

<b>Page: Submitter's Information</b>
<b>Chapter Name</b> ACC South Florida
<b>Page: Achievement Award</b>
<b>Category</b> Best Partnership Program
<b>Chapter Name</b> ACC South Florida
<b>Chapter Size</b> Mid-Sized (301-850 members)
<b>Entry Title</b> No Objections: A Candid In-House Counsel Chat at the University of Miami
<b>Entry Description</b> <p>Our in-house counsel organization partnered with the University of Miami School of Law to host a unique panel event designed to educate law students about careers in corporate legal departments—an often overlooked but increasingly important career path. Traditional legal education tends to focus heavily on law firms or public sector roles, leaving many students unaware of the opportunities and realities of working in-house. This program aimed to fill that gap by providing students with a firsthand look at what it means to be an in-house lawyer.</p> <p>We brought together a diverse panel of experienced in-house counsel from various industries and career stages to share their personal stories, challenges, and strategies for successfully transitioning into in-house roles. The panel was designed to be both informative and engaging, focusing on storytelling to make the career path relatable and providing practical advice tailored to students at different points in their legal education.</p> <p>To foster deeper connections and enhance the student experience, we also offered a networking lunch that encouraged informal conversations between panelists and students. This approach helped break down barriers and allowed students to ask candid questions and seek mentorship in a relaxed setting. Covering the cost of lunch was a strategic use of a modest \$500 budget, ensuring strong attendance and active participation.</p> <p>The event was well-received by students and faculty alike, strengthening our partnership with the University of Miami and building a foundation for ongoing collaboration. It provided valuable exposure to the in-house legal profession, inspiring students to consider a wider range of career options.</p> <p>This initiative is easily scalable and replicable, making it a model for other organizations seeking to increase awareness and accessibility of in-house legal careers. Ultimately, the program reflects our commitment to mentorship, diversity, and professional development—helping to shape the next generation of legal leaders.</p>
<b>When was the program initiated?</b> 10/22/2024

**What was the project objective? Describe the steps you took to achieve this objective, including key strategies, activities, or milestones.**

The primary objective of our project was to educate and inspire the next generation of legal professionals by providing law students at the University of Miami with an inside look at the world of in-house counsel. Recognizing a gap in awareness around this career path, our goal was to demystify the in-house legal role, share real-world career journeys, and provide actionable advice for students interested in pursuing this often less-visible sector of the legal profession.

To achieve this objective, we developed and executed a panel event hosted in partnership with the University of Miami School of Law. Our steps included:

**Collaborating with the University:** We worked closely with UM Law administration to address the fact that law students lacked exposure to in-house legal roles and the various paths that lead there. We worked with them to promote the event, secure an accessible location on campus, and align with student interest areas.

**Curating the Panel:** We assembled a diverse panel of in-house counsel from a range of industries and career stages. Our goal was to ensure broad representation in terms of legal expertise, background, and career trajectory to give students a well-rounded perspective.

**Designing an Engaging Format:** The event featured a moderated panel discussion followed by an open Q&A, allowing students to ask candid questions. Panelists discussed topics such as how they transitioned from law firms to in-house roles, what a typical day looks like, and the skills most critical to succeeding in corporate environments.

**Fostering Connection:** After the panel, we hosted a networking session to allow students and panelists to engage, building meaningful relationships.

The program was a resounding success, drawing strong student attendance and engagement. It not only met our objective of educating future lawyers about in-house careers but also deepened our organization's relationship with the academic community.

**How was the objective achieved? How did you measure success, and to what extent do you believe the objective was met?**

The objective—to educate law students about in-house legal careers and provide practical guidance on how to pursue that path—was successfully achieved through intentional planning, strategic collaboration, and engaging content delivery.

We measured success using both qualitative and quantitative indicators:

**Student Attendance and Participation:** The event drew a strong turnout from the University of Miami law student body, with more than 50 students attending in person. The high level of engagement during the Q&A session and post-panel networking demonstrated genuine student interest and enthusiasm.

**Feedback from Attendees:** We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, both anecdotally during the networking portion and through follow-up communication with faculty. Students expressed that the panel opened their eyes to new career possibilities they hadn't previously considered.

**Faculty and Partner Recognition:** The University of Miami Law School acknowledged the program's impact and expressed interest in making it a recurring collaboration. Faculty praised the candidness of the panelists and the practicality of the advice shared.

In terms of meeting our objective, we believe the event not only met—but exceeded—our goals. It provided real-world insights, sparked important career conversations, and helped bridge the gap between academia and the corporate legal world. Most importantly, it helped law students better understand the skills, experiences, and mindset required to pursue a successful career as in-house counsel.

**Please describe the total budget allocated for your program or initiative. Include a brief breakdown of how the funds were distributed across key areas. In addition, explain how the budget was used effectively or creatively to maximize impact.**

The total budget allocated for the program was \$500, which was spent on providing lunch for the participating law students. This investment created a welcoming and comfortable environment that encouraged attendance, fostered informal networking, and enhanced student engagement throughout the event.

**What significant obstacles or challenges did you encounter during the planning or implementation of your program or initiative? How did you address or overcome them? If you did not face major challenges, please explain why that may have been the case and what factors contributed to the smooth execution of your work.**

While the program was ultimately successful, we did encounter a few challenges during the planning and execution stages—each offering valuable lessons.

**Coordinating Schedules:** One of the biggest hurdles was coordinating the availability of multiple in-house counsel panelists, all of whom had demanding roles and limited flexibility. To address this, we began outreach well in advance and remained flexible with potential dates. We also leveraged virtual planning sessions to streamline coordination and ensure alignment across all participants.

**Engaging Students Outside of the Traditional Career Track:** Since in-house counsel roles are often less visible to law students compared to more traditional firm paths, we were initially concerned about whether the topic would attract sufficient interest. We worked closely with the University of Miami Law School's career services office and student organizations to promote the event as a unique and valuable opportunity. Their support was instrumental in generating strong turnout.

**Tailoring Content to the Audience:** We wanted to ensure the discussion was both accessible to 1Ls and valuable to 3Ls. This required careful planning around the questions, themes, and structure of the panel. We worked with the moderator and panelists ahead of time to strike the right balance—offering both introductory insights and advanced career advice.

Despite these challenges, the event ran smoothly and exceeded expectations thanks to three key factors: early planning, strong collaboration with university partners, and the genuine passion of our panelists, who were eager to give back and support the next generation of legal professionals. These elements helped us overcome logistical issues and deliver a meaningful experience for students.

**What do you anticipate will be the long-term impact of your project or initiative? Describe how the outcomes will extend beyond the immediate results, including any lasting benefits to the local/global ACC community. If applicable, explain how the initiative might be sustained, scaled, or replicated in the future.**

The long-term impact of this initiative extends well beyond a single panel discussion. By creating space for open, honest conversations about in-house legal careers, we helped plant the seeds for a new generation of lawyers to consider—and actively pursue—this path earlier in their professional journey.

For students, the event demystified the in-house role, offered real-life insights into the transition from law firm to corporate counsel, and encouraged them to think proactively about their career goals. Many left the session with a clearer understanding of how to position themselves for future in-house opportunities and a deeper appreciation for the unique skills required in the corporate legal environment.

For the ACC community, the program served as a meaningful step toward increasing visibility, accessibility, and diversity within the in-house profession. By engaging directly with students, we're not only raising awareness but also contributing to a more informed and better-prepared pipeline of future in-house counsel—many of whom may go on to join and strengthen the ACC network.

This initiative is highly scalable and replicable. Based on the overwhelmingly positive feedback and clear demand from both students and faculty, we plan to explore similar partnerships with other law schools in our region and beyond.

Ultimately, the long-term benefit lies in fostering early exposure, expanding access, and building enduring relationships between the academic and in-house legal communities. With continued support, we believe this initiative can become a cornerstone of ACC's outreach and talent development efforts.

**Please share what you are most proud to report about execution of this program. Please explain what this accomplishment means to you and how it reflects the values or goals of your work.**

What we are most proud to report is the genuine connection that was created between seasoned in-house counsel and aspiring legal professionals. Watching students engage enthusiastically, ask thoughtful questions, and walk away with real clarity and inspiration affirmed that the event had a meaningful and lasting impact.

This accomplishment means a great deal to us because it reflects one of the core values of our work: paying it forward. As in-house counsel, we understand how non-linear and opaque the path to corporate legal roles can be, especially for law students with limited exposure to alternatives outside of law firms. Being able to offer honest advice, share our stories, and encourage students to think broadly about their careers felt both impactful and deeply aligned with the ACC community's commitment to mentorship, inclusion, and professional development.

It also demonstrated the power of collaboration. By working hand-in-hand with the University of Miami, we helped bridge the gap between the academic and corporate worlds—fostering dialogue that we believe is essential to the future of the legal profession.

More than just an event, this program was a reminder of why we do what we do: to guide, inspire, and shape the next generation of legal talent.

**Please share how your project or initiative is innovative. Describe any original approaches, strategies, or tools you used to address a problem or achieve your goals. What makes your work stand out from more traditional methods.**

Our initiative stands out because it redefined how law students learn about in-house legal careers—a topic often overlooked in traditional legal education, which tends to focus on law firms or public sector roles. By bringing experienced in-house counsel directly to the University of Miami campus, we provided students with an authentic, behind-the-scenes look at this dynamic career path.

Unlike standard lectures or recruiter-led talks, our program featured a diverse panel of in-house lawyers who shared their personal career journeys, challenges, and strategies for transitioning into corporate legal roles. This storytelling approach made the content relatable and actionable, helping students understand not just what the role entails, but how to navigate their own paths toward it.

We tailored the discussion to suit different levels of student experience, offering foundational insights for first-year students while providing deeper career advice for those closer to graduation. This customization ensured broad relevance and engagement—something traditional one-size-fits-all panels often miss.

Another innovative element was our emphasis on relationship-building. After the panel, we hosted a networking session that fostered informal mentorship and ongoing dialogue, extending the event’s impact beyond the formal program. This created valuable opportunities for students to connect directly with in-house counsel and build meaningful professional relationships early in their careers.

By focusing on real stories, practical advice, and authentic connections, our initiative demystified the in-house counsel career path and made it more accessible and appealing to law students. This human-centered approach fills a gap in legal career development and offers a scalable, replicable model for other organizations seeking to inspire and prepare future in-house lawyers.

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