



ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE
PARALEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, February 28, 2019, EPITech Center, Largo, Florida
5:30pm-6:45pm

MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Dean Susan Demers, Rachel Bennett, Joseph Benavides, Deborah Eldridge, Darryl Henderson, Kaila Glaros, Melissa Solevilla, Candi James, Laura Marx, Andrew Sasso, Nate Suedemeyer, Heather Arbuckle, Vitalia Shafer, Ellen Poole, and Iryna Bandaryk

NOT PRESENT: Jason Nicholson, Rebecca Frank, Lisa Brody, Christy Powers, Ian Banks, Melissa Daun, Erika Hartman (unable to reach), Kandice Hyatt, Caitlein Jammo, Anona Johnson, Robert Schumaker, and Jason Stearns.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. at the EPITech Center, Largo, Florida.

Following roll call and introductions:

Dean Demers opened with a request for ideas to assist in marketing the programs and reaching potential students. She also explained that print and radio are no longer the best options for marketing.

Laura Marx commented that she has an employee working as a legal assistant who does not have the skill set to go farther. She explained that school would be a great option for her. Laura also indicated that she needs a very experienced paralegal to act as a lead in litigation, and during that process, she interviewed a current student who has been in the field for 17 years but would like to obtain a Paralegal Studies degree.

Other ideas for reaching potential students included:

- Chain emails
- Hosting an event that potential students could attend to meet faculty and current students
- Melissa Solevilla suggested using the event to market for internships as well
- There was some discussion about the viability of high school students and whether they are really informed enough to know that they want to pursue our programs
- Iryna Bandaryk mentioned that we should be targeting corporate counsel newsletters

- Offering CLEs for attorneys might be a good option. We could also consider:
 - Contacting Bar associations
 - Kaila Glaros suggested a PAF webinar (Patient Advocate Foundation); how to choose a paralegal program/why the degree would benefit you
 - Nathan Suedemeyer said that YLD (Young Lawyers Division) has revamped their information and would be a good place to connect
 - Darryl Henderson offered to place an ad in the City of Clearwater Chamber of Commerce Newsletter
 - Melissa Solevilla commented that there are two large career fairs in Pinellas County; Carey & Leisure has a table every year at both and would be happy to include our handouts.
 - Heather Arbuckle: asked if the program could utilize the digital arts program to create promotional videos.

Rachel Bennett introduced the committee members to the proposed AS Degree changes. The intent is to eliminate the selection of three out of six substantive topic tracks and require A.S. students to take all six substantive courses in order to complete the degree. Proposed Paralegal Studies Program Changes are attached.

Iryna Bandaryk asked whether these changes would have an impact on the BAS program. Rachel Bennett explained that it would only impact the teaching of technology because the students would be completing the NSLT certification (National Society for Legal Technology) in two lower-division courses, both of which are required for all three programs.

Nathan Suedemeyer commented that in his experience it is not so much that students need the exposure to the additional subject matters, but whether they can write well.

Other considerations regarding student needs were:

- Increased ability to interview for various firms
- Increased exposure to various areas of the law, which would be beneficial
- Writing well determines whether or not students can succeed in doing advanced work
- What can we provide to assist students in improving their writing skills?
 - Andy Sasso explained that employers cannot teach them to write, so writing is a critical skill for students to master prior to graduation
- Darryl Henderson shared that at recent meetings he has attended, employers in Pinellas County are much more concerned with potential employees' soft skills than knowledge. For example, good communication skills, being a responsible employee (attendance, appearance), business-appropriate social skills, etc.
- Deborah Eldridge asked if this is tied to the importance of team projects, and the group discussed this to a small extent

In furthering the conversation, Rachel Bennett asked, what are the things we are missing? What hands-on things should we be doing?

- Melissa Solevilla said that internships are a critical piece of the puzzle
- Heather Arbuckle suggested that having students complete the same assignment in multiple ways broadens their learning
- Nathan Suedemeyer mentioned that Stetson uses teaching fellows. Students really learn from teaching others
- Susan Demers explained that a round robin of paper review might be an effective way to help one another
- Rachel Bennett expressed concerns about FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and consistency
- Susan Demers and Melissa Solevilla brought up the Student Legal Internship program that the Clearwater Bar Association used to run. A discussion ensued about whether this might be a good model to establish a program for SPC students

Rachel Bennett thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting ended at 6:55 pm.