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Legal Tech Groups Launch New E-Discovery Certification

By **Steven Lerner**

Law360 (January 21, 2021, 3:34 PM EST) -- Two legal technology associations have launched a self-paced training curriculum to give law students, attorneys and paralegals exposure to e-discovery software.

Eighteen schools are now offering the new e-discovery technology certificate program this semester as part of the official launch, which was established as a collaboration between the Association of Certified E-Discovery Specialists, or ACEDS, and the National Society for Legal Technology, or NSLT.

ACEDS President Mike Quartararo told Law360 Pulse on Wednesday that the new program was created in response to members asking for more hands-on exposure to products in e-discovery and the broader legal technology market.

"The goal here is to take the legal and theoretical underpinnings of e-discovery, which ACEDS really excels at teaching, and marry that theoretical knowledge to the more practical and technical aspects of executing e-discovery and other tasks using software currently in use in the legal community," Quartararo said.

NSLT President Douglas Lusk told Law360 Pulse on Wednesday that law schools want to teach e-discovery, but there's always a "chicken and the egg" dilemma about whether to teach e-discovery theory before the practical side of e-discovery, or vice versa.

"I knew it was two sides of the same coin and you really can't have one without the other," Lusk said Wednesday.

"I approached ACEDS and proposed we marry their expertise in teaching theory with the NSLT expertise in teaching practical hands-on software skills and nine months later, or slightly longer, eDTech was born."

The new course features hands-on interactive simulations, foundational e-discovery training and practical exploration of e-discovery software, according to a statement from ACEDS.

Lusk said that the NSLT announced the launch of eDTech certification to some of its law schools and paralegal program clients at the start of the fall 2020 semester. About a dozen schools launched e-discovery classes for a beta test and used the eDTech certification as the sole curriculum for the course.

"eDTech was still in the writing phase at that time, so our team had to scramble to finish the lessons and were mere weeks, sometimes only a few days, of releasing the lessons ahead of when the students needed them for class," Lusk said.

U.S. District Judge Xavier Rodriguez, an adjunct professor at St. Mary's University School of Law in Texas, augmented his e-discovery class in the fall 2020 semester with modules from the new program and assigned the modules as required viewing before classes.

"My students reported they found that viewing the ACEDS modules in advance of the course lecture enhanced their understanding of the material," Judge Rodriguez told Law360 on Thursday.

Students in Judge Rodriguez's class were also offered the option of completing the entire program so that they could acquire the eDTech certification.

Montgomery College, a community college in Maryland, was among the first paralegal programs to offer the new e-discovery classes and certification in the fall 2020 semester.

Harry Singleton, Montgomery's collegewide coordinator and professor of paralegal studies, told Law360 Pulse on Wednesday that he took the course to gauge firsthand what the students would experience.

"The course is very comprehensive and provides excellent exposure to the discovery process of ESI and the various software apps available to facilitate this process," Singleton said.

With the feedback from the initial eDTech certification positive, Lusk predicts that about another dozen schools will start the program during the summer 2021 semester and that the total number of schools could reach 50 to 60 by the fall 2021 semester.

--Editing by Jill Coffey.

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