

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

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

The Special Committee on the College of Law met on Wednesday, June 1, 2022. Trustee Otis Cliatt called the meeting to order with the following committee members present establishing a quorum: Otis Cliatt, Michael Dubose, Zachary Bell, and Kristin Harper.

Trustee Cliatt asked for a motion to approve the February 16, 2022, and April 6, 2022 meeting minutes. Trustee Bell moved approval. Trustee Harper seconded the movement, and it passed with a unanimous vote.

Next, Trustee Cliatt recognized Dean Keller to present her comprehensive report on the College of Law (COL) to the Committee. She shared that the information contained her recommendations regarding putting the COL on the road to sustained success. Her evaluation centered on student success, specifically first-time bar passage, as the cornerstone of the COL's success.

The Comprehensive Report includes an executive summary, implementation status, and next steps. The report included strategies from contracted experts. Dean Keller also engaged key constituents and reviewed existing consultant reports in making the recommendations.

1. **Recommendation:** The COL should recruit and retain students in line with its critical mission, whose incoming credentials demonstrate the College can support them to success on the bar and in the profession.
Strategies: The report demonstrates that the other State University System (SUS) law schools and the other Historically Black College and University (HBCU) law schools generally aid more of their students and a higher rate than FAMU. She also shared that most of the COL's peers provide scholarships at admission, which students maintain throughout their enrollment. They must also long as they remain in good standing. She noted that the University provided the COL a one-time \$1M infusion for retention scholarships.
2. **Recommendation:** The COL needs to stabilize its staff, infrastructure, and facilities to consistently provide students with the wrap-around support they need to thrive.
Strategies: Strategies include fully staffing student services departments and addressing infrastructure and facilities issues, primarily security and parking, providing end-to-end academic programming that meets admitted incoming students where they are and supports them to succeed on the bar and in the profession. She said the COL needs to assess and optimize everything from pre-matriculation programming, the skills curriculum, and the bar preparation program.
3. **Recommendation:** The COL needs to provide faculty with the resources and development they need to align curriculum and pedagogy with best practices in student success; to adapt to changing circumstances by adopting the National Council of Bar Examiners' next-gen bar exam. These change de-emphasizes memorization and center on skills.

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Strategies: Hiring faculty to ensure that all foundational courses are taught by permanent full-time faculty. The COL also needs to provide the faculty with development and resources to optimize the curriculum and pedagogy, and improve the assessment tools and processes to ensure the development opportunities for faculty are flagged and addressed in real-time.

4. Recommendation: Maximize the COL's fundraising capabilities.

Strategies: The COL must optimize its engagement with alumni and other potential donors, write and administer grants and broaden the COL's media reach.

Dean Keller shared that the COL does not have an out-of-state waiver for students from Georgia. Trustee Cliatt confirmed that COL students can access the University of Central Florida's health clinic. FAMU reimburses the health fee to UCF.

Chair Lawson asked if it was a challenge for the COL to get strong candidates and Dean Keller responded in the affirmative. She said that students with a 3.5-grade point average (GPA) and a 150 Law School Admissions Test score (LSAT) are hard to attract to FAMU because they have a broad choice of other law schools. Trustee Cliatt indicated that he believed that the COL could bring in strong candidates. Dean Keller said that one of the strategies is to reinvigorate the 3+3 program, which would be a direct route for FAMU students to attend the College of Law.

The COL faculty adopted a proposal that requires students with a first-year GPA of 2.7 or lower to take additional coursework, have intrusive advising provided by the instructional dean, and the academic success/bar personnel. They are also addressing COL student writing by requiring three semesters of legal writing rather than two. They also need a better student-faculty ratio in the legal writing program. She shared that Florida International's law instructors have 25-30 students, whereas FAMU instructors have over 40 students. By lowering the ratio, faculty can give students better feedback and spend more time helping to improve their writing skills.

Trustee Bell pointed out that COL students pay several fees and don't have an opportunity to use the resources. For instance, he said students don't have access to transportation or parking, although they pay a transportation fee. Trustee Cliatt said that the COL is starting a shuttle service in August or September to transport students to parking.

Trustee Cavazos added that the American Bar Association has a committee looking at other ways to assess student success. She also added that the faculty had contacted her regarding several concerns:

- Why was the Comprehensive Report shared with the Board before being shared with them?
- Was the report based on Barry Currier's observations?
- Did Mr. Currier perform the tasks on his contract?
- Did Mr. Currier meet with staff, students, and faculty?
- Were top students queried about whether a scholarship would have kept them at the FAMU COL?
- The faculty had concerns regarding the termination of the SCALES program, noting that the valedictorian of the last class was in the SCALES program. The SCALES program

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was a two-week program for students entering the COL with less than a 147 on the LSAT.

Dean Keller said the recommendations from the report were presented at a faculty meeting. The Comprehensive Report includes Mr. Currier's report in the appendix. Mr. Currier spoke with individuals she asked him to talk with and the COL leadership team. Dean Keller asked him to provide a particular consideration of various issues, including recruiting and retention and student evaluations. She asked him to look at other law schools that are not housed on the main campus and assess how they addressed infrastructure issues. He completed the requested tasks. She also shared that she spoke with three students that transferred to other law schools this year. Two received better scholarships and one transferred for reputational reasons.

Dean Keller reported that the SCALE program was not terminated but was paused. The data suggested that the program did not impact the cohort, so she redirected those resources.

Chair Lawson requested that Dean Keller consider immediately addressing the short-term issues that can improve performance. Trustee Cliatt said that during each meeting, there should be follow-up on the issues raised, and from meeting to meeting, make sure that there is a continuation of the discussion.

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