

St. Petersburg College

SPC

PARALEGAL STUDIES

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, October 26, 2021 - Clearwater Campus

5:30pm-6:45pm

AGENDA

WELCOME & ROLL CALL: (Roll was taken from Zoom Meeting Participant list and introductions. Please see attached Attendance Sheet.)

Dean Susan Demers: Dean Demers invited our newest member, Joyce Frustaci, to introduce herself.

Joyce Frustaci indicated that she has a boutique agency called Juice Marketing and Design. They do the classic side of marketing – product development, branding, business cards, folders, brochures, etc., as well as the online business side, social media, email marketing, websites. She’s been working with Juice for 12 years. Prior to that she worked in corporate America on the mortgage side, but as a marketing professional there. Before that she was a teacher.

Dean Demers said that that was a perfect fit for our committee.

She then introduced herself as the Dean of the program. She then turned the meeting over to Dr. Powers.

Dr. Powers thanked the Dean and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She indicated that we meet twice a year and this is our official Fall 2021 meeting.

Dr. Powers then proceeded to take roll call by asking each participant to introduce themselves.

She introduced herself as the Academic Chair of the Department. She then asked Elizabeth to introduce herself.

Dr. Powers called on Joyce Frustaci.

Joyce Frustaci said she works for Juice Marketing and Design, and mentioned she is the non-lawyer attendee.

Dr. Powers called on Deborah Eldridge.

Deborah Eldridge indicated that she is with Paralegal Studies as an instructor who focuses primarily on business law and handles the internships and job placement and information for students. She said it was wonderful to see everybody and welcomed everyone.

Dr. Powers thanked Deb and called on Caitlein Jammo.

Caitlein Jammo introduced herself and indicated that she is a probate litigator at Johnson Pope and she joked that she does whatever Kaila Glaros and/or Dean Demers tells her to do and she is happy to be here and to be part of this for the last couple of years.

Dean Demers added that she is an awesome classroom resource and a great program resource, and thanked her for being here.

Dr. Powers then moved to Kaila Glaros.

Kaila Glaros introduced herself as a paralegal and an instructor who teaches Law Office Management.

Dean Demers added that she is a graduate of our program.

Dr. Powers moved on to Ellen Poole.

Ellen Poole introduced herself, and she works for a local fire protection company as general counsel. She's been there about 7 years and she's been on the committee for a few years now as well as getting the opportunity to teach one of the business law classes.

Dr. Powers called on Iryna Bandaryk.

Iryna Bandaryk said she graduated from the Paralegal Program and went to Stetson and works for Citibank now.

Dr. Powers asked Jerrick Rivera to introduce himself.

Jerrick Rivera introduced himself and indicated that he is an SPC alumnus from the College of Business. He has taken the Business Law class with Dr. Powers. He is also a recruiter for the college, recruiting for Legal Studies and Public Policy and Administration. He works closely with the college as well as the marketing department.

Dr. Powers noticed a guest with a number and no name and asked for identification.

Vitalia Shafer introduced herself as a board certified immigration attorney and she's had her own practice for 21 years.

Dr. Powers then called on Marilyn Brown.

Marilyn Brown introduced herself and said she supports all 30 of the advisory committees and the deans and the program administrators and thanked everyone for their input and time and talent that they bring to the committee.

Dr. Powers called on Candi James.

Candi James said that she graduated from the program. She is a corporate paralegal at Raymond James Financial.

Dr. Powers commented that we have a fun opportunity to look at some changes and to apprise everyone of shifting and changing of the guards.

FOLLOW-UP FROM SPRING MEETING:

-Approve Spring 2021 Meeting Minutes – Dr. Powers sent out the 2021 Spring Meeting Minutes and wanted to make sure that the committee approve those as written. She asked the group if there was anything they wanted to change or comment on prior to approving. There were no changes, corrections or issues with the minutes, so the minutes stand as approved.

Dr. Powers also indicated that if there are changes to the spring minutes they can be amended at any time.

-Elective Chart Review – Dr. Powers started with the Elective Chart, and said that she had wonderful feedback on it from some advisory board members.

She went on to explain that our Bachelor students have many electives and in general students know what they want to do once they are in the BAS. So the committee was asked to help create a chart for a particular type of paralegal or a certain field. Dr. Powers shared a chart that came together with everyone's feedback. She asked everyone to look at it.

Dr. Powers then went on to describe the chart and shared screen to get some feedback about the chart. She read the categories to everyone – Criminal, General, Civil, Estates, Intellectual Property, Real Estate, Family Law and Administrative. She invited the members to see if they would like to add a section for more specific areas of law, and the 8 corresponding electives that would be helpful in that area.

The plan is to share this with the students, but the committee members should look at it and make suggestions as to changes that could be useful.

Dr. Powers asked everyone to look at the top areas of Law and determine if those are the main areas that paralegals are looking for, and if there is another area that should be added.

Iryna Bandaryk mentioned corporate, business, in-house counsel.

Dr. Powers asked if anyone else had suggestions.

Deb Eldridge said under Civil Litigation add Insurance Law.

Dr. Powers said so for Civil Lit do you think it should replace State and Local Government. They only have 8 electives to choose from.

Dr. Eldridge said either State and Local Government or Family, because family is more specialized.

Dr. Powers agreed that that is a great idea.

Iryna Bandaryk wanted to add that it could be sorted by relevance. For example, in Criminal Law, Criminal Law and Procedure should go first.

Dr. Powers agreed that the most relevant should be at the top. These are suggested, so they can say I really like this course, but could I take something else. It gives them a place to start.

Dr. Powers asked for suggestions about formatting, class type. She will be sending this out to everyone so they have some time to work with it before it gets finalized.

Kaila Glaros mentioned that it would be good for students who aren't yet familiar with the content of each main heading, to include whatever would encompass the track in the heading – Civil Litigation/Insurance/ etc., or Administrative/Government/.

Dr. Powers suggested hyperlinks to click on, i.e., click on criminal and it will give a description of main duties, obligations, daily operations that an individual would perform. So it would show this is what you're going to be doing if you're in this area.

Kaila Glaros said that her students sometimes think they want to do something because they assume it's one thing, but when they realize what it really is they don't want to do it anymore.

Dr. Powers said this is a great start to help our students narrow down what they want to take. So by putting it into priority order will help them figure out if that area is what they want to do. It will allow them to see if they don't like the first class, maybe they don't want to be in that area of the law.

Iryna Bandaryk commented that maybe there could be something in the chart to indicate which classes are offered on rotation or once a year, or every semester.

Candi James suggested color coding of the frequent classes, and less frequent classes in a different color.

Dr. Powers said that we can have that broken down into 3 colors basically – These are offered every semester, here's what's offered in even years and odd years. Classes that aren't offered frequently, are usually offered in even and odd years. So there is a way to delineate that that will make sense to the students.

She said that we are trying to help the students figure out the classes by looking at the course descriptions. We want to give them something that indicates that we have plans for them, but they're not set in stone, but we want to provide guidance in a direction that will make the students successful even before graduation.

This could also help certificate students decide if they want to take some of the classes for CLEs or to bolster their understanding of a certain area, etc.

This will be published on the Commons so all students can look at the suggestions.

Jerrick Rivera asked if this could be hyperlinked to our marketing pages.

Dr. Powers said it's definitely something we will do. So when they click on the hyperlink it will go to the SPC page for course descriptions, and then also get it back to our marketing pages for our degrees.

Deb Eldridge pointed out that a couple more people have joined the meeting – Andrew Sasso and Max Lovato.

Dr. Powers invited Andrew Sasso to introduce himself, which he did. And Max Lovato introduced himself.

COLLEGE-WIDE UPDATES:

Dr. Christy Powers

Dr. Powers mentioned the next order of business, College-Wide Updates. Dr. Williams recently put out a video for our Advisory Committee Members.

-Dr. Williams' Appreciation Video was presented to the group.

Dr. Powers said that the great thing about Dr. Williams is the camaraderie and the community of care and she is invested in making sure that everybody has a great collegiate experience.

-Advisory Committee Summit Results/Goals

Dr. Powers said that we recently had an Advisory Committee Summit and what it was designed to do was to bring some industry chairs together, community members – and our community is large, including Public Policy, Public Safety, Ethics, Legal Studies. It's a large community of work force degrees where we have to work together because many of our skills are transferrable.

She said that we came up with some ideas that are listed below that would increase our opportunities for our students, community, and advisory committee members to collaborate. We came up with three items. Dr. Powers then shared screen to show the items.

Are You Prepared for Legal Studies? Webinar: Soft skills meets education in workforce degrees

Dr. Powers said that we are working on a 1 – 2 hour webinar to make sure that students are receiving all the information they need as they are going through the program in terms of soft skills, i.e., how do we act on Zoom; how do we act in an office; how do we act with clients and counsel. As we put these together, we will ask you for some input. We will tell you what they will present at the webinar and you can let us know what to focus on, add some things or take away some things. This could be a 1-part webinar; a 3-part webinar, but we want to make sure the students are prepared pre-graduation.

Mentorship and Shadowing - Do You Know Where You Will Go After Graduation? Pairing students with advisory members and beyond to assure that students know what they want as much as what they don't want to do.

Dr. Powers said the next list is Mentorship and Shadowing. This is where we pair students with advisory members and beyond to make sure that students know what they want as well as what they don't. Shadowing could be a day. It could be a half day. We could pair someone up with an alum of ours or a current paralegal to see if the day-to-day operations might be something they would be interested in.

Essential Functions Checklist - Completed the “essential functions” of what it takes to thrive in your career/degree field. Assess in Intro and in Capstone to build resume and portfolio of work product. The ADVC Members are integral in building the currency in those essential functions.

Dr. Powers continued with the next topic we've been working on: the Essential Functions Checklist. We are making sure that students know it's not just their resume – it's their resume-plus. It's not what you tell me you can do, but also show me. We want them to include work product.

So with the 3 markers to make sure we are engaging, if you have any ideas or want to participate in one of the items – the 3rd one is pretty much nailed down. But the other two might take a bit more work.

Dr. Powers asked if there was any feedback on our summit results and what we came up with for ways to engage?

Max Lovato said that at Gulf Coast Legal Services they are looking for volunteers or people who want to shadow and learn or gain experience.

Dr. Powers said that we would love to partner with Gulf Coast because there are a lot of different options there. She asked the area of law that Max works in.

Max Lovato said he works in the housing department predominantly – evictions and that type of thing.

Dr. Powers said that is a great idea for people who want to get into public service.

Ellen Poole suggested that being in-house, shadowing is a great idea. She's open to it. And recently she had a high school student, and what came of it is that she isn't looking for in-house but looking more for family law. She was able to pair the student with a family law person that could give her a better opportunity to see what that looks like. So shadowing gives them a chance to see if it's something they want to do or not.

Dr. Powers said that it's great to go through that process because it allows you to guide them better. Volunteering is good as well because experience matters. We have experiential learning in the classroom but lots of lawyers want to see that you have your feet on the ground and you've actually had some experience in that area.

Deb Eldridge suggested that we add that to the Paralegal Studies Commons so students know they also have the opportunity to shadow if they want to do that.

Dr. Powers added that shadowing can also turn into internships. If they like it they can commit to a certain number of hours.

Iryna Bandaryk mentioned that Jennifer at Citibank, who is a Stetson Grad, welcomes shadowing and would be open to having students shadow.

Dr. Powers turned the conversation over to Dr. Eldridge in the area of new sites and ongoing opportunities as people are shifting with COVID. Many are going back to work; some are learning to work remotely; some are splitting it up and finding out what works best.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS/ INTERNSHIPS: Full Time Faculty, Dr. Deborah Eldridge

-New Sites & Ongoing Opportunities during COVID-19

Deb Eldridge said that it is interesting to see how the dynamic is developing because as we shift back to the office, some students and paralegals still want to work from home. There are those offices that want to do both, so it's an interesting dynamic. She would like to see more flexibility, because some of our students can't always get into the office, but they need the hours for the AS program for their internship requirement to get their degree. So it would be interesting to see more of a hybrid develop in the area where they could offset their time. Some of them have to work at their regular job as well as intern, and finish the degree and move on. They need the flexibility and it gives them the opportunity for the experience that they wouldn't otherwise have. With all of us having Zoom hearings now, there is so much opportunity. Dr. Eldridge would also love to see them embrace more technology because they need to be getting comfortable before the camera. Some courts are continuing with the online way of doing business.

Dr. Powers said that Deb's on the right track and we are interested in what the members are doing now since COVID. She asked the group if they are seeing that half time at work and half time at home works. What is the shift in percentage of office time versus working remotely? Depending on the area of law and the clientele, how much really needs to be face-to-face. She said a lot of attorneys she talks to are just getting back to physically being the office. We would be interested to see, in your own professions currently, your own areas of practice, how has the time been spent? What have you adjusted to and what do you find is working? Please let us know what your working situation looks like in your field.

Vitalia Shafer said that at her office, work is back to normal. Sometimes people want to have Zoom meetings but she doesn't particularly like Zoom.

Candi James is in hybrid state right now. Because they are a financial company that has part of the customers that are inside and part of their customers are outside, within Raymond James even in the legal department they have very different schedules. She said they are working for the general counsel, the bank, and our Trust, and mergers and acquisitions activities, she is slated to be in the office one day a week. She goes in when the Bank or the Trust say they need to see her. The litigation department is scheduled one week out of every two months to go in unless they have a hearing. If they have a hearing they have to be in the office so they can check on the remote hearings if needed with their attorney in the same room. We do have positions for paralegals who are 100% remote. Our HR paralegals they are never coming back.

Iryna Bandaryk said that at Citibank it also depends on the region or area of business.

Dr. Powers said that students have an expectation of “what are we doing now? What is expected at a job?”

Caitlein Jammo said their office is very flexible, but she wanted to highlight that the courts are still remaining pretty remote. The only reason she’s been at the courthouse in the last year and a half is to attend an investiture rather than to attend a proceeding. That’s because she’s primarily appearing before Pinellas County probate judges who are still doing things remotely. She still goes to the office, but the office in general is operating with flexibility.

Dr. Powers added that some people are in the office so they want everyone in the office, so it’s dependent on the relationship between the paralegal and the attorney.

Dean Demers asked Max how things are at Gulfcoast Legal Services.

Max Lovato said it’s mostly f2f as far as intakes go. The clients walk in and the paralegals take the documents and forms and everything to qualify them first. But then the interview and appointment with the attorney are typically over the phone. Paralegals are at the office all day every day.

Ellen Poole said that being a smaller company where her clients are the owners of the company, they did not like the work from home environment. They wanted the communication with everybody working together, seeing each other, because that’s how they get even more work done, having the ability to go into each other’s offices and talk and collaborate as issues arise. At this point there is very little work from home.

Laura Marx said as a member of a small boutique litigation firm with very large cases they made it one month closed and they’ve been back in the office ever since. There’s been no more shut-down at the office. Her supervisor likes to see everyone in their seats and there is a lot of collaboration and everyone works together. It would be nearly impossible to have somebody working from outside.

Dr. Powers asked if anyone else had any comments.

Andrew Sasso commented that his practice is similar to Caitlein’s and all the hearings are remote, even evidentiary hearings, and it seems to be working fine. One thing that is important is that we all learned there are a lot of things we can do remotely that we didn’t think would work remotely, for example, mediations. He never thought that a mediation could be accomplished remotely. He thought it was important to have everybody physically present at the same location, be focused on the task at hand, but he’s learned that mediations work fine remotely and there are some advantages. People don’t have to travel from all over the country or all over the world to attend a mediation. He then gave an example of all parties being from different countries or states and they had a very successful mediation remotely.

Dean Demers added that Lee Green thinks he’s more effective as a remote mediator, but he feels his batting average in terms of customer satisfaction of both sides, is way up as a result of remote mediation.

Andrew Sasso thinks it is less stressful for most people, because they can be in their own homes. And he also heard from judges that they can judge demeanor better on Zoom because they can stare right at the witness while they are testifying, which they couldn't do in a courtroom.

Dean Demers said some of her students prefer the live online zoom classes because they are sitting right next to their teachers.

Dr. Powers asked Joyce to comment on what things are like in her work environment.

Joyce Frustaci said that her team has been remote for 10 years, so the transition was very easy. The biggest change was the fact that she has to be out networking for what she does, and obviously most of the networking things came to a standstill. Some of the networking converted to virtual easily and others did not. But it's starting to come back together again. She added that she finds that older clients prefer meeting in person so she accommodates those kinds of situations, but for the most part it's Zoom and phone and email.

PROGRAM UPDATES: **Dr. Christy Powers, Chair**

-ABA Interim Report APPROVED

Dr. Powers transitioned into the topic of Program Updates. She shared that we have had our interim Report Approved by the ABA finally. We have 3 more years until the next report is due when we finally have our site visit, where we will invite you all out to talk to our site visitors from the ABA. But we are proud of that and put a lot of work into that. She mentioned that we always learn from these interim reports and what we need to do to make a program better, more current, especially in areas of technology and transitioning during the pandemic.

Dean Demers said that the committee members make us look good but Dr. Powers makes us look good. In this case she jumped in early, and this was the first time we had a completely online report. As an early adopter she helped them perfect the system and it all worked to our benefit. Props to Prof. Powers for getting in there early and helping us work everything out. She went on to describe how we are reporting on Graduates' work histories contemporaneously.

Dr. Powers talked about her competitiveness and wanting to be first, with the help of the ABA during the process. She said that when we are held highly as a program – the ABA holds us as one of the top 3 programs in the state - and with 3 programs ourselves, we become a model to do great things. And Dr. Powers acknowledged Dean Demers for her wealth of knowledge and pointing out the purpose of our reports.

-AS Degree Adjustments

Dr. Powers said that the State of Florida has decided to make some changes to our AS Degrees in the Workforce area and she has adjusted the admissions guide that she will share. She asked

Dean Demers to give some insight as to the changes that our AS Degree is going to have to make due to the legislature and what they want to incorporate into the AS Degrees.

Dean Demers said that previously we had 3 communication courses, Comp I, Comp II and Speech that are a part of our gen ed. portion. In our degree she said we are lucky because we have a larger than 60 credit degree plan that we can use. Generally you're restricted to 60 credits for your two year degree for obvious reasons – they don't want you to pay for 3 years to complete a 2 year degree.

The legislature has decided that in every Workforce degree every student needs to have one class from each of the 5 general education areas. That means, one communications class, one social science, one math, one natural science and one humanities class. We have not previously had a science in our program so we are going to let speech go and add public speaking opportunities in the classroom to make up for it because clearly our students have to be able to present. Then we will add in a science requirement. There is a great biological issues class that is a great fit for our students. So that's our solution to the problem. But everyone is having to deal with this because the whole idea is the legislature is trying to smooth the transition from AS Degrees to Bachelor's Degrees with the idea that at some point people will all need Bachelor Degrees.

Dr. Powers added that we have to make up for the speech somewhere. So she shared with the group the revised planning guide for the AS. She said that we've added specific classes as Dean Demers mentioned. We have the required courses and the substantive courses and the days they are held. Some classes are offered more than others because - especially the Research and Writing – they are pretty heavily attended so we need different days to accommodate the need.

She said that this is giving a pretty clear plan for completion, by semester, and we are deliberate in where the classes are placed. Dr. Powers is going to send the planning guide to the members of the Committee to see if the order of the classes makes sense. She wants them to look at it to see if it makes a cohesive semester, knowing that the classes in the chart are the classes they must take. They really are not going to have much of a choice. But if they didn't want liberal arts Math 2, but wanted 1, Statistics, that is something that we would work with. We also want to make sure that students are attending at least part time, so they are Financial Aid ready.

Dr. Powers then asked the group as past students, if this is something that is welcoming and easily followed. She said we are interested in their feedback as to whether this makes sense as they are put together in a particular semester. For example, ENC1101 should come first before PLA1104 because the foundation for writing should be completed first.

Iryna Bandaryk asked if Financial Accounting is required.

Dr. Powers said it's mandated. She said again that this is going to be sent out to the committee members and said that any feedback is welcome.

DISCUSSION/SUGGESTIONS: **Dr. Christy Powers, Chair**

-Open floor to committee for suggestions

Dr. Powers mentioned that we are a minute over time, but she wanted to open the floor to suggestions or questions. She also said that the members can reach out and share ideas and comments at any time.

Vitalia Shafer said that she is a member of AILA the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and she has access to general email of the central Florida Chapter, so if there are opportunities for internships, etc., she can forward an email to them.

Dr. Powers said that any opportunities to be part of that would be welcome.

CLOSING REMARKS/ADJOURNMENT: **Dr. Christy Powers, Chair**

Dr. Powers said that we discussed many great things and she is happy that everyone assisted and was able to give input. There are more things to come and we are open to all the feedback.

We will be sending out the Elective Chart, and our AS Planning to make sure that the course combinations seem that they belong together in a particular semester.

Dr. Powers called on Dean Demers for closing remarks.

Dean Demers thanked everyone for joining the meeting and said it's really helpful. We get a double benefit from this: the state requires that if you have an AS program you have to have an Advisory Committee; and we also have a requirement from our Accrediting Body that we have an Advisory Committee. They are particular about having a general public member and that we also have graduates of our program who are vested in making sure that we do the right thing so their degree retains its value. She really appreciates the members coming to the meeting and being willing to share and comment and invited them to share any time.

Dr. Powers then thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.

(Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.)

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