

2019-20 Paralegal Studies Annual Program Plan

I.A. Program Profile: Purpose

Describe the program(s) to be reviewed. What is the purpose of the program and how does it contribute to the mission of Skyline College?

Narrative

The Paralegal Program offers an A.A. degree and a 27 unit Certificate in Paralegal Studies. Working from a student ready framework, this small but dynamic program supports students in their efforts to transfer to a four-year baccalaureate program, gain living wage employment as a legal support professional, and/or prepare for law school. The sequences of required courses and electives for the degree position students to build critical thinking, effective communication, citizenship, and information literacy skills as well as an awareness of how legal professionals can work for social justice. The program contributes to Skyline College's mission of empowerment and transformation by offering all students the opportunity to realize their own potential as students, legal professionals, and change agents in the community.

I.B. Program Planning Team

Annual program planning is intended to be a collaborative process which promotes dialogue and reflection. Please identify all individuals who contributed to or shaped the narrative. Include names and the title or role of each person.

Narrative

Jesse W. Raskin, Associate Professor

Steve Aurilio, Professor

Maria Segarra, Instructor

Please see section I.B. in the APP submitted by the Administration of Justice program for an in depth write up of the collaborative activities completed by ADMJ and LEGL.

II.A. Analysis: Progress on Prior Program Objectives (Goals) and Activities

Describe the progress made on previously established program objectives (goals) including identification of achievements or areas in which further effort is needed. New programs which have not yet established CPR/APP objectives should discuss progress on program implementation or activities.

Narrative

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The program completed CPR in AY 2016-2017. Three major objectives identified were:

1. Approval by the American Bar Association of the Paralegal Program.
2. Maintain the quality of instruction while increasing enrollment.
3. Explore Merger with ADMJ Program.

Objective 1: ABA Approval

Success! The paralegal program is now ABA approved. This is a major recognition of the good work done by students and educators in the program and will help increase the program's profile, and job prospects for students. Yet, it has also resulted in greater scrutiny and significant additional work annually for the program. And we are thankful to have a part-time Program Service Coordinator to support the program. We will only be able to maintain approval with the ongoing support of the college in the form of faculty assign time and the support of a PSC.

Objective 2: Supporting Students While Increasing Enrollment

For assessment purposes, the Program uses success and withdrawal numbers as one measure in determining our efficacy in supporting students. In AY 2013-2014 total enrollment by term was 144. In AY 2017-2018, total enrollment by term was 200. In AY 2013-2014 unduplicated head count by term was 77. In AY 2017-2018, it was 91. Thus, enrollment has recovered from the low point. Yet, it has not increased significantly over the past four years.

As to overall success, in AY 2013-2014, our overall success rate was 74.6%. In 2017-18, the rate was 85%. In four of the past five years, 2013-2014 through 2017-18, the rate of success for students in the paralegal program was at or above 74.6%. In the same time period, the withdrawal rate for students in the program decreased from 14.5% to 9.5% and the retention rate increased from 85.5% to 90.5%. While there is always room to improve, this data shows the paralegal program is contributing to the college's goal of 75% of students graduating on time.

A look within the numbers shows some positive trends for students from communities traditionally marginalized in higher education. The program can report that the aggregate numbers from AY 2013-2014 to 2017-2018 show that success gaps among student groups are much smaller in the program than in the college as a whole. For example, consider the total success rates by race:

- 74% for Asian students
- 74% for Black students
- 75% for Filipino students
- 73% for Latino students
- 81% for white students
- 78% for multi race students

The program still needs to close the equity gap between white and non-white students, but can be proud of the success of Black, Filipino, and Latino students. However, the 45% success rates for Pacific Islander students need to be addressed.

Objective 3: Explore Merger With ADMJ and Social Justice

The paralegal program believes there may be some benefit from merging with ADMJ and Social Justice into one law and justice program inclusive of several degree programs. We hope to have this conversation with the Division Dean and faculty in all three programs.

II.B. Analysis: Program Environment

Describe any recent external or internal changes impacting the program or which are expected to impact the program in the next year. Please include when the specified changes occurred or are expected to occur.

Narrative

The first major change impacting the program in the next year is the recent approval of the program by the American Bar Association. Approval is a major recognition of the good work done by students and educators in the program and has the potential to increase the program's profile and job prospects for students. Yet, it will also result in greater scrutiny and hundreds of hours of additional work annually for the program. For example, we will need to seek prior approval of any major changes in the modality of course deliver.

A second major change impacting the program is the Comprehensive College Redesign and programs integration into the Guided Pathways framework. These changes have the potential for positive impact in helping more students get in, get through, and graduate on time from the paralegal program. Within this context, the program is aware that it may experience changes in over the coming years.

A third major change is the resignation of Michelle Shores and Katie Padilla from the part-time faculty. Losing these instructors will impact the programs ability to serve more students at different times. The program will continue our focus on faculty development and intra-departmental collaboration to maintain consistent quality of education for students and we will also need to consider whether to attempt to bring on another part-time instructor.

A fourth major change is the addition of part-time Program Services Coordinator Rachel Deliz. After she gets up to speed Rachel should greatly enhance our outreach and marketing efforts to current, former and prospective students and will be able to support our efforts to maintain ABA approval.

II.C. Analysis: Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs and PSLOs)

- (1) Instructional Programs Only: Describe what was learned from the assessment of course SLOs for the current and past year.
- (2) Student Service Programs Only: If PSLOs are being assessed this year (3-year cycle), describe what was learned. If no assessment was done because this is an off-cycle year, please state that this item is not applicable.

Narrative

The Program engaged in SLO assessment of the following courses recently: LEGL 245, LEGL 290 and LEGL 670. In LEGL 290, the role play is an effective tool in assessing most of the SLOs for the course. In both LEGL 290 and LEGL 245, the instructors identified exploring a different assessment tool for a course SLO as an area of improvement. Two courses have SLO assessment pending this term.

In addition to cyclical SLO assessment of its courses, the Program also seeks to obtain student feedback regarding the courses, the instructors and the program as a whole. Each semester, the Program partners with PRIE to invite current students to participate in a confidential and voluntary survey. In each of the past three semesters (Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Fall 2018), 90 percent of student respondents have indicated that their learning activities and course materials are relevant and appropriately engaging. During the same period (the past three semesters), nine in ten students have rated their instructors as competent and welcoming. These results indicate that the overwhelming majority of our students are highly satisfied with their educational experience.

The student surveys have also illuminated areas of improvement. In Fall 2017, we learned that students would like to have more class activities, preferably in small groups, and more hands-on and practical assignments. These same themes were echoed in the Spring 2018 student responses. In that terms, students also expressed preference for hybrid structure for the introductory courses. Somewhat different themes emerged in the Fall 2018 responses. In the latest term, some students provided comments regarding timeliness of instructor feedback and requested more practice activities for graded assignments.

The student surveys and the SLOs assessment process complement each other. Instructors assess the effectiveness of the course assessment tools while the surveys afford students an opportunity to provide narrative comments on aspects of the course that are working well as well as the areas of improvement.

III.A. Reflection: Considering Key Findings

Consider the previous analysis of progress achieved, program environment, and course-level SLOs or PSLOs (if applicable). What are the key findings and/or conclusions drawn? Discuss how what was learned can be used to improve the program's effectiveness.

Narrative

Key Findings:

The ABA application and approval process has positively impacted the way the Program assesses its effectiveness and the degree to which it utilizes data from various constituents toward programmatic improvements. These positive impacts have been systematized in the following ways: the paralegal faculty meets every term to discuss the program, review assessments, and learn from each other; the Advisory Committee meets each semester to provide input regarding job trends and paralegal skills, review assessments, and provide guidance to the program staff and faculty regarding employer needs, and the Program seeks feedback from students each semester and from program graduates and local legal employers on a yearly basis. These positive and systematized processes have been made sustainable by the hiring of the program service coordinator (PSC) for the Program.

One core strength of the Program lies in its faculty: the diversity of their perspectives and experiences, their solid commitment to education and student empowerment, and their continued interest in honing their teaching skills. With the resignation of Michelle Shores at the end of this current term, the Program loses not only a dedicated instructor and the perspective of a practicing paralegal manager, but also the insight of a valuable Advisory Committee member as well. As the Program strives to reach out to prospective students and increase its visibility and student enrollment, the Program staff must remain closely connected with working paralegals and must continue to seek working paralegals as prospective faculty members.

Upon reflection, marketing and outreach is a one area that the program can work on as it seeks to increase enrollment. Rachel Deliz, PSC, will lead these efforts in collaboration with faculty, Workforce, and the division dean. In addition, professional development will continue to be a focus as we strive to continually improve our ability to serve diverse students.

III.B. Reflection: ISLOs

If your program participated in assessment of ISLOs this year:

- (1) What are the findings and/or conclusions drawn?
- (2) Does the program intend to make any changes or investigate further based on the findings? If so, briefly describe what the program intends to do.

Narrative

The Program did not participate in the assessment of ISLOs this year.

IV.A. Strategy for Program Enhancement: Continuation/Modification

Indicate whether the program is continuing implementation of the last CPR strategy or revising the strategy. Please describe the modifications if revisions are intended.

Note: Any new strategies should be linked to Institutional Goals through creation of objectives in the next section. If the program has not yet participated in comprehensive program review, an annual or multi-year strategy can be defined in this item.

Narrative

The Paralegal Program's strategy for program enhancement has three components: (1) expanding outreach efforts to publicize the program and increase student enrollment; (2) engaging in continued efforts to maintain ABA approval, including continued regular assessments of current students, program graduates and local legal employers and complying with the ABA Guidelines; and (3) seeking more professional development opportunities so program instructors could continue to hone their teaching skills.

IV.B. Strategy for Program Enhancement: Action Plan and Resource Requests

Based on the most recent CPR and any desired modifications, develop an annual action plan with related resource requests. No narrative response will be entered in this section, but the objectives you create will be printed automatically in the APP report under this item.

- (1) To begin, click on PLANNING at the top of the page, then CREATE A NEW OBJECTIVE. To view previously created objectives, click PLANNING at the top of the page, then VIEW MY OBJECTIVE.
- (2) IMPORTANT! Make sure to associate each objective to this standard in the APP. Need help? Contact the PRIE Office for further instructions. Institutional Goals. Need help? Contact the PRIE Office for further instructions.

Narrative

Resource Requests:

ABA annual fee and other fees: As an ABA approved program, we are required to pay an annual fee of \$1,500.00. Moreover, whenever the program submits a substantive change request, we expect to be required to pay a corresponding fee for each request. The ABA current fee schedule is available at:

https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/ls_prlgs_fee_schedule.pdf

Spring event for students: The Program expects to host an event geared for students and recent alums during each Spring term. Last year, the Program partnered with the Career Advancement Academy to host a Legal Career Night. This year, the Program has teamed up with the Career and Workforce Department (CWD) to host a Paralegal Roundtable on April 25. Our current (and past) budget for each event is about \$1,000. We request that continued funding so we can continue to host these events annually.

Project-based funding for summer 2019 work: The Program has a number of work projects this summer: review and revamp its marketing and outreach materials; conduct an assessment of local legal employers; organize a retreat for program staff to assess the need for curriculum changes and other programmatic improvements; and explore alternative instructional delivery of paralegal courses that would meet the ABA Guidelines (e.g. SIA). We request funding in order to complete these summer projects.

Work space: There are two work stations in the outer office of Room 1-317. One of these offices is being used by Rachel Deliz, the Program Service Coordinator. The other work station is being shared by ADMJ and LEGL part-time faculty. Sometimes, there is high demand for this work station. For instance, Maria Segarra regularly uses her own personal computer to complete her non-instructional paralegal program work on Monday mornings when Kevin Phipps,

an adjunct faculty in the ADMJ department, uses the shared work station. In light of this, we request that a third work station be installed in this office space.

Associated Objectives

943-Enhance the Paralegal Workspace and the Classroom

906-Maintain ABA Approval

908-Project Based Work for Programmatic Improvement

907-Spring Event for Students

Enhanced Budget with Objectives and Tasks

Enhanced Budget with Objectives of Paralegal Studies unit