

PARALEGAL STUDIES
Advisory Committee Meeting
November 10, 2010

Summary Notes

Present: Mr. Bruce Moseley, AC Paralegal Studies Coordinator
Ms. Rhonda Brashears, CP; Chair
Ms. Kim Davis, AC Continuing Education
Ms. Amy Dobberstein, Paralegal Studies Major
Ms. Melba Fenwick, ACP, RP; AC Graduate
Dr. Shawn Fouts, Dean-Career and Technical Education
Mr. David Kemp, Attorney
Mr. Carl Mueller, CLAS
Ms. Carolyn Ottoson, WTA&M Law Librarian
Ms. Cathy Peek, CLA, TBLS
Ms. Rita Saldierna, PLS, CLA
Ms. Regina Vieth, Member-at-Large
Ms. Luisa Vigil, Northwest Texas Legal Services

Absent: Ms. Janis Barnett, CP
Ms. Ann Britt, AC Business Division Advisor
Mr. Scott, Brumley, Attorney
Ms. Jana Comerford, AC Library Network
Mr. Ron Faulkner, AC Workforce Training Coordinator
Mrs. Sharla Fowler, CP, TBLS
Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Paul Matney, President
Mrs. Gay Mills, Office Administration Coordinator
Mr. Jerry Moeller, Asst. Dean for Academic Programs
Ms. Donna Pergrem, AC Assistant Career & Employment Services
Mr. Don Sanders, Member-at-Large
Mr. Christopher Wrampelmeier, Attorney

The Paralegal Studies Advisory Committee met for a 12:00 luncheon in the Library Room 113. Rhonda Brashears welcomed the committee members.

Minutes of August 16, 2010 Meeting

The minutes were available for review; David Kemp presented a motion to accept the minutes as written. Amy Dobberstein seconded, and the minutes were approved as written by the committee.

Agenda Amended

Rhonda told the committee that she would like to add a couple of items to the agenda.

1. Bruce's AAFPE trip
2. Getting the sequence of classes back in order

Adding a Certificate Program

Bruce told the committee that in order to get enrollment up some schools offer a certificate program for students who have some legal training. He said some people have no intention of getting a degree in Paralegal Studies, but they would be interested in getting a certificate. The committee's concern was that a certificate program might take away from the enrollment rather than increase it. Bruce explained that this option would be for persons that already have a degree in some other area, and would like to work in a law office. After taking the required courses for the certificate, they would then be qualified to work in a law office. He said that we have other areas that use this method for their certificate programs. He also told the committee that ABA is almost insisting on a certificate program for schools where the enrollment is down, so getting their approval for a certificate program would not be a problem. He said it would take about eight months to get the ABA approval, and recommended that the committee approve the certificate program.

Melba Fenwick asked if the reduced hours would adequately prepare a student for a job in a law office. Bruce explained that the courses they would take would be what are considered the core courses, and he feels that would adequately prepare them for the workplace.

Melba then asked about having some CLE classes. She said that in order for Paralegals to maintain their certification, they have to continually take courses and she thought this might be a way to attract students.

Rita Saldierna asked is there has ever been an effort by AC to offer classes for CLE. She is always looking for places to take CLE and thinks other paralegals do the same. Kim Davis said that AC has offered some of the classes, but it has been several years since they have had any. Rita suggested that they only offer it once a semester. She thinks this could attract potential students from the entire Panhandle region.

The committee concluded that it would be beneficial to have a certificate program. Bruce will begin checking with the ABA to get their approval for getting a certificate program started.

Getting Rid of LexisNexis

Bruce told the committee that the reason we are thinking of getting rid of LexisNexis is because of the increase in cost. Our budget cuts and rising cost of Lexis, no longer make it feasible to continue using this product. Originally, there was no outside access for students, but now they can travel to WT and access West Law and Lexis, and access several websites that are free. Carolyn Ottoson told the committee that unofficially, anyone can use WT's access to West Law and Lexis. Officially, she would need to check with her supervisors to insure this would be okay.

Bruce said that 57% of ABA approved schools don't have West Law or Lexis. He said that Case Maker and Lois Law provided all the same things and aren't as expensive. He said Google Scholar has state and federal cases and it is free. Rita told the committee that she uses several sites that are free and she will be glad to check for additional free sites that would satisfy ABA's requirements. Bruce told the committee we would continue to work on options to replace Lexis.

AAfPE Conference

Bruce told the committee that it was a very good conference, and that he got a lot of good ideas. He told them that he learned there are ways around the ABA requirements on Lexis. He said that 57% of ABA approved schools don't have West Law or Lexis. Bruce will put together some of the ideas and email them to the committee.

Sequence of Classes

Because of the low enrollment last year, we got some of our classes out of sequence. We had to waive the prerequisites, and that is not always a good idea. In order to get back on the right sequence, we may need to offer some classes back to back or in the summer so students will have more options to take the correct sequence. Our enrollment is up some this semester, and the prediction is that we will have a 28% growth in the next ten years. David Kemp told the committee that Potter County has actually added a paralegal position. In essence, they now have three positions. Bruce told the committee that we had four graduates last year and all four are currently employed as paralegals.

Presentation

Luisa Vigil, with the Legal Aid of Northwest Texas, made a presentation from the Amarillo area Equal Justice Volunteer Program to Bruce Moseley as the Attorney of the Year. This organization provides free legal services to low-income people in the area, and gives this award to attorneys who take pro-bono cases in the Texas Panhandle. She thanked him for all his help in the past year.

Grade Law Office Management Notebook

Rhonda gave the committee instructions for grading the notebooks. She told the committee that they have done a good job in grading these notebooks, and we are on target with the industry standards.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Butler
Senior Staff Assistant
Amarillo College Paralegal Studies