

INSTITUTE FOR PARALEGAL STUDIES
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

Minutes of Faculty Meeting
Saturday, September 27, 2008
Water Tower Campus

Present: Kelly Barry, Eamonn Coyle, Carla Davis, Trip Finnegan, Jennifer Goldstone, Kathie Greenwood, Marie Harrigan, Mary Joly, Enid Kempe, Nick Kourvetaris, Christopher Lambert, Debbie Metzger, Tim Morella, Leverett Nelson, Jean Hellman Ryan, Melissa Samuels, and Joan Stevens.

The fall faculty meeting of the Institute for Paralegal Studies was called to order by Director Jean Hellman Ryan at about 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 27, 2008.

A new faculty member, Debbie Metzger, was introduced. Debbie has been a litigation paralegal for 17 years and is currently a paralegal supervisor at Segal McCambridge Singer & Mahoney. She also served previously as a member of the Institute's advisory committee. Debbie is teaching the Civil Litigation I class.

Enrollment in the current Fall I session again exceeded the previous year's totals (9.7% increase in credit hours). The Fall II session, which begins in three weeks, is expected to show similar increases; there is sufficient enrollment already in all of the classes. A preliminary analysis of the student demographics for this year showed few changes from last year. The average age is still 32, and the proportion of recent graduates is only slightly increased at 28%. A little over a third of the students have some previous legal experience, which speaks well for the program's reputation in the local legal community. Ten percent of our students are Loyola graduates, followed by the two University of Illinois campuses. The average undergraduate GPA rose slightly to 2.94.

The Institute's placement statistics continue to demonstrate that our students are finding suitable employment. A recent review of the last five years' statistics showed that 80% of program graduates work as paralegals or in another capacity in the legal field.

The Director then updated the faculty on the status of the program's ABA Self-Evaluation Report due in November 2008. The University funded a temporary part-time position to help compile this report, and Kelly Barry has been working on it with the Director and staff since March. Assistance is now needed from every faculty member. Each received the course outline for courses he or she teaches, to be reviewed and revised by October 15. Each faculty member also received a copy of his or her resume currently on file, to be replaced or updated, and a list of classes taught, meetings attended, and faculty development participation, to be revised as necessary. Teachers are asked to include a few listings of MCLE or other continuing education that relate to their subject area.

Assessment activities will also be reported to the ABA. The Director noted that the real estate concentration and the legal research and writing course sequence were reviewed last year by the faculty teaching those courses. This year we are examining the civil litigation concentration (including the Computer Applications in Litigation course) and probably the corporate concentration. We are also planning to review our required computer course. The Director will continue to meet with teachers of the elective courses; eight of the 11 electives have already been updated.

Another recent assessment activity was an analysis of the postings since 2006 on the Institute's paralegal job board. In addition to information on the type of employer and the area of law specified, the analysis reviewed the job skills requested for each of our three concentrations. The most frequently requested skills seem to correspond very well with the content of our classes. We also gathered useful information on computer programs legal employers wanted employees to know. These results will be used in further course reviews. Kelly Barry, who compiled the data, offered to focus a similar analysis on intellectual property and other areas beyond the three Institute concentrations.

The Director then discussed the University's concern with threat assessment, in response to situations at other schools in the past year. The University has developed a Behavioral Concerns Team to assess potential situations where a student may be a threat to others or to himself or herself, and in fact one of our students was evaluated by the team shortly after it was first organized last spring. The faculty were given materials from the website explaining the team's purpose and procedures. The group also discussed classroom behavioral concerns. Students are expected to adhere to the Courtesy Expectations described in the Student Handbook, and any behavior that disrupts a class is subject to discipline.

The group considered next a new policy on making up quizzes and exams, as there seem to be a few students abusing the privilege. The faculty agreed that as a general rule a student would be allowed to make up a quiz or exam only once over every two 8-week sessions. Of course, a situation involving health or family emergencies would be treated more generously. The Director will draft a statement and circulate it in the next week or two so that it can go into effect with the Fall II session beginning October 18.

Finally, the Director reminded the faculty of the resources available on the Institute's faculty website, and asked if any teachers wanted to continue to receive AAfPE list serv messages, as the policy is changing.

Faculty Development: Using the Faculty Center on LOCUS 2.0 and the Grade Center on Blackboard 8.0. Jennifer Gettings, the Institute's program assistant, demonstrated the new resources available to faculty on Loyola's new record system (LOCUS 2.0). The faculty also reviewed the Grade Center on Blackboard 8.0, which replaces the Gradebook used in previous versions. Some new features allow tracking of student assignments more easily than the Digital Dropbox.

This meeting was adjourned at about 12:15 p.m.