

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

September 6, 2012 – 5:00pm

Room 2-303

Epi-Center Campus

In attendance: Sean Scott, Christy Powers, Susan Demers, Deborah Eldridge, Bob Schumaker, Karen France, Nathan Suedmeyer, Karen McLead, Vitalia Shafer, Andy Gaunce, Ross Harrop, Rebecca Frank, Jane Helms, Ashley Caron, and Iryna Bandaryk.

The meeting was called to order at five pm. Dr. Christy Powers introduced Dr. Rachel Bennett as the new full-time professor in the program. Dr. Rachel Bennett then discussed initiatives that she has been working on to improve the Research & Writing courses in the program, including PLA1104, PLA2114, and PLA4116. Dr. Bennett explained that Focus Groups have been formed with both the professors and students to begin the conversation about what can be improved. Dr. Bennett also discussed the addition of Jowita Wysocka as a legal writing tutor and explained that prior to Prof. Wysocka's employment there had not been out of class writing support that focused on legal writing. Dr. Bennett also discussed that ways in which we are promoting Prof. Wysocka including creating a website for online scheduling and asking adjunct professors to encourage students to use Prof. Wysocka.

Dr. Christy Powers asked Iryna Bandaryk at what point in the program she thinks she might have utilized a legal writing tutor and Iryna indicated that she would have sought out a tutor after completing Advanced Legal Research.

Dr. Bennett also discussed proposals for two courses: Advanced Computerized Legal Research and Civil Trial Practice. Dr. Bennett explained that there is a need for the Advanced Computerized Legal Research course because there are students who already adequate research skills but would benefit greatly from instruction designed to increase efficiency and practice real world research projects. Dr. Bennett explained that the Civil Trial Practice will be an upper division course which builds on Civil Practice I with a heavy emphasis on preparing for trial.

Ms. Iryna Bandaryk commented that she would have really benefited from a Civil Trial Practice class because she did not know how to help a lawyer prepare for trial when she initially entered the workforce. She indicated that skills like preparing an exhibit list and preparing a trial notebook would have been very helpful.

Mr. Nathan Suedmeyer commented that he thinks this is an invaluable skill because lawyers don't focus on the requirements of the rules and the details when preparing for trial, and therefore, they must rely on their staff. Nathan also expressed a desire to guest speak in this course.

Dr. Christy Powers explained the College's "One College" initiative and the effort that is being made to improve college interaction with the workforce and help potential see SPC as a one stop shop for their education.

Dr. Powers also discussed the 5 X 180 Plan including the emphasis on all college employees receiving training to support students out of the classroom. Dean Demers added that this plan also includes a new counseling methodology, emphasis on students being able to monitor their progress towards a degree, and a revamping of the advising students receive.

Dr. Powers explained that there has been a slight decrease in enrollment and that has resulted in the need for a balancing act to provide an adequate number of courses for students to take without opening too many sections. Dean Demers added that SPC's overall enrollment is down about 7% but that this is just a leveling off after several years of strong enrollment increases. Dr. Powers explained that we are targeting a post-Baccalaureate program at the downtown campus to help boost enrollment. Dr. Powers explained that the downtown campus is thrilled to see our students on their campus and students are eagerly enrolling in classes that begin at 7:00am.

Dr. Powers issued a request for capstone projects and closed memorandums and asked Robert Schumaker to discuss his recent efforts in this arena. Mr. Schumaker explained that he had drafted 2 projects and in the process discovered that he enjoyed drafting them. Dr. Powers explained that the purpose of the Capstone Project is to help students transition from student to employee and the closed memorandums are used to prepare students for the CLA/CP exam.

Dr. Powers explained that while the CLA/CP exam is voluntary, students see it in a favorable light and realize that it is a way to show a potential employer that are competent. Dr. Powers indicated that our program's pass rates are quite high, although students frequently have to re-take the Communications portion of the exam. She explained that this portion of the exam is very difficult and Dr. Bennett and Dr. Powers both teach this area in an effort to improve student skills.

Karen McLead concurred and said that having to re-take the Communications portion of the exam is not specific to SPC student but is common amongst all exam takers.

Dr. Powers requested that members of the Advisory Committee volunteer to come in and observe classes. She asked Mr. Ross Harrop to share his experience of observing Dr. Bennett's Legal Research and Writing class. Mr. Harrop indicated that he thought Dr. Bennett did a god job of connecting to students at all levels. Mr. Harrop also indicated that he was glad to see that Dr. Bennett's class used online and print resources to learn.

Dean Demers indicated that the opinions of the Advisory Committee Members are very valuable because all other observers in our classrooms are interested parties. She explained that these comments help us to see what to and what not to do in the classroom.

Andy Gaunce asked what transactional courses we are offering. Prof. Sean Scott explained that that we offer Business Organizations which covers agency law and the different types of organizations, and Bankruptcy which focuses on being able to complete a Ch. 7 filing.

Dr. Powers also explained how out of over 70 applicants for Dr. Bennett's position, we retained one of the strongest interviewees, Sarah Rodriguez, for the PLA 2433 Business Organizations course. It was nice to pass it on to someone who practices in the area and for Dr. Scott to act as a mentor.

Dean Demers mentioned that the school has many types of business law classes, too many in fact. Prof. Deborah Eldrige agreed noting that there are business law classes for all sorts of programs including: photography, music, sustainability, and many more.

Ms. Iryna Bandaryk commented on the importance of teaching students applicable Florida laws in addition to Federal law, particularly with regard to the Civil Trial Practice and Civil Litigation courses. Dr. Bennett agreed and indicated that an effort should be made to encourage adjuncts to provide content from both. Ms. Karen McLead added that it is important not to skip the Federal information since that is the material covered on the CLA/CP exam.

Dean Demers asked for advice from members. Dr. Powers and Dr. Bennett will compose an online WITS survey to provide Committee Members with an opportunity to share any additional thoughts and ask about research tools.

This meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.