

COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS OPEN SESSION AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: October 2016 – O-407

DATE: October 5, 2016

TO: Subcommittee on Educational Standards

FROM: George Leal, Director for Educational Standards

SUBJECT: California Southern University School of Law - Periodic Inspection Report

BACKGROUND

Attachment A is the Report of the Periodic Inspection of the California Southern University School of Law (CSUSOL), completed on December 1, 2015. Attachment B is correspondence, dated October 5, 2016, received from Dean Ellen Sampong accepting the Report, and all of the suggested, recommended actions, in its entirety.

CSUSOL operates as part of the California Southern University, a for-profit, educational entity offering undergraduate and graduate degrees. As a part of the University, the law school operates from administrative offices located in Irvine and was founded in 1994. In 2015, the law school, as a constitute school of the University, became accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

As a correspondence law school, CSUSOL offers an asynchronous, online Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree program that qualifies its students to take the First-Year Law Students' Examination and its graduates to take the California Bar Examination (CBX). It is administered by Dean Ellen Sampong and Associate Dean Bernadette Agaton and currently charges tuition of \$37,400 for the entire J.D. degree program.

Since its prior inspection, CSUSOL has raised its admission standards and now admits only applicants with four-year undergraduate degrees. For the 2015-2016 academic year, it had 38 J.D. students taught by a faculty of 15 part-time professors, all of whom are licensed and practicing attorneys. For its graduates taking the CBX from 2011 through 2015, CSUSOL had a cumulative, first-time pass rate of 44.4%

The inspection confirmed that CSUSOL is operating compliantly. As described in the Report, its admissions standards, curriculum, academic standards and all operational policies and procedures are sound and compliant. In Dean Sampong, the law school has a very dedicated dean, a strong administrative staff, while students learn from an experienced and motivated faculty using excellent, proprietary online technology.

The inspection found no issue of non-compliance requiring any recommended mandatory actions. Only a few issues under the *Guidelines for Unaccredited Law School Rules* (Guidelines) were found where the law school might achieve better compliance. They include the following suggestions:

1. For better compliance with Guideline 2.9(D), the law school should consider re-instituting the requirement, as is required by the University in each of its other schools, the use of an independent commercial proctoring service so that all final examinations are proctored to provide better assurance as the authenticity of each student's examination answers;
2. For better compliance with Guidelines 2.9(B)(1) and 5.17, the law school should revise and publish a clear description and explanation of its grading standards and the methodology used to define academic good standing and, in doing so, choose to use either a numeric scale of 100, a numeric scale of 1.0 - 4.0 or alpha letter grades (A-F);
3. For better compliance with Guideline 5.12, the law school should develop additional electives classes, using various online technologies, to teach students various practical skills, such as trial and appellate advocacy, law office management and client counseling, as is needed in the practice of law.

DISCUSSION

As Dean Sampong's letter confirms, CSUSOL has accepted the Report, along with its findings and suggested recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Inspection Report be received and filed; that the response of Dean Sampong be received and filed; that the recommended, suggested actions contained in the Report be adopted; and that the law school's next periodic inspection take place in the fall of 2020, unless an earlier inspection is found necessary by the Committee.

PROPOSED MOTION:

If the Subcommittee agrees with this recommendation, the following motion is suggested:

Move that the Periodic Inspection Report of the California Southern University School of Law (CSUSOL) of the inspection completed on December 1, 2015 by George C. Leal, Director for Educational Standards, be received and filed; that the response of Dean Ellen Sampong submitted on behalf of the law school be received and filed; that the recommended, suggested actions contained in the report be adopted; and that the law

school's next periodic inspection take place in the fall of 2020, unless an earlier inspection is found necessary by the Committee.