor Munir Al-Suleh will suggest appropriate modalities of course delivery for his areas. Professor Munir Al-Suleh has completed extensive work updating the programs in his area, including the courses and syllabi. These updates will be presented at the February 2024 FSW Curriculum Committee meeting for approval. For increasing overall FSW enrollment and retention, Chair Conwell suggested to Dean Mary Myers recently that FSW’s marketing department contact The College Tour for a half-hour episode to be filmed showcasing the excellent programs and education FSW has to offer.
2. Unsocial students. All five professors have observed that many current students lack social skills, are very quiet, and seem unable to make small talk. Professor Matt Hoffman stated that it takes several classes to get students to open up. He also mentioned that students are unaware of current events. Professor Munir Al-Suleh said that it is a challenge to get students to work on a team or participate in a group project.
3. Program name change. The four paralegal professors agreed that the Paralegal Studies Program’s name needs to be changed to or incorporate Legal Studies because so many students plan to attend law school. Professor Hoffman cautioned it may be difficult to make program changes right now because FSW is in the process of switching accreditation to HLC. Also, FGCU might object to a name change as a sign of program duplication. However, Florida State College at Jacksonville renamed its paralegal program Legal Studies (Paralegal Studies), thus providing precedent for such a name change. An added benefit of incorporating Legal Studies into the program’s name would be increasing program enrollment and retention.
4. Artificial Intelligence (AI). Professor Hoffman is in favor of using AI, especially because it is here and not going away. Students should use AI to create study notes. Professor Miller predicted that AI will not take over jobs, but paralegals need to use AI or they will become obsolete.
5. Business Law. Professors Towers and Hoffman are working on revising Business Law. They will collaborate on selecting the next paralegal courses to revise after Business Law.
6. Professors Hoffman and Towers were unable to access Westlaw during the first week of class. They need Westlaw access as soon as possible.
7. LinkedIn. Professor Leah Miller introduced her students to LinkedIn and explained how to effectively use it to promote their career goals.

The breakout session was adjourned.