**Florida SouthWestern State College
School of Business and Technology
Paralegal Advisory Board Meeting
(February 18, 2025)
MINUTES**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Present** | **Absent** | **Excused** |
| **Administration** |  |  |  |
| Dr. Mary Myers, Dean | X |  |  |
| Jennifer Baker | X |  |  |
| Mary Fullenkamp | X |  |  |
| **Faculty** |  |  |  |
| Dr. Mary Conwell | X |  |  |
| Matthew Hoffman | X |  |  |
| Sandi Towers Romero | X |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Advisory Board Members** |  |  |  |
| Jim McLaughlin | X |  |  |
| Casandra Elg | X |  |  |
| Teresa Anders | X |  |  |
| Katie Valdez | X |  |  |
| Sabrina Guerin | X |  |  |
| Rosemarie Mitchell | X |  |  |
| Michael McHugh | X |  |  |
| Keith Grossman |  | X |  |
| Jessica Tavery |  |  | X |
| David Holmes |  | X |  |
| Leah Miller |   | X |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Present** | **Absent** | **Excused** |
| **Advisory Board Members cont.**  |  |  |  |
| Jim Myers |  |  | X |
| Jennifer Teitelbaum |  |  | X |
| Yolanda Flores |  | X |  |
| Wendy Dettman |   |  | X |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 11:30AM.

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

**New Business.**

**Introductions**

**Workforce Recruitment**

* Open House, On-site recruitment, and Career Fair are currently ongoing.
	+ Career Fair sign-up link will be sent to Advisory Board members.
	+ Casandra Elg shows support for these efforts and notes that interview preparation/soft skills is highly needed before students enter the workforce.

**Program Review**

* Dr. Conwell makes note of:
	+ Pg. 3 – we saw a decrease in headcount both semesters.
		- Dr. Conwell spoke with 88 current students about their experiences in the program.
	+ Pg. 5 – the Paralegal program serves more female students than male.
	+ Pg. 7 – Dr. Conwell makes the distinction that the AS Program is ABA accredited, the CCC is not.
		- Longer completion rates are often due to students’ personal circumstances and commitments outside of school (work, family, health, etc.)
	+ Pg. 11 – A 76% success rate is accurate for challenging curriculum
	+ Pg. 12 – Dr. Conwell notes that employer surveys suggest that our graduates are well-prepared.
	+ Pg. 15 – Dr. Conwell suggests that faculty may need to take a look at troublesome areas such as CGS 1100 for potential adjustment/replacement in future curriculum changes.
* This data is key in identifying effectiveness as well as potential areas for modification.
	+ This is how we gauge what does/doesn’t work for our students needs and success.

**Advisory Board Suggestions**: Advertising the program as “Legal Studies” instead of “Paralegal” might be more widely appealing to help increase enrollment.

* Completion data was better during Covid due to the convenience of online classes (Pg. 7 of program review).
* Courses offered in Fall/Spring only can hold students back.
	+ It is noted that the ABA face-to-face 9 credit hour requirement can be met via synchronous online courses.

**Discussion**

* Cassandra Elg suggests that online coursework would reflect her own remote work experience in the field—online coursework would not come off as a hinderance/weakness to all potential employers.
	+ She also notes that there seems to be more females than males working in the field, as was reflected in the Program Review gender-related data.
	+ Elg states that schedule flexibility/needs of our students should be acknowledged—this may mean incorporating more synchronous online courses.
* Judge Michael McHugh agrees that Live Online learning could be significantly beneficial to both the program and students’ success. He notes that in-person experience is still of importance.
* Associate Dean Baker mentions that, if the program moved to a “Legal Studies” name, we would need to be very careful about ensuring students know it is not a track to law school.
	+ “Legal Assistant” verbiage might be a possibility.
	+ We need to ensure we do not copy an FGCU track/program.
	+ We should ensure our verbiage matches the needs of future hiring business.
		- Would the program outcomes change to reflect the different position description?
		- It is suggested that “Paralegal” verbiage might come off as more professional—legal assistant positions are often more secretarial than paralegal positions.
		- Rosemarie Mitchell notes that there are no Paralegals in her office, only Legal Assistants—she states that our graduates would be suitable candidates for this position.
		- Cassandra Elg notes that, in her office, Legal Assistants do Paralegal work and secretarial work is done by another position.
		- Katie Valdez notes that the title is less important than the experience/knowledge that an FSW graduate/job candidate should be able to demonstrate.
* Associate Dean Baker poses that a majority of the program’s core outcomes are made up by AA/general studies with a healthy legal foundation.
	+ Judge Michael McHugh agrees and suggests that a lot of learning in this field is done on the job.
* Action Step: subcommittees will meet in zoom focus groups to navigate these potential changes and discuss methods for incorporating both traditional and modern needs within the fields.
	+ Professor Matthew Hoffman highlights that a valuable program should focus on getting graduates into the field efficiently.
		- Judge McHugh suggests AI as a topic of focus to produce exceptionally workforce-ready graduates.
		- Knowledge on AI and technology makes our graduates more appealing to older employers—it is worth discussing the risks and benefits of incorporating these topics.
	+ Advisory board members are encouraged to email Mary Fullenkamp if they’d like to join the subcommittee(s).
* Dean Mary Myers asks that board members nominate/suggests anyone they deem fitting to join the Advisory Board.
	+ She reminds them that we will soon be nominating a chair and co-chair of the board.

**Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Mary Fullenkamp, Coordinator