

**Bose McKinney & Evans LLP Invests
In Credentialing Its Paralegals**

It all began in November, 2006, when Jo Allgood, RP, a litigation paralegal with Bose McKinney & Evans LLP, stopped by the Indiana Paralegal Association [IPA] booth at Preferred Imaging's Tech Show held at the Indianapolis Convention Center. IPA was promoting the benefits it offers to its members and to the legal community, including promotion of PACE, the Paralegal Advanced Competency Examination. Allgood offered to approach her firm about putting together a PACE Study Group and helping paralegals within her firm become credentialed.

Shortly thereafter, Allgood invited Debi Neale, RP, IPA's PACE Ambassador to make a presentation about PACE at a paralegal meeting held at Bose McKinney & Evans. Neale was graciously received by Vicki Bruce, Bose McKinney & Evans' Chief Operations Officer, and a conference room full of paralegals to talk more about PACE. Neale provided a history and overview of the PACE examination, discussed the tremendous benefit to employers who market the credentials of their paralegals to their clients and promote professional development, and discussed the powerful statement by paralegals who are voluntarily willing to put their education and experience to the test and validate their competency, particularly at a time when credentialing is not yet mandatory.

The Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam [PACE] is a proficiency-based exam, designed to test the competency level of experienced paralegals. It is not an entry level exam. In fact, PACE has often been referred to as a "mini Bar exam." It is a very difficult exam and cannot be taken until after a paralegal meets specific education and experience requirements. The test is a fair and independent exam developed by members of the legal profession with assistance from Professional Examination Services [PES], a nonprofit corporation who promotes and provides services to multiple professions pertaining to sound licensure and certification practices. PES administers the day-to-day activities associated with the examination qualifications, maintenance of the test bank questions, scoring and updates to the exam. Paralegals that pass PACE can use the credentials "RP" or "PACE Registered Paralegal." The PACE credential is recognized nationwide.

PACE was designed to provide the groundwork for expanding paralegal roles and responsibilities; to provide the public and legal community with a mechanism to gauge the competency of the experienced paralegal; and to be used in states considering regulation of experienced paralegals as regulation of the profession nationwide becomes more widespread. Several states have recently adopted regulation of their paralegals and many other states are currently addressing the issue. Indiana currently has pending

before the Supreme Court a proposal to permit regulation of paralegals based on education and experience.

After learning more about PACE, Bose McKinney & Evans immediately stepped forward with a show of tremendous support of its paralegals. Allgood organized and facilitated the PACE Study Group. Bose McKinney & Evans offered to provide complete funding to its paralegals in their study efforts by covering the costs of the PACE Study Manual, application fee, NFPA's practice exam and the PACE examination fee. In addition, Bose McKinney & Evans offered space within the law firm for the PACE Study Group to meet and went the extra measure to open its offices to other paralegals in Indiana, outside of Bose McKinney & Evans, who were also interested in studying for PACE. The magnitude of what Bose McKinney & Evans was offering to the paralegal profession reached outside the scope of law firms into such businesses as Rolls Royce and additional paralegals joined the study group. In addition, Bose McKinney & Evans offered many of its resources for study materials as well as personnel within the Bose McKinney & Evans firm who taught various legal subjects covered on the exam.

The impact of Bose McKinney & Evans' support? Bose McKinney & Evans can now boast to its office, its clients, to the legal community and to the general public that it has more credentialed paralegals than any other firm or business in the State of Indiana. This puts a measurement on the quality of paralegals employed by Bose McKinney & Evans, not only by education and experience, but more importantly, based on competency. Bose McKinney & Evans currently has 8 credentialed paralegals with a second PACE Study Group going strong. A North Side PACE Study Group is also currently being held at Baker & Daniels in Carmel.

In a still relatively new profession where paralegals constantly strive to receive the professional respect which they have rightfully earned through education, experience and now competency assessments, Bose McKinney & Evans has certainly helped set a new standard. Hopefully, other law firms and businesses that employ paralegals will follow the lead of Bose McKinney & Evans in supporting and encouraging its paralegals to become PACE credentialed in this win-win situation. Bose McKinney & Evans has certainly earned the respect of paralegals in Indiana.

Vicki Bruce, Chief Operations Officer at Bose McKinney & Evans, served as a panelist in a recent seminar sponsored by the Paralegal Committee of the Indianapolis Bar Association entitled, "Marketing of Paralegals: How Paralegals Benefit Your Firm & Your Clients." In her presentation, she expounded on the significance that PACE credentialing has brought to Bose McKinney & Evans as well as in her hiring standards for future paralegal candidates. It is becoming increasingly clear that PACE credentialing is enhancing the paralegal profession. In a 2008 survey conducted by *Legal Assistant Today*, PACE Registered Paralegals reported the highest salaries among credentialed paralegals with an average salary of \$67,489.

Bose McKinney & Evans is a full-service law firm, and provides a full-range of legal services to privately owned businesses, publicly traded companies, high-tech

organizations, and governmental entities. Approximately 130 attorneys work in cross-disciplinary teams, combining their diverse backgrounds with experience to serve clients in matters from strategic planning to large, complex transactions with tight deadlines.

Bose McKinney & Evans was recently named one of the “Best Places to Work in Indiana” by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce in the large-sized employer category (250 or more employees). The firm's offices are located in downtown Indianapolis, in Meridian Corporate Plaza Two on the north side of Indianapolis, in West Lafayette, Ind., in Northwest Indiana, in Raleigh, N.C. and in Washington, D.C.

IPA congratulates Bose McKinney & Evans for its support of paralegals in Indiana and proudly honors its credentialed paralegals ~ Joetta Allgood, RP; Rebecca Munday, RP; Nan O'Neil, RP; Melissa Wakefield, RP, Katie Schuster, RP*, Linda Toschlog, RP* and Patty Miller, RP* as well as Teresa Gross, CLA, Indiana's first credentialed paralegal.

*By Debi Neale, RP
IPA PACE Ambassador*

* RP status to be confirmed following 04/30/08 PES Scoring Run.