

**Board of Trustees
Special Committee on the College of Law
Conference Call
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 28, 2020**

Chair Belvin Perry called the meeting to order. The following Committee members were present and established a quorum: Trustees Harper, Lawrence, and Perry.

Trustee Perry recognized Board of Trustees Vice Chair Kimberly Moore for the Committee's charge. Trustee Moore provided the following guidance:

- The Committee will establish guiding principles that will drive the future work of the committee.
 - The focus should pertain to: student performance, culture, stakeholder engagement model (community and business) and the College of Law standing (statewide and nationally)
- The Committee will establish a framework in partnership with incoming Dean Keller that sets the new course for the College with faculty and student engagement
 - Create in partnership with the University, a dashboard that captures goals and milestones that will be implemented to measure progress

Vice Chair Moore indicated that the College of Law Committee is expected to provide quarterly updates to the full Board.

Next, Trustee Perry shared some of his observations regarding the College of Law and the performance of graduates on the Florida Bar examination. He shared that the way the courses are being taught should be reviewed. He pointed out that some courses only have one exam the entire semester and thus students are not being prepared for how to answer bar exam questions. Maybe faculty evaluations should also be reviewed to determine if students believe they are getting what they need to be successful. The passage rates for the last three years: 2017 – 50%, 2018 – 47%, and 2019 – 57%. He stated that courses that cover subject matter that is covered on the bar examination should be required for law students.

- Trustee Perry suggested that the College should consider reviewing the admissions standards and put more emphasis on student GPA, as FAMU law school data has shown that students with higher GPAs, perform better on the bar exam than students with higher LSAT scores.
- Next, he suggested that legal writing and research and analytical courses should be reviewed for quality and quantity.

Trustee Perry asked for input from the Committee. He said that at the end of the meeting the Committee needed to have some direction and map out strategies regarding what it needed to do.

Trustee Harper observed that based on the reports she reviewed, the curriculum didn't appear to cover all tested subjects and may not be coordinated well amongst the professors. She suggested that the College should address the sequence of the curriculum and start bar preparation at year one. Based on student feedback, she surmised that students want credit for key courses that lead to better student outcomes. She suggested that the College needs consistent and reliable data that it can benchmark and measure itself against. The College should also engage with VP Barrington to coordinate the data. Trustee Harper suggested the need for professional development regarding teaching methodologies for faculty. She suggested that wrap-around services are necessary to close gaps and provide additional support. The College should coordinate with the main campus to coordinate early intervention strategies using predictive analytic tools. As a final point, Trustee Harper stated that students perceived that some faculty members were not familiar with the bar examination.

Trustee Lawrence shared five points that should be considered:

1. First year law students need to be connected with BarBri for all three years of law school.
2. Look at the culture at the College to ensure that all students feel respected and care about.
3. Students should be required to take every course that is related to the bar exam.
4. Consider whether the College has the right bottom-line score for the LSAT.
5. Find out to what extent students enter the College then transfer to another law school after the first year.

Trustee Perry shared admissions data for the law schools in Florida:

	Median LSAT scores	Median GPA
University of Florida	157	3.5
Florida State University	158	3.52
University of Miami	157	3.36
Florida International University	156	3.63
Stetson University	154	3.27
Barry University	146	2.96
Ava Maria University	148	3.0
St. Thomas University	147	3.06
Florida A&M University	146	3.0
Florida Coastal	144	2.88
Nova Southeastern University	149	3.1

Trustee Lawrence asked for the minimum LSAT score required by FAMU College of Law. Dean Nikki Booth shared that in 2018 the minimum score for admission was 145, 2019 was 146 and now it's 146. She reported that an LSAT score of 144 requires a justification for admissions. As a follow-up, Trustee Lawrence asked to be provided the relationship between the LSAT score, GPA and bar passage rate. Dean Booth replied that the LSAT and GPA are predictors, but for FAMU students, the major predictor is the first year GPA. She indicated that bar preparation must start the first day students enter law school. The College commissioned BarBri to conduct a longitudinal study which showed that more intervention is needed at the end of the first year. She also shared that last year, the faculty was charged with revising and reviewing the curriculum. They also changed some non-credit earning courses to credit-earning.

Trustee Perry shared that the Committee needs to see what happened with several actions that the College indicated would be implemented. 1) hiring an academic planning for success advisor for students on probation and for course selection; 2) implementing a mandatory upper level exam for part-time second and third-year students. The exam measured the student's knowledge and analytical skills and also identified deficiencies; 3) implementing a small study program for first-year students meant to increase their interaction with faculty; 4) appointing a permanent director of the bar prep program; and 5) hiring additional staff and a permanent legal writing director.

Trustee Perry recognized Provost Edington to provide an update on next steps and strategies. Provost Edington expressed regrets for incoming Dean Keller, as she could not attend the meeting. He indicated that she has met with each committee member and that the meetings were very productive.

Provost Edington reminded the Committee he established a licensure passage rate task force to identify necessary actions and key steps, with the ultimate goal of having sustained levels of performance. He said that the task force identified some critical factors for student success:

- Foundational Skills
- Faculty Pedagogy
- Academic Support
- Curricula
- Culture
- Program Leadership
- Clinical Experiences
- Professional Development (faculty, staff, students)

Provost Edington stated that the task force will provide a report to the Board at its June 2020 meeting, with specific recommendations regarding the College of Law, highlighting things that need to be enhanced and changed. He shared that the newly appointed dean has already had conversations with the administration and Dean Boothe. She is reviewing the three consultant reports regarding the College and is creating plans of action for her first 30, 60 and 90-days on the job. She plans to start in July 2020.

Trustee Perry asked the Committee for suggested next steps. Trustee Harper indicated that she agreed with the prioritization of student performance, curriculum, faculty and ASBP (intended to support students with additional wrap-around services). She said that driving strong communication between the faculty teaching the bar prep courses and the ASBP team is critically important. Trustee Harper stated that student performance ties into campus culture.

Trustee Lawrence indicated that he wanted to understand the culture and how it is perceived. He was also interested in how students are tracked, giving them the very best chance of success. He also wanted to know the description of a typical student transferring from the College and whether it was a large problem. Trustee Perry suggested that a representative from BarBri could make a presentation to the Committee regarding the students' performance on the bar exam.

Trustee Moore challenged President Robinson, Provost Edington and the dean with having transparent steps, including accountability, milestones, and on-going improvement in key areas. She emphasized that the plan must be implemented and executed.

In closing, Trustee Perry made the following suggestions:

1. Trustee Perry and Provost Edington will meet during the next week to refine what the committee stated regarding next steps.
2. Staff will arrange a 20-minute presentation from BarBri through Zoom.
3. Dr Edington and Trustee Perry will set a timeline for Committee actions.
4. The Committee needs to look at financial assistance for students.

Finally, Trustee Perry reiterated that plan must be executed and those responsible must be held accountable. If that is not done, all of this will be for naught. He said that he strongly believes that bar preparation starts at the beginning of law school and that there is no reason the FAMU College of Law is not one of the top four law schools in Florida.

With there being no further business for the Committee, the meeting adjourned.