

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

Special Committee on the College of Law
Wednesday, June 1, 2022
4:15 p.m.
Band Rehearsal Hall

Committee Members: Trustee Otis Cliatt, Chair
Trustees Zachary Bell, Michael Dubose, and Kristin Harper

AGENDA

- | | | |
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| I. | Call to Order | Trustee Cliatt |
| II. | Roll Call | Linda Barge-Miles |

ACTION ITEM

- | | | |
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| III. | Approval of Minutes | Trustee Cliatt |
| | A. February 16, 2022 | |
| | B. April 6, 2022 | |

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- | | | |
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| IV. | Comprehensive Report | Dean Deidre Keller |
| V. | Adjournment | Trustee Cliatt |

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

**Special Committee on the College of Law
Minutes
June 1, 2022**

Subject: Special Committee on the College of Law Meeting Minutes

Proposed Board Action: Approval of the Minutes

Rationale: Section 5.10 of the Board of Trustees Operating Procedures provides that detailed minutes should be kept for any Board or Committee meeting. Those minutes should include a record of votes cast and attendance.

Recommendation: Approve the Board of Trustees meeting minutes for February 16, 2022 and April 6, 2022.

Attachments: Yes, copies of the minutes are attached.

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

**Special Committee on the College of Law
Committee Minutes
February 16, 2022**

The Special Committee on the College of Law met on February 16, 2022. The following committee members were present and established a quorum: Belvin Perry, Dave Lawrence, and Kristin Harper.

Trustee Perry asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 15, 2021 meeting. Trustee Lawrence moved approval. The motion was seconded by Trustee Harper and passed with a unanimous vote.

Next, Trustee Perry recognized the College of Law consultant Barry Currier for a report. Mr. Currier shared that to move the bar passage rate to 80%, the fastest and most reliable way to do it is to provide more resources to the College of law to recruit different students than they can recruit right now. He said that the University should provide \$3 million dollars, a million dollars a year each year for three years to the College. This money would be used to recruit students and would give the college a realistic chance to improve the first-time passage rate to 80%. He surmised that FAMU has a challenge in recruiting students with higher test scores and grade point averages because students might not choose to attend because of issues such as rankings, career options, and other things that make FAMU less attractive. He suggested that if the school does not get more scholarship money, its accreditation will not be negatively affected because FAMU is meeting the accreditation passage rate requirement. He highly recommended that the University should recruit stronger students if it wants to have a high bar passage rate.

Trustee Dubose stated that the University should focus on retention and progression in the program. That would also include expanding internships with corporations and law firms.

Trustee Moore pointed out that she thought that the Board was looking for a comprehensive report that not only looked at money, but also looked at faculty, students and the student-faculty engagement, and wraparound services.

Trustee Cavazos asked if Mr. Currier has reduced the oral report to writing. He said that he has not drafted a final report. She also inquired about how he came up with the three million dollar amount and whether it was supported by data. Trustee Perry asked about his deliverables and indicated that the Committee was not involved in determining them.

Trustee Harper shared that his report was not necessarily what she was expecting. She indicated that providing money to the College to increase the bar passage rate is too simplistic of a solution. She said that it's not comprehensive and is not fitting the scope of what was intended.

Chair Lawson shared that Pharmacy went from a low score to a high score, but the College of Pharmacy made adjustments to its curriculum, instituted practice tests, and made other changes. Chair Lawson stated that the Board wanted to see the comprehensive report soon. He then asked the Provost to interject regarding the next steps.

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

Provost Edington clarified that Mr. Currier was primarily speaking to the question of what's the single most impactful set of decisions that the University can make in the short term to align the bar passage rate. He said that was why analysis of the data and predictive analytics were the focus. He said that the Board was having a broader conversation regarding a comprehensive assessment of the College.

Trustee Cliatt suggested that the Board have further meetings regarding this College with the President, Provost, and Dean; and that Mr. Currier provide the report.

Trustee Perry stated that he wants to ensure that the students are successful in the job market.

Chair Lawson asked the committee to agree on a due date for the submission of the final comprehensive plan. Provost Edington suggested that the report could be ready in sixty days. This report would include conversations with students, faculty, and individual conversations with each member of the Board. He said that there needs to be a decision regarding the true goals and that the set of recommendations needs to be targeted to achieve those goals.

Several Trustees emphasized that they are confident in the dean and that she has their full support.

Dean Keller reviewed the most recent bar passage numbers with the Committee. She said that the July 2021 passage rate was 56% and the state average was 71.6%. The passage rate for FAMU students is an average of 12 points lower than the state passage rate. BarBri prepared a study of FAMU students sitting for the bar. That study revealed that students coming in with a 146-147 LSAT and a 3.0-3.1 GPA have a 52%-53% chance of passing the bar examination the first time. She also shared that the net tuition is higher at FAMU than at other SUS law schools because they offer better scholarships. Only eight percent of FAMU students have a 50% or better scholarship, whereas other schools offer 25% of their students such scholarships.

Dean Keller said that all students are encouraged to take a bar review course. Trustee Stone inquired about the possibility of encouraging students to transfer to the College of Law. Dean Keller indicated that she was focused on bringing in well-credentialed first-year students and retaining them.

Trustee Perry closed the meeting by suggesting that the University ask the legislature for the requisite amount of money the College needs to be successful. Chair Lawson agreed that the request should be included in the University's Legislative Budget Request.

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

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.