**Florida SouthWestern State College
School of Business and Technology
Paralegal Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
(October 17, 2023)
MINUTES**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Present** | **Absent** | **Excused** |
| **Administration** |  |  |  |
| Dr. Mary Myers, Dean | X |  |  |
| Jennifer Baker | X |  |  |
| **Faculty & Staff** |  |  |  |
| Dr. Mary Conwell | X |  |  |
| Matthew Hoffman | X |  |  |
| Mary Fullenkamp | X |  |  |
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|  | **Present** | **Absent** | **Excused** |
| **Board Members** |  |  |  |
| Howard Swett | X |  |  |
| Jim McLaughlin | X |  |  |
| Leah Miller | X |  |  |
| Nicki Stewart | X |  |  |
| Sabrina Guerin | X |  |  |
| Casandra Elg | X |  |  |
| Jessica Guth | X |  |  |
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**Call to Order.** Dean Mary Myers called the meeting to order at 11:44PM.

**Minutes.** Minutes of the last meeting were approved as submitted.

**Unfinished Business.** No unfinished business was brought before the committee.

**New Business.**

Enrollment

* Our Paralegal program has good overall enrollment retention and growth.
* Our Paralegal program is in good standing with state frameworks.
* SoBT was very popular at our latest Open House event.
* SoBT’s overall enrollment numbers are up.

Main Goal for the Paralegal program: advertising & promoting

There is a need for Paralegals in Charlotte county – is there in Ft. Myers and Cape Coral?

* Board members said yes, there is a need in Ft. Myers and Cape Coral.
* Economic obstacles keep paralegals out of these jobs: wages, housing, & transportation.
* Potential to fund buses for bringing students to and from FSW campuses
* Dr. Conwell has done a good job creating blended courses to meet the needs of our working students.

Question Raised: where are our Paralegal graduates going, if not economically able to stay local?

* Many stay in SWFL but jump between jobs due to low wages.
* Some leave the area.
* Some move on to earn advanced degrees.
* Housing is an issue for those jumping between jobs.
* Housing is a contributing factor in many cases of graduates leaving SWFL.

Leah Miller presented the opportunity of virtual paralegal jobs

* Candidates need experience for these jobs.
* Candidates should have some established connections within the industry (LinkedIn is an ideal space for doing so).
* Students would benefit from engagement with LinkedIn through coursework – maybe a module.

Marketing

* Mary Fullenkamp is working on new program sheets.
* Marketing and Admissions are now under IT.
* Please volunteer any marketing ideas and/or events our advisors should attend.

Workforce Education

* This new department has taken over recruitment, career fairs, and grant funding.
* WIOA funding is available to many of our students (mostly tech programs, no paralegal).
* We will share the link for more info – please share with anyone you think might be interested.
* Because paralegal is high skill, high wage we are actively pursuing funding.
* RMI certifications are available (through courses) to all students through WIOA.
* SoBT is prioritizing graduating students debt-free & with industry certifications.

Insurance Village

* 268 consumers were helped and $4,346,257 was paid.
* Will be bringing an office of the Division of Insurance Agent & Agency Services to Ft. Myers.
* Will directly employ our AS students who receive RMI certification.

The next Career Fair will take place in March

* Sign-ups are now extended through Workforce Education Department.
* Jennifer Baker will make sure board members are invited & in the loop as we make this transition.

FSW’s Career Center will be launching soon

* We hope this will help to emphasize and teach interview/employability soft skills to students entering the workforce.

Retention Initiative

* Dr. Conwell: course updates are in the works (especially Business Law)
	+ Professor Sandi Towers is preparing to make these updates.
* We would like to incorporate “law studies” into the program/courses in order to attract more to potential students.
* On AI: there is a general consensus that attorneys who are comfortable with AI could use it to take on more cases and increase productivity.
	+ Most use of AI in the field would likely pertain to drafting different types of documents
	+ Human eyes are still needed for proofreading.
	+ Professor Hoffman emphasized that the use of AI in this field is most applicable to menial day-to-day tasks.
* Judge Swett points out that AI could be useful in this regard but there still needs to be a focus on ensuring paralegal students learn to write and reference their work thoroughly.
* FileVine software (currently used) has similar capabilities.
* Effective Use, Policy, & Procedures:
	+ Very debated within FSW
	+ AI has already been used by students for cheating – how do we asses?
	+ AI has been successfully implemented into coursework – need to continue monitoring.

What does the industry need? What are we not offering?

* Training on case management systems: potential to partner with one
* Coursework on Outlook (we do cover MOS & give these certifications; Comp Science professors are currently looking into how Outlook can fit into this)
* Leah Miller might be an avenue for looking into a case management system (she is a rep for one)
* Office Management skills are crucial for paralegals: Leah Miller emphasizes that this course was the most useful throughout her education at FSW

Jennifer Baker encouraged board members to share both good and bad observations of how/where we can improve.

Question: feedback from students on the program?

* They seem to love it
* Professor Towers’ Legal Studies club does very well and is very active

Question: Are Hodges students coming to FSW/being recruited?

* These students tend to try to get into universities first; those who don’t usually migrate to us
* We have done some recruiting but so are other schools
* Their Physical Therapy program is now largely on our Charlotte campus

Question: Is there any interest in a pre-law track at FSW?

* There is but we have to be careful in developing one because FGCU has one

Professor Hoffman points out that AI can be used to create a LinkedIn page to get students started

* Can improve it throughout the rest of their coursework
* Leah Miller is very knowledgeable on LinkedIn—feel free to contact her with any inquiries.

Building K will be ready for move-in in April

* This will be FSW most student-centered space: highly engaging

American Bar Association has changed in-person their in-person requirement to allow for synchronous online courses as well – could bring in long-distance students (also caters to our working students)

* First Zoom marketing event (with out-of-district students) will be held soon.

**Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 12:39PM.

Mary Fullenkamp, Coordinator