FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees

Special Committee on the College of Law
Committee Minutes
February 15, 2023

The Special Committee on the College of Law met on Wednesday, February 15, 2023. Trustee Otis Cliatt called the meeting to order with the following committee members establishing a quorum: Otis Cliatt, Michael Dubose and Kristin Harper.

Trustee Cliatt asked for a motion to approve the December 7, 2022 meeting minutes. Trustee Harper moved approval. Trustee Dubose seconded the movement, it was passed with a unanimous vote.

Dean Keller provided an executive summary to the comprehensive report from June 2022. The executive summary contained four components, recruitment and retention, staff infrastructure and facilities, faculty development and fundraising. Recommendations for (1) recruiting and retaining students whose incoming credential demonstrate that the College can support them to success on the bar and in the profession; (2) stabilizing the College's staff, infrastructure and facilities to provide the wrap-around support students need to thrive; (3) providing faculty with the resources and development they need to align curriculum and pedagogy with best practices in student success, and to adapt to changing circumstances; and (4) providing faculty with the resources and development they need to align curriculum and pedagogy with best practices in student success, and to adapt to changing circumstances were included in the summary.

Since the June 2022 meeting, the college has made significant progress by seating a very strong incoming cohort last fall that had a median LSAT of 150 and a median undergraduate GPA of 3.41. Studies predict students with these credentials have a median 75% chance of first-time bar pass. At the 25th percentile, that student has a 66% chance of first-time bar pass and, at the 75th percentile, that student has an 87% change at first-time bar pass. This is up from the class of 2019 whose median was at 53% probability of first-time bar pass; at the 25th percentile was at 42% and the 75th percentile was at 72% probability of first-time bar pass. The college also retained all but four of its high performing students. The College is now focused on seating the fall 2023 cohort by intentionally targeting those students by visiting HBCUs, participating in the HBCU Pre-law Summit, and targeting pre-law students at the University.

Strategies are being deployed to stabilize the college's staff, infrastructure and facilities to provide the wrap-around support students need to thrive by fully staffing student services departments, addressing infrastructure and facilities issues, primarily security and parking, by deploying the venom shuttle that runs from the college to the parking facility from 7am to 5pm with a van pick up from 5pm to 10pm, and providing end-to-end academic programming by adding teaching assistants to every doctrinal first-year course and providing intensive advising to all students whose GPA is below a 2.7 at the conclusion of their foundational curriculum.

Dean Keller informed the committee that the big moving circumstance on the horizon is the adoption of what the National Council of Bar Examiners is referring to as the next Gen Bar Exam and expressed the College's need to be ready for this looming change. The first aspect of this is making sure the faculty is fully staffed with permanent faculty teaching all required courses. The college is focused on hiring a Director of Legal Research and Writing, a position that has been vacant for over a decade. In terms of development and resources, the college began colleague conversations in October, and will continue throughout the academic year with 10 scheduled on topics including online pedagogy, the intersection of speech and tax exemption, and comparative law as utilized by the Caribbean Court of Justice. The college is currently working with university personnel to make necessary changes to the course evaluation process and increasing student participation. The law school survey on student engagement has also been deployed for the first time since 2018.

The final recommendation in the report is to provide faculty with the resources and development they need to align curriculum and pedagogy with best practices in student success, and to adapt to changing circumstances. The strategies to enact this recommendation include optimizing engagement with alumni and other potential donors, enhancing the College's capacity to write and administer grants, and broadening the College's media reach. A search is currently underway to identify a vendor to assist with the next marketing campaign.

Implementation and Next Steps: Dean Keller reported that 45% of the fall 2022 incoming cohort received scholarship aid. Additionally, 26% of the student body received aid of one-half tuition or more in academic year 2022. 129 students with a median LSAT of 153 and a median undergraduate GPA of 3.6 have been fully admitted for fall 2023. She stated that a student with this profile has an 85% probability of passing the bar examination the first time. The College is also working to have the 2023 class seated by June 15th and developing a robust admissions profile of student credentials. This quantitative and qualitative data analysis project is scheduled for completion this year. The admissions process will also need revision. Finally, efforts must continue to ensure adequate scholarship funding. In terms of faculty resources and development, two faculty members were hired last year and the College is working to fill seven vacancies for fall 2023. With the approach of the Next Gen Bar Examination, faculty development focus for this year has been on pedagogy and assessment. The College is also working to complete assessment of the academic success and bar preparation program. Strategic hires have been made in the library, which allows for more hours of operation, the shuttle driver, career services and IT. The next steps will be to make hires in the key areas of admissions, student services and faculty support. Also working on enhancing the financial aid distribution process and improving processes with the College and staff development. The College also had a great year of fundraising, raising more than $650,000 during the twentieth anniversary events between November 21, 2022 and December 22, 2022. Dr. Keller thanked the faculty, staff, the University and the Board for their work, efforts and participation in the 21 events commemorating the anniversary. The College is working on a history book for distribution that chronicles the 20 years of the re-established FAMU College of Law. The College is also hosting a series of events and programs in various regions to expand engagement by connecting with university alumni who graduated from other law schools to gain insight on career and mentoring opportunities for the current law students, and to learn about assistance with career and professional development programs. A marketing initiative to help increase enrollment of academically sound mission applicants is also being developed. Several partnerships with financial and legal industries have been developed to leverage relationships to provide more experiential learning and employment opportunities for our students. The Dean's Advisory Council, which consist of community leaders, has supported the College's efforts through fundraising initiatives. Their role will be broadened to increase opportunities to serve as ambassadors for family law.

In conclusion, Dr. Keller stated that significant progress had been made, but the College has more work to do, and will provide timely updates as needed. She also informed the board that the college recently submitted its required annual bar passage report to the American Bar Association. With this submission, the College remain in compliance with a 78.57% ultimate bar pass rate for the class of 2020.

Trustee Cliatt asked Dean Keller to provide an in-depth analysis of the fall 2023 admitted cohorts' data in comparison to the history of the College. She informed the committee that the incoming cohort is an improvement and that they have an 85% chance of first-time bar pass rate based on data comparing the 75% rate for the fall 2022 cohort. If the medians of the two cohorts are maintained, the probability of first-time bar passage would increase by approximately 10% year over year.

Trustee Harper then inquired about the seven vacancies. Dean Keller responded that the vacancies are not new roles, but were the results of turn over, assuming other roles, and death. Three of the vacancies have been historically filled by visiting faculty, but the College is focusing on permanent hires. Currently there are 28 permanent faculty at the College.

Trustee Dubose expressed his concerns on the sustainability of funding the College, requirements for bar preparation and fundraising. He also offered suggestions on attracting the top law firms/corporations/consultant companies to partner with through internships, mentoring programs and financial donations. Trustee Harper concurred. Trustee Lawson expressed his thoughts on the probable benefits of restructuring the curriculum by adding required coursework geared toward passing the professional exam like pharmacy and nursing programs; providing a boot camp with the faculty and testing agency during a specified time to keep them abreast of updates to the bar exam; and his concern of the faculty vacancies. Trustee Washington asked Dean Keller to provide more details on the 2.7 GPA and the requirement for additional coursework. Interim VP Watson commented on the listening tour that took place with scholars and faculty to discuss activities, research and bar exam preparations. Trustee Harper asked for insight on the funding request for the College of Law in the legislative budget request. Dr. Robinson provided information on LBR funding. Trustee Lawson commented on making the College of Law a priority program moving forward. A robust discussion among trustees continued on programs funding. Afterwards, Trustee Cliatt provided a summary of the discussions and follow up items.

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