

INSTITUTE FOR PARALEGAL STUDIES
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

Minutes of Faculty Meeting
Tuesday, January 8, 2008
Water Tower Campus

Present: Kelly Barry, Tony Clark, Eamonn Coyle, Jennifer Goldstone, Mary Joly, Christopher Lambert, Jim Lundy, Leverett Nelson, Jennifer Pritz, Jean Hellman Ryan, Melissa Samuels, Matta Setty, Joan Stevens, and Caryn Suder.

The spring faculty meeting of the Institute for Paralegal Studies was called to order by Director Jean Hellman Ryan at about 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 8, 2008.

Dean Jeffrey Rosen updated the paralegal faculty on activities in the School of Continuing and Professional Studies. These include additional paralegal Continuum continuing education courses this spring: Caryn Suder teaching client interviewing, Eamonn Coyle, Concordance; and Rett Nelson, interacting with federal agencies. He invited teachers interested in proposing classes to contact Carla Maria Kayanan, the Continuum coordinator.

The Director asked the faculty to note two upcoming events on their calendars: SCPS graduation on Saturday, May 10, at 2 p.m., and the annual LEX dinner on Thursday, June 26. The group also discussed the scheduling of future faculty meetings. A fall meeting right after the beginning of the Fall II session is likely preferable to August, and early in January is a good time in the spring. The Director noted that room availability and other deadlines may dictate changes.

Enrollment continues at an excellent pace. The Spring I session starting next week has 112% of last year's enrollments. The demographics, however, which were completed once the Fall II session was in progress, showed the percentage of recent graduates at 27%, not much changed from previous levels. A full 45% are minorities, 20% to 25% of them African American.

The Illinois MCLE Board has developed a certificate form for teachers of law courses to use to obtain CLE credit for teaching in the program. Jennifer Gettings, the program's administrative assistant, will prepare these for teachers on request; please allow her a few days' notice to complete these.

The faculty website has been revised in accordance with the discussion at the last meeting. Teachers are asked to forward any suggestions for additions or revisions.

The discussion then moved to our assessment process for the ABA Self-Evaluation Report due in fall 2008. The Director has begun meeting with faculty members who teach

the elective courses to evaluate the course to ensure that it is current, and to update the course outlines submitted to the ABA for approval as legal specialty courses. A copy of the evaluation form being used was distributed for the entire faculty's examination. Meetings of the groups teaching the separate concentrations, the legal research and writing classes, and the computer classes are planned for later in the year.

The faculty reviewed the most recent survey of program graduates, intended to gather information externally on how the program is meeting its goals. This survey included graduates from August 2005 through August 2006, and had a 52% response rate.

Well over the majority—69%—were currently working as paralegals or in another capacity in a law-related environment. Of the 31% who indicated they were not, 38% were utilizing their paralegal education in their current positions. The graduates working as paralegals were overwhelmingly working in law firms (81%) of all sizes.

The graduates rated their overall satisfaction with the program's preparation for paralegal work very positively: 37.5% at the highest level, 45% at the second highest, 12.5% at the middle level, and the final 5% at the fourth level. Several questions on the survey asked about preparation for specific tasks, particularly legal research. The faculty discussed these results in some detail. Many comments indicated that students had obviously not paid sufficient attention to certain areas, such as the importance of timekeeping. The faculty agreed to emphasize these areas whenever opportunities present themselves rather than in just the introductory class. The questions on legal research skills elicited the expected information, given that so many of them work in larger firms, that over half the graduates rarely or never were asked to perform legal research or even retrieve a case or statute, and almost 90% rarely or never were asked to Shepardize. Several faculty members noted, however, that the legal research and writing classes help the students improve their analytical and communication skills.

The Director also brought up recent comments from two employers that supposedly corrected writing samples submitted by our graduates had blatant errors (grammar, spelling, punctuation). It is of course possible that the students didn't make corrections, and English was not the first language of one student, but the faculty agreed to take more care in marking all errors.

Faculty Development: Using Blackboard: Review of the Gradebook and Course Copy Features. Jennifer Gettings, our chief troubleshooter for Blackboard, reviewed these features and answered many questions about these and other areas.

This meeting was adjourned at about 8 p.m.