

Amarillo College Business Community

Business and Leadership Council—Business & Legal Studies

Meeting Minutes

Date: May 6, 2026

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Format: Virtual (Microsoft Teams)

Facilitator: Dr. Lori L. Petty

Recorder: Compiled from meeting transcript

Attendance: Erica Anderson, Tina Anderson, Becky Burton, Edie Carter, Dr. Robert Clarke, Victor Favela, Phillip Flores, Amanda Head, Jodi Lindseth, Rhonda McCampbell, Lori Petty, Rashmi Pillai, Amber Griffith Slocum, Dr. Rene'e Stovall, Lisa Venhaus-Gray, Mark White, Cindy Williams, and Becky Wilson.

Lori Petty-PURPOSE:

The purpose of this meeting is to address the feedback we received from our last meeting a few months ago. Some of you were present during that discussion. If you recall, we were seeking input on the program's direction and on various courses. Lori stated that, over the past few months, our faculty has been working diligently to identify and implement necessary changes. They have developed new ideas and directions that they are excited to share at today's meeting. Our agenda for today includes several key topics. We will review the new pathways and the changes that have been made. Next, we'll discuss the continuing education (CE) courses available this summer, as well as information about tuition scholarships. Finally, we will explore opportunities for collaboration between employers and Amarillo College.

Jodi Lindseth report:

We are redesigning the degree program to make it more mainstream by proposing the removal of nine classes from the curriculum and the addition of six new, more relevant classes. One key new course is BUSI 1301, an introduction to business concepts, management, finance, ethics, and organizational practices. This course will provide a solid foundation for students. We will also continue offering a human relations course, while the Professional Image Management class has been revamped to help students market themselves. This includes creating a strategic outline covering their mission, vision, values, and personal branding elements like logos. Additionally, we introduced an introductory accounting class to support management students who faced challenges taking accounting and math simultaneously. We will continue to offer the Intro to Accounting and Accounting Communications and Management courses, which are vital for developing soft skills. Additionally, we are introducing a new Leadership course and an Intro to Data Visualization to help students analyze and interpret data.

The Data Visualization course will cover basic concepts, data types, and techniques for data-informed decision making, which is increasingly important. We are also excited to introduce Financial Literacy, which Rashmi from the CIS department currently teaches. This course covers essential financial principles, including budgeting, retirement planning, property ownership, savings, and investment strategies, which are vital for students before graduation. Next, we offer a financial aid course and a legal studies class focusing on contracts. This paralegal training program introduces fundamental concepts of contract law, emphasizing drafting, analysis, and enforcement.

In management and human resources, we deal with various contracts and see this as a valuable addition to our curriculum. We will now make BMGT 2341, focusing on strategic management, the capstone course for the management degree, transitioning from a previous leadership course that required an e-portfolio. This strategic management course will cover essential concepts and issues, as it is critical for planning future directions. Renee will share further details on the capstone implementation. We are also introducing a new employment law course, which addresses contracts, at-will employment, government regulations, and discrimination, emphasizing the importance of these topics in human resources. The supervision course remains, and BMGT 1302 will serve as a co-op program, allowing students to earn credit for their work experience.

Additionally, we will include an internship opportunity based on requests we've received. We believe these courses will enhance our curriculum and provide valuable skills for our students. Thank you, Renee.

Edie Carter:

Jodi mentioned focused on human resources and management, while this one emphasizes project management and entrepreneurship. The first five courses are the same, but the next nine differ by specialization. Strategic Management serves as a capstone for both pathways.

We have a new course, BMGT 1309, on Information and Project Management, and Small Business Entrepreneurship for those interested in starting their businesses. Principles of Selling is also included in this pathway. We offer a course on Analytical Tools and Methods, which builds on the earlier data course. Lastly, we want students to have internship or co-op opportunities. We've enhanced work-based learning at the college with our STEM grant, benefiting both students and community partners, many of whom have hired interns after their placements.

Rhonda McCampbell:

For strategic management, which will be the new capstone, this course is replacing our problem-solving and decision-making class. This capstone will have a high level of emphasis.

Jodi Lindseth:

We've been focusing on project management for a while, and it's a good addition. Entrepreneurship is a constant interest; many people express a desire to own their own business, so we kept that as it draws interest. Both fields involve selling. Rashmi, can you discuss the analytical tools and methods?

Rashmi Pillai:

The study of data in business continues to evolve. We will focus on two of the most prominently used tools from the user-end perspective. This discussion will not delve into data science; rather, it will concentrate on

practical applications for users. In this class, we will teach business professionals how to obtain and analyze their data using at least two different tools.

Eddie Carter:

After reviewing the last two slides on course offerings for these tracks, I consulted with the advising team for their input. Feedback from our business partners and advisors indicates that students are excited about the streamlined course paths. This will be presented for approval in the 26-27 school year, with plans to launch in the fall of 2027.

Tina Alexander report:

We removed eight elective classes, such as those focusing on digital forensic tools, to streamline our program and make the legal training more practical. We reviewed various paralegal programs at different schools in Dallas and Houston, using their ABA-approved programs as models for our own.

We have made some updates to the paralegal program. The general education core courses remain unchanged, but in the major core, we've added American Government and removed a computer course, believing that the word processing course covers necessary skills. We also included a business management communications course, as effective communication is crucial in the legal field. While we're keeping most of the existing major core classes, one point for discussion is whether to replace the cognitive skills course with a practicum. Your input on this would be appreciated. In the specialty core, students can choose six courses, though realistically, they may select five due to instructor availability for certain classes like immigration law, which we added based on student interest. The highlighted courses represent new offerings, and we're retaining employment law, which I will teach. We are also considering a fully online paralegal certificate program. A new student expressed interest in this option, and while we currently don't offer it, we know there is demand. The ABA allows for a 100% online certificate if three classes are synchronous. This could help students, especially women in areas like Perryton, who wish to change careers without commuting. I thought I could offer another option for them, but I wasn't sure if we would find someone to teach it. It would need to be the right person.

Erica Anderson believes that cognitive skills are more important. They are probably easier on the curriculum than trying to integrate internships.

Dr. Robert Clarke:

The intern this semester secured a job with a local law firm last week. She worked with the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission and participated in mediations, gaining valuable experience that clearly paid off. Erica suggested combining legal research and writing. With our subscription to Westlaw ending and reliance on free case law. Students seem to struggle most with writing skills, so integrating a technical writing class could help. Eddie mentioned that there will be new CE courses available this summer, with more offered in the fall. Amarillo College received a \$500,000 True Grant focused on the business and CIS departments. This summer, they will offer three pathways: Accounting Assistant, Human Resource Specialist, and Data Center Technician, the latter run by CIS instructors. The first 12 students to enroll will receive free tuition and vouchers for the industry credentials. Eddie requested feedback from those in the law profession on whether you think cognitive skills should be there or out in the field.

Dr. Clarke described the class as a critical thinking exercise where students analyze various scenarios and learn to think like lawyers. He mentioned that students seem to enjoy it and noted that he taught it once, recalling that Robyn Malone taught it before him.

Amber Griffith Slocum agreed with Dr. Clarke, saying that cognitive skills involve staying steps ahead of attorneys and anticipating the actions needed in response to events. Anderson mentioned that cognitive skills might be more important and easier to include in the curriculum than integrating internships, which her firm dismissed. Dr. Clarke mentioned that a girl from our internship this semester got a job with a local law firm last week. She was with the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission and gained valuable experience participating in mediations. It worked out well for her.

Erica Anderson suggested that we integrate legal research with cognitive skills, given our shift away from Westlaw to free case law. While I mainly find and forward cases, I notice students struggle with writing. A combined course focusing on legal research and technical writing could address this gap. Amber and Mark White agreed. Erica mentioned that potential employers are now requesting samples of their writing. Some tasks are beyond the students' ability to comply. Mark White noted that lawyers believe AI reduces the need for paralegals and junior associates for basic research. While strong writing skills are essential for lawyers, they may struggle with unfamiliar areas of law, like eviction cases, despite having access to law summaries through AI instead of relying on paralegals or new associates. Amber stated that AI isn't replacing us; it's just providing attorneys with a starting point for next steps.

Amber asked if Amarillo College offered PMP certification. Edie replied, "Yes! This summer, we're launching three new continuing education courses through the TRUE Grant, part of the Texas Reskilling initiative. Amarillo College received \$500,000 for two years for the Business and CIS departments. The courses include accounting assistant, human resources specialist, and a data center technician program conducted by our CIS instructors. The first 12 students to enroll will receive free tuition and vouchers for the industry credentials.

Rhonda responded regarding the PM Certification: As a Human Resource Specialist, there will be an eight-week course on human resource management and another eight-week course on employee relations. Additionally, there's a 16-week preparation course for the HRC exam, which is currently considered the gold standard in our community, although the SHRM CP exam might gain more prominence in the future. Tina and I plan to take the AHRC exam and then teach this course during the summer sprint.

Rashmi asked if this is the second summer certificate offering for reskilling. It's available for anyone looking to change careers, and we prepare them for the Intuit bookkeeping professional certificate.

We will have an expert with over 25 years of experience from a local accounting firm leading our classes. The program consists of three classes:

1. Basics of accounting
2. Technical skills with QuickBooks, which can be adapted to other industry software
3. Using Excel for accounting, focusing on financial ratios and creating financial statements for firms without accounting applications.

We'll focus on using Excel for financial ratios and demonstrate how to create financial statements for firms without accounting software like QuickBooks. We're offering an eight-week course in accounting. The first class lasts five weeks, focusing on basics for two weeks, with classes four days a week. The second and third classes meet twice a week. Our goal is to prepare participants for a new career in accounting within the local community and attract those looking to switch careers.

Eddie stated to make sure the department adds the offerings to all the Business Associates. Dr. Clarke wanted to clarify that for the fall, we will be offering six CE courses: one in business intelligence analysis, which Rashmi and I are involved in. She is teaching me a lot about being a business analyst, as well as courses in human resources specialization

Rashmi Pillai: We will have an instructor with over 25 years of experience in accounting. The program will include three classes: the basics of accounting, QuickBooks training, and Excel for accounting.

Dr. Clarke, for the fall, we're offering six CE courses: Business Intelligence Analyst (with Rashmi), Human Resources Specialist, Project Management, Accounting Assistant, and Legal Studies Certified Paralegal Exam Prep, which includes civil litigation and legal research. Additionally, there will be an NALA prep course since Tina recertified this year. She is excelling with the challenging Mallory certification, which has a 50% pass rate. The data center technician role primarily offers upskill classes, while the accounting assistant position is a reskill. The legal studies prep can also be seen as an upskill, helping in that industry. The data center technician is another reskill opportunity.

Rashmi Pillai: We're excited to announce our fall offerings, including the same certificate program that will run for eight weeks. It consists of two five-week classes and one class that lasts the full eight weeks, designed to prepare students for the Intuit Bookkeeping Professional Certificate.

For the first time, we will also offer a Business Intelligence Analyst program. My teammates, Brent and Jodi, and I are committed to creating a user-friendly experience focused on data extraction and analysis. Participants will prepare for the Microsoft Power BI Data Analyst Professional Certificate, which requires annual renewal. Power BI is the preferred data visualization tool in our area, making it a fitting choice for this program. The advanced database section will teach students to create queries without building databases. We may also introduce Python, depending on whether we emphasize coding or graphical user interfaces. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of data analysis. Brent will cover data governance, while Jodi will focus on how business professionals can use data for decision-making. We aim to equip participants to work independently without relying on technical staff for data access.

Tina Alexander: We will offer a 16-week online course for certified paralegal exam preparation. This course will focus on legal research and writing, emphasizing the IRAC method, as well as civil litigation. Students will learn these topics while also preparing for the certified paralegal exam. The legal research and writing and civil litigation courses can be credited toward an associate's degree for paralegals, without those who wish to become certified. I spoke with Vicki Lorenzen, and we plan to discuss this at an upcoming paralegal luncheon to propose this opportunity for those interested in the exam or seeking continuing education.

Rhonda McCampbell stated that the Project Management Specialist program includes three classes to prepare individuals for the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM), which we affectionately call the "baby certification." In response to the earlier question, Amarillo College does offer a Project Management Professional (PMP) program. Rhonda and I are currently studying for the PMP certification there. This eight-week course features a hybrid format, combining in-person and online instruction.

Becky will help the Business Management program put students into these classes. Jodi wanted to know: What feedback did they have for the department regarding the "True Grant" for their Continuing Education (CE) program, and the initial part of our discussion focused on academics. We really need to get that off the ground and determine if we can make it work. Additionally, do you think that the new degrees and pathways will help meet workforce needs? Edie mentioned, "We've had some technical difficulties today, but it's important to stay flexible. The final details will be on the actx.edu website under Continuing Education. Our new pathways aren't up yet as we're still finalizing them, but we want your feedback. The discussion on practicums and courses was very valuable, especially regarding everyone's schedules."

Philip Flores from the Texas Workforce Commission commented, "Great job! I want to ensure that the new course offerings align with the Panhandle area's target occupations list and are also included on the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). This is crucial for securing funding for these roles." Edie responded, during our research, we focused on high demand in our region, knowing we need you as our partner. This helps students gain new skills and enter the job market. Do you have any other questions or concerns? Feel free to email or contact me."

Erica Anderson asked if they are called certificates or modules. Jodi and Rashmi clarified they are called OSAs, or Occupational Skills Awards; they used to be called "Marketable Skills Awards. Rashmi mentioned that there are three summer pathways available, each consisting of two to three combined courses that will lead to a specialized certificate. All courses are completely free, with 12 courses available per pathway. Please note that the offerings include more than just accounting; there are a variety of subjects across the three pathways.

Edie thanked everyone for attending the meeting, especially Lori Petty for leading the group and partnering with them, and expressed excitement for continued collaboration.

Mark White wishes Tina and Rhonda good luck on their upcoming exams.

Meeting adjourned at 12:46 pm.

Edie Carter