

UNIVERSITY  
OF MIAMI  
FACULTY SENATE



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**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Donna E. Shalala, President

**From:** Richard L. Williamson  
Chair, Faculty Senate

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard L. Williamson'.

**Date:** April 1, 2014

**Subject:** Faculty Senate Legislation #2013-36(B) – Proposal for a Distance Learning  
Component in the LLM in Real Property Development, School of Law

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The Faculty Senate, at its March 26, 2014 meeting, voted unanimously to approve the proposal for a distance learning component in the LLM in Real Property Development from the School of Law. The program began as an experiment and has now become so successful that the school has decided to seek its official approval.

The proposal is enclosed for your reference.

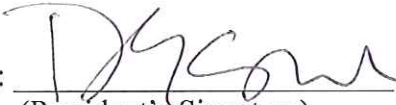
This legislation is now forwarded to you for your action.

RLW/am

Enclosure

cc: Thomas LeBlanc, Executive Vice President and Provost  
Patricia White, Dean, School of Law  
Patrick Gudridge, Vice Dean, School of Law

**CAPSULE:** Faculty Senate Legislation #2013-36(B) – Proposal for a Distance Learning Component in the LLM in Real Property Development, School of Law

APPROVED:  DATE: 4/11/2014  
(President's Signature)

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL TO IMPLEMENT: Dean White

EFFECTIVE DATE OF LEGISLATION: IMMEDIATELY  
(if other than June 1 next following)

NOT APPROVED AND REFERRED TO: \_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS (IF NOT APPROVED): \_\_\_\_\_

March 17, 2014

Robyn Hardeman  
Secretary of the Faculty Senate  
325 Ashe Administration Building  
1252 Memorial Drive  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

Sent via email to [facsen@miami.edu](mailto:facsen@miami.edu)

Dear Ms. Hardeman,

At the request of the General Welfare Committee, I submit this report on the University of Miami School of Law's Robert Traurig-Greenberg Traurig LL.M. in Real Property Development Distance-Learning Program ("Distance Learning Program"). I have also attached:

- Faculty meeting minutes from March 24, 2009, showing the vote of the law school faculty in support of the experimental trial of the Distance Learning Program;
- Faculty meeting minutes from May 8, 2013, showing the unanimous vote of the law school faculty to approve the Distance Learning Program on a permanent basis;

#### Trial Design

Over the course of the preceding years we have had the opportunity to put in place a relatively small scale program, treating it as an experiment, and therefore monitoring its progress with an eye to its effects on teaching processes, its usefulness to students in finding work after law school, and our own capacities (or not) to manage the new technologies (new for us) involved in the distance learning enterprise. The report below summarizes much of what we have learned, and shows, we think, an educationally and technically successful effort without significant adverse "blowback" for our on-going, on-site course of studies. Accordingly, I respectfully request that the General Welfare Committee approve this Law School distance learning program.

#### Program Purpose

The Robert Traurig-Greenberg Traurig LL.M. in Real Property Development is intended to provide an advanced educational degree for lawyers dedicated to working in the real estate field either as attorneys or entrepreneurs. The degree is designed both for recent law school graduates and for practitioners interested in redirecting or fine-tuning their practices.

Before the development of the Distance Learning Program, students had to attend classes in Miami for a year or more to study and earn an LL.M. degree in Real Property Development. Beginning in 2009, however, this LL.M. degree also became available through its distance learning adjunct, offering the same course of study provided by the on-campus program. The Distance Learning Program offers students the ability to earn the degree while continuing to work. The ability to enroll part time or full time, starting in the fall or spring, with no career interruption provides an obviously substantial benefit for post-J.D. students. The LL.M. degree as pursued through the Distance Learning Program can be earned in as little as two years or as many as five years.

#### The Distance Learning Program Described



Students in the Distance Learning Program take the same courses as the on-campus students, learn from the same professors, and earn the same degree as students enrolled on campus. The course content, instruction method, examinations, and grading are all the same. Students enrolled in the Distance Learning Program must attend two classes on campus during their LL.M. careers (for a total of approximately two weeks each semester).

The technology works as follows:

All live courses are captured and recorded with Echo technology and the Distance Learning Program students watch the classes online via Blackboard. The taped lectures are available from anywhere in the world within 24 hours after the live class has been held. The Law School invested \$65,000 to complete technological upgrades to the Distance Learning Program classroom, E-265, in order to ensure that high quality recording and presentation was attained. This was a condition of the law faculty before the launch of the program. Currently, a Law School IT staff specialist attends each class, monitors the cameras, edits and then posts the class to Blackboard within 24 hours of the live class.

Student participation is channeled through faculty office hours (telephone, email, and Skype) and required weekly questions/comments from each student in the Distance Learning Program (confirming the student's presence and raising points for further discussions or resolution of questions).

Enrollment Distribution

The chart below compares the enrollment figures of on campus students to those of Distance Learning Program students for fall 2009 through fall 2012:

	<b>On Campus</b>	<b>Distance Learners</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Fall 2009	8 enrolled, all have graduated	4 enrolled, all have graduated	
Fall 2010	22 enrolled, including 1 from the joint J.D./LL.M. program, 19 have graduated the LL.M. program	9 enrolled, 4 have graduated	2 students from the on campus program went on medical leave and 1 withdrew from program; in the distance program, 3 students need to complete one final class and 2 withdrew from the program
Fall 2011	13 enrolled, including 1	4 enrolled, 2	1 on campus student

	<b>On Campus</b>	<b>Distance Learners</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	J.D./LL.M. student, 12 graduated	graduated, one currently enrolled	became a distance learner in the spring and graduated, 1 on campus student needs to complete one class; 1 distance learner was academically dismissed for a substandard G.P.A.
Fall 2012	13 enrolled, including 6 J.D./LL.M. students, all graduated	10 enrolled, all currently in program	

Placement Data

Job placement rates have proven successful for Distance Learning Program students, likely because these students did not have to leave their jobs in order to earn the degree. In 2013, 7 on campus students graduated from the program and of these students, 3 reported their jobs to the Program Coordinator at the time of graduation. This same year, 3 distance learners graduated from the program and all 3 reported their jobs to the Program Coordinator at the time of graduation. In 2012, 13 on campus students graduated from the program and 9 of these students reported their jobs at the time of graduation to the Program Coordinator. This same year, 6 distance learners graduated from the program and all 6 students reported their jobs at the time of graduation to the Program Coordinator. Even if not definitive, in only therefore provocative, these results are promising.

Student Places of Origin

Our Distance Learning students come from Florida and a variety of other states, including South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Georgia, Louisiana, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Kentucky and New York.

Technical Adjustments

Since the Program's inception, some technical matters have arisen and been addressed promptly. We have retained the services of ProctorU to electronically monitor closed book exams. We have instituted the use of fixed microphones in the ceilings of our classroom to assure that our Distance Learning Program students can clearly hear the comments and questions being asked in the classroom. The hours of our IT support office (the law school's "Help Desk") have been extended to account for time zone differences and one support person is on call for off-hour support. We have started to use Adobe connect with video to support the video conferencing required by team projects and presentations.

Student Interaction

The incorporation of distant students into an on-going on-campus program obviously raises a question as to how distant students will interact with each other and (at least as importantly) communicate with on-campus students. Our Distance Learning Program seeks to meet these

challenges in several ways.

- Distant learners interact with both on-campus students and other distant learners at orientation in August; and in the two required on-campus classes, one in the fall and the other in the spring.
- The Introduction to Real Estate Development and Real Estate Development courses assign group projects. Students use Skype or other forms of video conferencing to work together.
- Engineering a communicative culture: The Real Property Development office makes available contact information for students seeking out other students. Distance learners are able to develop an initial sense of other students they would like to get to know because they view other students in their classes asking questions or assigned cases to present. The available contact information includes campus student email addresses as one mode of contact. Faculty facilitate contact as an ordinary consequence of class interaction: Distance learners are required to make comments and ask questions of their professors based on weekly lectures. Professors share responses to questions and comments, in the process identifying the participating distance learners.

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I am pleased to present this report and proposal and the enclosed attachments to the Faculty Senate.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely yours,

Patrick O. Gudridge  
Vice Dean and Professor of Law



Pertinent Faculty Meeting Minutes

From Minutes, Faculty Meeting, University of Miami School of Law, Wednesday, March 24, 2009:

“The faculty approved an experimental distance learning program for the Master’s Program in Real Estate Law. The success of this program will be reviewed after one year.”

From Minutes, Faculty Meeting, University of Miami School of Law, Wednesday, May 8, 2013:

“Dean White asked whether the faculty would approve the online version of the real property development LLM. The program has been run by Douglas Bischoff in trial form. Bischoff described the growth of the program over the past several years. Eleven of the twenty-five students enrolled so far have graduated. Student evaluations and performance have been excellent, and the technology has worked very well. The faculty unanimously approved a motion to approve the program on a permanent basis>”