

FLORIDA **A&M** UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees

**Special Committee on the College of Law
Committee Minutes
April 6, 2022**

The Special Committee on the College of Law met with the law faculty for a round table discussion on April 6, 2022. Trustees Belvin Perry, Otis Cliatt, and Kristin Harper were present and established a quorum. Trustees Cavazos, Dubose, Whigham, and Moore also attended the meeting.

Trustee/committee chair Belvin Perry shared that the purpose of the meeting was to hear the faculty's perspective regarding the bar passage rates.

The College of Law (COL) faculty and the Committee discussed funding needs, student success, bar preparation, and faculty recruitment. A synopsis of the comments is provided below:

Funding:

- The University needs to provide more full scholarships for students. Students are transferring to other law schools because of a lack of funding. Some of the highest performing students are being poached away from the COL after the first year.
- The University should ask for enough money to endow scholarships.
- The University should seek funding for at-risk students to take a bar examination review course.
- Many recent graduates need additional financial resources so that they don't have to work while studying for the bar examination.
- It was also suggested that the University should seek funding from various sources to pay for a bar examination review course for at-risk students.

Student Success and Bar Prep

- The COL should start preparing students for the bar examination on the first day of law school.
- The COL needs to institute a preparatory law program for students prior to the start of the fall semester.
- Students should be required to take a comprehensive exam at the end of each year to help prepare them for the bar examination.
- The COL should offer skills development follow-through after the first year.
- The COL should also consider requiring writing across the curriculum and have smaller class sizes; so that students' writing skills can be properly addressed by faculty.
- The COL needs to provide wrap-around services for students. This should be included as a goal in the University's new strategic plan.
- The COL needs to increase the number of legal writing professors and have smaller class sizes.

Faculty

- The University needs to start the faculty recruitment process earlier in an effort to recruit the best candidates.
- The Academic Success and Bar Prep program at the COL has a severe staffing shortage.
- The COL needs additional funds for faculty recruitment.
- The COL needs to ensure that faculty members are teaching subjects that are included on bar examinations.
- Faculty must include essay questions on their examinations. This requirement would help strengthen students' writing skills.

Approximately 90% of the faculty attending the meeting indicated that requiring a higher grade point average and keeping the LSAT score the same would increase the bar passage rate. They all agreed that focusing on legal writing and wrap-around services would improve the passage rate. The faculty also emphasized that the COL should address these issues while staying true to its statutory mission.

The Committee and other members of the Board of Trustees emphasized that the first-time bar passage rate is a Board of Trustees and University priority. They shared that they fully support the COL and its faculty and students. They agreed that the most prevalent issue for the COL and its students is the lack of sufficient funding.

Faculty and BOT suggested that the focus should include:

- Scholarships for tuition, fees, and living expenses, including housing
- Wrap-around services for students
- Skills development for passing the Florida Bar Examination and the Uniform Bar Examination
- Investing in legal writing throughout the program
- Using predictive analytics to guide intervention strategies
- Replicating best practices

Provost Maurice Edington shared that the Board of Governors wants to see the passage rate within five points of the 80% benchmark. He said that the University and the COL will identify the “low hanging fruit” and agree on how to address them. He said that the COL and the University also need to agree on what success looks like for the College of Law.

In closing, Trustee Perry stated that the committee would reconvene to sort out some short-term goals and set timelines regarding next steps.

There being no further business for the Committee, the meeting adjourned.