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2017 PAC Minutes, Paralegal

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Casey's Meeting Minutes
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June 15, 2017 – 6:50 PM – 8:00 PM
H1005 – Fanshawe College

Present:
Nick Dasios Crystal West
Mark Hunter Robin Minielly
Dana Raffa Brittany Basra
Dianne Elliot Sarah Goodman
Barbara Bidner Kassandra Hallett
Stacey Pipicelli Tom Schoenleber
Chris Surowiak

Regrets: Linda Pratt, Robert Prior, Angela Walsh and Carmen Dawdy

Call to Order: Dianne Elliot called the meeting to order at 6:50 PM

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, PAST MINUTES & ACTION ITEMS

• Nick welcomed the committee and began introductions of PAC meeting members
• Last meeting we decided to have two separate PAC meetings for the Law Clerk program and Paralegal program
• Dianne Elliot has agreed to Chair our meeting this evening

PARALEGAL PROGRAM

UPDATES

Paralegal Pathways

• Our mission is to give our graduates the best legal education they can get while helping them find jobs in the field
• Feedback was given from firms to make our students stronger candidates for the field
• This included the creation of two separate certificate programs giving the students intensive training in litigation and commercial
• New strategy to streamline what is the core of what the biggest firms are looking for when hiring our students?
• Working together with the Law Clerk program – asking for approval of online course delivery of both Introduction to Civil Procedure (LAWS-1007) and Civil Procedure Advanced (LAWS-5006) courses, as these two courses are the foundation for practicing litigation
• Introduction to Civil Procedure course is running in the Fall – students to have the option of taking this course concurrently with Paralegal program courses, available in Level One or upon completing the program
• Civil Procedure Advanced course taken as an additional course in the Summer term
• If Paralegal students can complete both courses, this may be an opportunity to develop an advanced Law Clerk certificate (ex. Class Action Litigation)
• Paralegal students to have a pathway into these certificates by completing these courses – cuts expense and time, creating a more streamline approach
• These courses could be valuable in assisting students in co-op placements, already having exposure to civil procedure content
• We will need to ensure the paralegal scope work in co-op placements is still meeting the requirements of the Law Society
• This could also be beneficial for students entering into a Law Clerk role first – they will be more prepared and have gained the necessary skills to grow into a Paralegal position
• This will be addressed at the Law Clerk Program Review Meeting – will look at what other courses are best to turn into online versions, eventually to be opened up to the Paralegal students

Research
• Survey – majority of software used across all firms are taught to our students
• PowerPoint is currently taught in the Paralegal program – hoping to introduce into the Law Clerk program
• Hoping to integrate Net Easy Law and One Note into the Paralegal program
• OneNote – part of Microsoft Suite, easy to integrate into the program
• Web-Design skills set software – helpful for sole practitioner or small business
• PrimaFact is one software that most digital firms use which we are exploring to introduce to our students – it is dedicated to the legal community
• Adobe Acrobat is taught in the Law Clerk program
• CLEO software will be considered as an alterative to PC Law in both the Paralegal and Law Clerk program accounting courses

Degree Audit Change & Reaccreditation
• Last year we were required to undergo a reaccreditation of the Law Society
• Result was a change to the Degree Audit, which meant we needed to put certain courses in certain semesters
• Advocacy and Evidence has been moved into the last semester of the Paralegal program
• Provincial Offences, Criminal Summary Conviction, Residential Landlord and Tenant Law courses has been moved into second semester
• Any student coming into placement in the normal period has the training in these areas
• Will ensure students are as well trained as possible when coming to you on placement to be successful
• The program is a lot stronger with this configuration
• Legal Research and Writing course is currently delivered as a three hour course
• Ask to the PAC members to increase the Legal Research and Writing course to a four hour delivery

ACTION ITEM: Legal Research and Writing course to be extended to a four-hour course delivery
• Student feedback suggests this would be beneficial as the current delivery is rushed and content is not properly absorbed and students need more time to ask questions
• Possibility of having Legal Research and Writing course a full four hour lab delivery in the future

NEW INITIATIVES

Introduction to Paralegal Field Placement
• The Introduction to Paralegal Field Placement course is now in the first semester
• Created specifically for our students to learn some of the skills they need to land their placement positions
• Students gained interviewing skills - mock interviews performed by former HR Director of Siskinds
• Paralegal program graduates working for Siskinds came to the college to speak to the students about what they do
• Expectations and Obligations – list created for students preparing for field placement

New Field Placement Contract
• Will save a tremendous amount of time for our Paralegal Hosts
• Includes a new clause for a renewable contract
• Hosts will no longer need to sign a contract annually
• Stacey Pipicelli – Placement Coordinator
• Please take the time to revise the new contract – if you have any questions please connect with Nick Dasios

Improvement of Placement Process
• Hoping to have students placed earlier in field placements – as early as October for Part-Time placements and November for traditional placements (that were to start in March and run through the end of April)
• Most Hosts expressed they were not interested in securing students as early as November as they thought it was too early
• Reasoning included preparedness of students and timing of workload
• Given this, we thought of what we could do to kick-start the process of having students connect with the Hosts as early as possible
• Nick and Stacey held a Host Appreciation and Paralegal Student Networking event in February
• The event was successful and gave students the opportunity to train in networking
• Feedback – the students enjoyed it, and the Hosts want to participate in this event again next year
• The one challenge we encountered was the ratio of students to Hosts – more Hosts are needed for future events
• Many Hosts were able to find students they wanted to work with for the placement period
• Challenge moving forward – the Paralegal program is growing
• This past year, we have sent out 20 percent less offers and received 71 respondents for 50 seats in the program
• Also, for the first time the application close date for the Paralegal program was February 1st
• As a result, there is a demand for quality placements
• Call to the PAC members – if you know of any employers that are interested in hosting students for placement, please let Nick Dasios know
• A minimum of 120 hours of placement time is required by the Law Society, however there is no limit on the number of hours a student can work

Paralegal Mock Trial Competition

• The Fanshawe College Paralegal Team won 1st place and the Cup at the Mock Trial Competition
• Initiatives such as these really allow our students the opportunity to shine and apply their skills learned in the classroom
• Thank you to our staff, faculty and students for volunteering their time

Paralegal Student Association

• Students were very excited about this opportunity, created a personal logo
• Nine students have agreed to lead class of sixty – five students had to campaign through an election
• The Association meets on a weekly basis
• They plan social events such as BBQ, movie and game nights
• First CPD Event was co-chaired by the students
• Entire event was run and organized by the students – 50 registrants attended to support this event
• Students were responsible for online registration, marketing, catering, research, Law Society accreditation, etc.
• The Nota Bene Newsletter – a monthly or bi-monthly publication that focuses on our students and what they are doing, includes ‘In Case You Missed It’ column
• This newsletter gives students the opportunity to write about legal developments of interest (ex. Changes to legislation, Case comments)
• The Coordinator would like to see this eventually expand into a Law Journal
• The Paralegal Student Association also have a social media Facebook page
• The goal is to bring all students together in the program and build relationships to stay connected, leading to opportunities in the future

Provincial Offences Mock Day

• We have been expanding this as an opportunity to bring our curriculum to life
• Learning about Provincial Offences is best understood when dealing with clients who have committed these offences
• We have now integrated the Advanced Police Studies students into the day – previously used Special Constables
• Law Clerk students are recruited to commit offences across the college, are apprehended by the APS students and issued Provincial Offence Notices
• The students are then taken to the Provincial Offences Court where the Paralegal students try these cases
• This Day allows students the opportunity to assess and apply what they have learned in the classroom

Paralegal Student Run Law Clinic

• Unfortunately we were not ready to launch this from an administrative standpoint this year
• Will be run by the Paralegal students with support from the Law Clerk program
• The aim is to help Fanshawe College students with any Paralegal scope issues (ex. Landlord and Tenant Law)
• The FSU is on board and will offer office space and meeting rooms for the Clinic
• We are in need of funding and someone to be the licensee responsible for training and supervision of the students
• Looking at the potential to open the Clinic up to the community in the future – there are logistics and challenges to this

Signature Paralegal Charity Event

• Early planning stages for a benefit concert had begun
• This will be reserved for next year’s group due to time constraints this year
• The goal is to have the Paralegal students working with the community to build the Paralegal program brand
Publishing

- Academic Paralegal Journal
- Currently nothing like this in Ontario
- Open to members in the community who wish to write about an area of interest – gives them the opportunity to publish their work
- A task for next year’s group to consider developing

Special Events

- We support a variety of events including:
- Lawyers Feed the Hungry
- March 29, 2017 – Paralegals & Family Law Meeting
- We invited the Paralegal community to Fanshawe College to discuss limited Paralegal scope of practice in Family Law
- Submissions were sent to the Government and Law Society requesting Fanshawe College be a pilot school to offer this certificate to the community
- Ontario Paralegal Association – Warren Cummings spoke to our students about the organization
- RBC Executives spoke to our students about business plans and answered questions about starting a business
- Graduates spoke to our students about preparation for the Paralegal Licencing Exam

New Immigration Law Certificate

- Immigration Law Certificate in development
- We are in contact with the Federal Immigration Minister
- A pathway for Paralegal students to pursue future employment

Law Clerk & Paralegal Program Heads Group

- Reporting structure from Ontario Colleges that leads from the program levels
- The Law Clerk and Paralegal programs currently do not have a heads group
- Mark Hunter has received approval from Ontario Colleges to establish this group
- We have been in contact with all of the Law Clerk and Paralegal program Coordinators in the province and hoping to have our first meeting in the fall
- This group can influence the regulatory group – will ask someone from the Law Society Education Committee to join this group to gain insight into education at the college level

**DISCUSSION/FEEDBACK ON PROGRAM/PAC MEMBER NEEDS/WANTS**

- You are all valuable leaders in the community and we appreciate any ideas or suggestions you may have for how to improve our programs for our students and how to make the Paralegal community as strong as possible
- Suggestion to extend the invitation for social events to the Paralegal community – a good way to solidify the relationship between the program and community partners
- Student feedback:
  - Lack of Evidence and Advocacy education – can we influence the Law Society to address this?
  - Students feel this is really integral to placement – most tasks require knowledge of evidence
  - Students feel it would be beneficial for Evidence course to run a full semester, rather than compressed, given it is quite dense in content

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION NEXT MEETING**

- We will be actively seeking a Paralegal PAC Chair
- Update: Dianne Elliot has agreed to Chair the Paralegal Committee moving forward

**MEETING CLOSE**

- Dianne Elliott adjourned the meeting at 8:20 PM