DE ANZA COLLEGE

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES/PARALEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM

LOTTERY FUNDS ATTACHMENT

When the Paralegal Studies program at De Anza College was encouraged to seek American Bar Association approval by the college in 1990 the college was required to make a commitment to provide the resources required by the ABA. Primary among those requirements was a requirement that the campus library possess and maintain the currency of print subscriptions for the major California law books that a paralegal would be expected to use on the job. From the very beginning the library paid the annual costs associated with keeping our law books up to date.

In 2010 I was informed by the library that they would no longer continue to pay for the annual cost of keeping our books current. At that point in time the ABA was still requiring paralegal programs to have print copies of the required law books available for student use. The program was therefore required to obtain subscriptions from Thomsen West for the books we need and the annual cost for these subscriptions was $14,352.00. This amount was presumably paid for out of lottery funds. In addition to the print requirements as electronic media became more common in law firm environments the ABA began to require that students have the availability to be exposed to the basic electronic systems that were developing. The Paralegal Studies program then acquired a minimal subscription to the Westlaw system for an annual cost of $12,000.00 again presumably paid for out of lottery funds. The total for the print and electronic subscriptions was $26,352.00.

In 2013 the ABA changed their guidelines to allow paralegal programs to move to almost exclusive electronic legal research resources if the program’s advisory boards believed that the local employment environment had moved to almost exclusive electronic resources. The Paralegal Studies Program Advisory Board at the end of 2013 approved the conversion to almost exclusive electronic media but the move could not be made until the existing contracts with Thomsen West were up for renewal. Accordingly, in November of 2014 at the renewal date almost all print subscriptions were cancelled and replaced with a number of Westlaw passwords in accord with our student and faculty numbers at that time. The initial annual cost for the passwords was $26,352.00 and with annual 3% increases the present annual cost is now $28,494.00.

The Westlaw contract is now up for renewal in November. Thomsen West has now improved the resources available to paralegal programs on their Westlaw system but they have also increased the per password cost. In an attempt to save money, I have proposed to West to reduce the number of passwords and in return they have agreed to reduce the increase to us from their normal increases. Unfortunately, the new cost will still be $29,364.00. This is an annual increase of 870.00. Since we have a reduced student number in the program the reduced number of passwords will meet our needs.

I suspect I do not really need to remind the college community about the standing of the De Anza College Paralegal Studies program but if I do not do it, it may be overlooked. In a listing of the ten best community college paralegal programs that is maintained by the state of California the De Anza program is listed number one. In our local area the De Anza program total completions is greater than the total combined completions from our competing programs at West Valley and Evergreen Valley Colleges. It should be known that our Westlaw representative has disclosed to me that the usage of our existing passwords has been extraordinarily high so we are using the system. If we cannot maintain our access to Westlaw for our students our continued ABA approval of the program cannot be guaranteed. In our area graduation from an ABA approved paralegal program is the gold standard and it is almost universally required for employment. Loss of the ABA approval would no doubt result in the program becoming far less competitive with our neighboring programs and contribute to an even greater decline in student numbers.

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