Comprehensive Program Review Report

Academic - Paralegal (PARA) - (CE)

Program Goals

Marketing for the paralegal program to recruit students ages 23+ (Goal 2)

Program Goal: Start robust marketing for the paralegal program to recruit students ages 23+, including social media.
Goal Status: Active

Mapping
2022 - 2028 Strategic Plan: *(X)*

- **Eliminate Equity Gaps in Course Success:** Start robust marketing for the paralegal program to recruit students ages 23+, including social media. (**X**)

- **Increase Equitable Access:** Start robust marketing for the paralegal program to recruit students ages 23+, including social media. (**X**)

- **Increase Hiring and Retention of Diverse Employees:** Start robust marketing for the paralegal program to recruit students ages 23+, including social media. (**X**)

- **Increase Persistence and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Start robust marketing for the paralegal program to recruit students ages 23+, including social media. (**X**)

Summary of Progress or Results
Summary Date: 09/23/2024 **Summary of Progress or Results:** TBD **Reporting Period:** 2024 - 2025 **Status:** In Progress - will carry forward into next year **Action steps for this academic year.:** Identify proper publications Identify cost scales for the publications Develop a budget request for the advertising Develop the advertisements and publish them We have met with the Director of College & Community Relations to identify needs for the program advertising. We have also provided numerous photos to be used in a social media/marketing attempt for PARA. Online Adjuncts came to campus and took photos for a marketing the program.

Prepare for the ABA Report (Goal 1)

Program Goal: Prepare for the ABA Interim Report which is due 1/15/26 and the full reapproval report which is due 4/15/2029 to the ABA with drafts to be completed to administration before submission to the ABA.
Goal Status: Active

Mapping
2022 - 2028 Strategic Plan: *(X)*

- **Eliminate Equity Gaps in Course Success:** Prepare for the ABA Interim Report which is due 1/15/26 and the full reapproval report which is due 4/15/2029 to the ABA with drafts to be completed to administration before submission to the ABA. (**X**)

Program Goals

- **Increase Completion and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Prepare for the ABA Interim Report which is due 1/15/26 and the full reapproval report which is due 4/15/2029 to the ABA with drafts to be completed to administration before submission to the ABA. (**X**)

- **Increase Equitable Access:** Prepare for the ABA Interim Report which is due 1/15/26 and the full reapproval report which is due 4/15/2029 to the ABA with drafts to be completed to administration before submission to the ABA. (**X**)

- **Increase Hiring and Retention of Diverse Employees:** Prepare for the ABA Interim Report which is due 1/15/26 and the full reapproval report which is due 4/15/2029 to the ABA with drafts to be completed to administration before submission to the ABA. (**X**)

- **Increase Persistence and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Prepare for the ABA Interim Report which is due 1/15/26 and the full reapproval report which is due 4/15/2029 to the ABA with drafts to be completed to administration before submission to the ABA. (**X**)

Summary of Progress or Results
Summary Date: 09/23/2024
Summary of Progress or Results: We have begun gathering the required data and sending out the required surveys.
Reporting Period: 2024 - 2025
Status: In Progress - will carry forward into next year
Action steps for this academic year.:
Gather the required data that needs to be tracked for submitting the interim report.

Develop a Legal Resource on Campus (Goal 3)

Program Goal: Develop a Self Service Legal Resource on Campus for Students, Staff, Faculty and the Community
Goal Status: Active

Mapping
2022 - 2028 Strategic Plan: *(X)*

- **Increase Completion and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Develop a Self Service Legal Resource on Campus for Students, Staff, Faculty and the Community (**X**)

- **Increase Equitable Access:** Develop a Self Service Legal Resource on Campus for Students, Staff, Faculty and the Community (**X**)

- **Increase Hiring and Retention of Diverse Employees:** Develop a Self Service Legal Resource on Campus for Students, Staff, Faculty and the Community (**X**)

Summary of Progress or Results
Summary Date: 12/17/2024
Summary of Progress or Results: Began Discussions
Reporting Period: 2024 - 2025
Status: In Progress - will carry forward into next year
What resources, if any, are needed to achieve this goal? (Select all that apply): Supplies, equipment, and/or furniture
Action steps for this academic year.:

Program Goals

Summary of Progress or Results
For the next academic year we will be considering whether this should be a full free legal aid center, or if it should be a self help legal resource center. We need to consider where this could be located on campus. We need to consider the level of demands of each type for supplies, staffing, management, and accessibility for students. We will likely need printing resources, or potentially private meeting rooms.

Legal Workshops (Goal 4)

Program Goal: Host Legal Workshops on Campus
Goal Status: Active

Mapping
2022 - 2028 Strategic Plan: *(X)*

- **Eliminate Equity Gaps in Course Success:** Host Legal Workshops on Campus (**X**)

- **Increase Completion and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Host Legal Workshops on Campus (**X**)

- **Increase Equitable Access:** Host Legal Workshops on Campus (**X**)

- **Increase Hiring and Retention of Diverse Employees:** Host Legal Workshops on Campus (**X**)

- **Increase Persistence and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Host Legal Workshops on Campus (**X**)

Summary of Progress or Results
Summary Date: 12/17/2024 **Summary of Progress or Results:** We have started brainstorming topics for these workshops that will boost the awareness of legal issues and of the PARA department on campus. **Reporting Period:** 2024 - 2025 **Status:** In Progress - will carry forward into next year **Action steps for this academic year.:** For this next year we are going to begin coordinating events through facilities requests, communicating with faculty, and marketing these events to our campus community.

Program Overview and Update

Lead Author
Joan Rettinger, Esq.

Collaborator(s)
Harold Rucker, Deepaliemilie Joshi, Frantz Farreau, Bethany Ensz, and PARA Advisory Committee

Initial Collaboration Date with Program Team
08/15/2024

Dean/Manager(s)
George Dowden

Program Reflection and Description

Provide your program's mission statement. If your program does not have a mission statement, what is your timeline for creating a mission statement?
The Program seeks to prepare and provide students with the analytical skills and written abilities necessary to assist attorneys in the practices of law, emphasizing three primary areas: legal research, analysis, and writing; ethics and the mechanics of law; and the integration of substantive and procedural law.

Is the program description in the current college catalog up to date and accurate?
Yes

Describe how your program advances the College's vision of equity, excellence, and social justice through education. How does the program reflect the College's mission and values?
The PARA program has been in existence since 1992 and ABA approved since 2002. The vision for the campus is Equity, Excellence and Social Justice through Education. The PARA program is a shining example of the vision in action. Paralegal employment provides a path for people and their families to grow rapidly economically into stable careers in the legal field with room for growth and advancement upon graduation with only an AS degree. Additionally, the greater existence of paralegals in the legal community helps lower the cost of legal services which increases access to legal services to underserved populations.

Curriculum Review and Development

Have all of your active course outlines been reviewed within the last five years?
Yes

Please list any planned changes from the current semester forward for curriculum (courses, degrees, and/or certificates) and the rationale for those changes.
PARA 120- update textbook and SLO updates. Incorporating WBL SLOs as supported by our advisory committee to courses when practical. This course still meets an industry need as paralegals continue to work in administrative law offices.
PARA 130- update textbook and SLO updates. Incorporating WBL SLOs as supported by our advisory committee to courses when practical. Streamlining SLOs when possible. This course is critical to industry needs and functioning as a paralegal.
PARA 132- update textbook and SLO updates. Incorporating WBL SLOs as supported by our advisory committee to courses when practical. This course is also critical to industry needs and completing work as a paralegal in the current era. Advisory Committee does not yet support incorporating AI tools into this course as they are not yet reliable in the legal industry.
PARA 140- update textbook and SLO updates. Incorporating WBL SLOs as supported by our advisory committee to courses when practical. This course still meets an industry need as paralegals continue to work in criminal law offices.

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PARA 199- deactivate course form. This course has not been offered in years and is not planned to be offered again. Rather than offer this highly specialized course for a small group we will focus efforts on designing new courses in stable areas of the law for paralegals.

PARA 250- SLO update. Continuing the internship course is supported by our Advisory Board, but they recognize the need to create equitable space for our working students so they supported the development of the practicum course to support students unable to enroll in this course.

For Transfer Programs: How is your program meeting the transfer needs of students, and/or articulation with four-year institutions? If not a transfer program, please enter N/A

We are technically not a transfer program, but we have articulation agreements with PLNU and NU. We are providing pathways for our PARA students and having the schools share information with our students to support the process. Some of our students go on to earn BA degrees in a variety of subjects as a BA in PARA is not required by the industry.

For Career Education Programs: How is your program meeting labor market demand and preparing students to enter the workforce? If not a career education program, please enter N/A

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad region of California employed 7,208 paralegals in 2023 at an annual mean wage of $61,697. USBLS also lists the San DiegoCarlsbad area's regional employment growth in July 2024 higher than the national average by 1.2% from 2023 to 2024 for Paralegals. The California Employment Development Department estimates a 20.4% job growth by 2030 for paralegals in San Diego County. Top distinguishing skills by demand include electronic discovery, which is indicated as a salary boosting skill and has a projected growth of 11.3% showing why it's so important that we have embraced the skill through our electronic discovery course and advanced electronic discovery course.

We regularly conduct advisory board meetings to ensure we are meeting the demands of our local workforce and attend Paralegal Educator Conferences to ensure the program stays current on trends within the industry and demands for our paralegal students to meet.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Assessment

Please upload an updated, current version of your SLO assessment plan. (Ideally, the updated plan should specify assessment semesters for all service areas over the next 4 years, between this comprehensive program review and the next.)

PARA Assessment Plan 2024.xlsx

What do your SLO data suggest about student experiences, successes, and challenges in your service area?

SLO data suggests that students struggle more in PARA 100 but are generally much more successful in the rest of the courses within the program. This makes sense as PARA 100 is the introductory course and may lead to reevaluation of students continuing in the program or being introduced to support services such as tutoring. Additionally students must pass PARA 100 to complete the rest of the program, so it makes sense that success number are much higher in the rest of the program as they are working out most challenges with the methods of learning the law in PARA 100.

The SLO data from our PARA program suggest that students experience more challenges in PARA 100, the introductory course, but are generally more successful in the subsequent courses within the program. This is consistent with expectations, as PARA 100 serves as the foundational course where students are first introduced to the methods and content related to legal studies. The struggles observed in this course could be attributed to several factors, including the steep learning curve involved in understanding legal terminology, concepts, and adjusting to academic expectations of college.

The data indicate that students who successfully navigate PARA 100 tend to perform much better in the following courses. This pattern suggests that PARA 100 plays a critical role in preparing students for the rigor of the rest of the program. It also highlights the importance of

this course in helping students build the necessary skills and knowledge base for success in subsequent courses. As PARA 100 is a prerequisite for progressing through the program, it serves as a key hurdle that students must overcome. Students who face difficulties early on may benefit from additional support services, such as tutoring or study groups, to help them grasp foundational concepts and improve their performance.

Moreover, the higher success rates in the later courses reflect that, after completing PARA 100, students are better equipped to handle more advanced content. They are likely more comfortable with legal reasoning, research methods, and the academic rigor required in the program. Overall, the data suggest that while students face significant challenges in PARA 100, those who persist and succeed in this course are generally well-prepared for the remainder of the program.

Given this, there may be an opportunity to review and enhance support mechanisms for students in PARA 100, ensuring that those who face difficulties are provided with the tools and resources necessary to succeed. This could include earlier intervention strategies, more robust tutoring services, and additional instructional resources that cater to the diverse learning needs of our students.

Upon reviewing the SLO discussion sections from each program review, it is clear that our students are indeed meeting the goals of the program. The baseline for viewing students as successful at the individual SLOs is a minimum of 70% successful completion of the assignments used for the review.

Upon reviewing the SLO discussion sections from the past four years, it is clear that our students are indeed meeting the goals of the program. The baseline for viewing students as successful at the individual SLOs is a minimum of 70% successful completion of the assignments used for the review. The lowest success rate recorded in the last four years of assessments was 73% for PARA 132 (Computer Assisted Legal Research), specifically for SLO 5 in Spring 2023. This outcome involved identifying the jurisdiction of federal and state courts and locating electronic legal authorities. Nearly all courses reported success rates above 70%. Out of the courses fully detailed, all assessed courses had over 70% success rates for their SLOs, even with some isolated lower-performing outcomes.

- Most courses demonstrated high success rates in achieving SLOs, with many instances of 100% success rates (e.g., PARA 110 SLO 1 and 2 in Spring 2024).

- Courses like PARA 132 consistently showed over 80% success rates, though challenges in reading comprehension and grammar were noted.

The following provides a detailed highlight of courses:
-
    o **PARA 110** (Civil Litigation): Consistently 87%-100%.

    o **PARA 120** (Administrative Law): 82%-95%.

    o **PARA 125** (Business Organizations): 77%-100%.

    o **PARA 132** (CALR): Lowest success rate was 73%; others ranged from 80%-93%.

    o **PARA 135** (Bankruptcy Law): 82%-95%.

o   **PARA 140** (Criminal Law and Procedures): Not fully available in the excerpt.

- **Effective Assessments**:

  o   Assignments included real-world tasks such as drafting legal documents, conducting research, and analyzing statutes.

  o   Projects like filing claims, drafting memorandums, or preparing bankruptcy petitions promoted practical application of skills.

- **Challenges and Recommendations**:

  o   Some courses (e.g., PARA 135) identified attendance as a critical factor for student success.

  o   Faculty recommended more interactive learning experiences, like collaborative projects and hands-on activities, especially for complex topics such as civil procedures and bankruptcy.

We are leaning into Work Based Learning and now highlighting SLOs that are monitored through assignments that meet this standard which often shows success of our first PLO through the creation of documents composed that demonstrate the application of the research, analytical skills and college-level writing abilities necessary to assist attorneys in the practice of law. PLO number two is incorporated into every legal specialty course as there is always an SLO dedicated to ethics in the profession in every course. Once again the high success rates demonstrate our students are deeply exposed and learning the ethical standards to ensure they know the expectation of how to act in an ethical and professional manner when confronted with a law office related conflict scenario. We are lacking SLO data for PARA 121, 176, and 251 as they will not be offered with the current SLOs until Spring 2025. PARA 175 is being reassessed this semester, Fall 2024 as this is the first offers with the current SLOs.

Share an example of meaningful, innovative, equitable, and/or student-centered SLO assessment happening in your program.

As part of our WBL approach, students complete classroom projects designed to mirror the types of tasks they will encounter in legal work settings, such as drafting legal documents, conducting legal research, or preparing case summaries. These assignments are structured to ensure that students are learning industry-relevant skills in a controlled, supportive environment. What makes this particularly meaningful is the integration of feedback from instructors who are professionals currently working in the field. This feedback not only helps students refine their work but also offers valuable insights into industry standards and expectations, which strengthens the connection between academic learning and real-world practice.

This process is also student-centered, as it encourages iterative improvement. Students are not simply evaluated at the end of a project; they are given opportunities to receive feedback through instructor preview, revise their work, and enhance their skills before facing similar tasks in their future careers. This approach reduces student anxiety around assessments and promotes a growth mindset, helping students understand that feedback is a tool for improvement, not just a judgment of their abilities.

In addition to the WBL approach, we have adopted equitable and student-centered SLO assessments in the form of instructor pre-assignment reviews. In several courses, instructors offer students the opportunity to submit drafts or preliminary versions of assignments before the final submission. This allows students to receive early feedback on their work, identify any areas of weakness, and make revisions prior to the final grading. This process is particularly beneficial for students who may struggle with the expectations of academic writing or legal

analysis, as it provides them with a chance to improve their work and demonstrate mastery of the material without the penalty of a low grade for initial errors.

The pre-assignment review process is grounded in equity, as it recognizes that students come to the program with varying levels of experience and preparedness. It ensures that all students, regardless of their starting point, have the opportunity to succeed by giving them multiple chances to demonstrate mastery before their work is graded. This fosters an environment of inclusivity and support, where students feel empowered to take risks, seek clarification, and ultimately improve their skills in a low-stakes environment.

Together, these SLO assessment strategies—work-based learning projects with industry feedback and pre-assignment reviews—embody a student-centered, innovative, and equitable approach to assessment. They not only align with industry standards but also support diverse student needs, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to succeed and grow in the program. By emphasizing feedback, reflection, and continuous improvement, these strategies help build both student competence and confidence, ultimately preparing them for successful careers in the legal field.

Discuss how your SLO data are being used for course and/or program improvements for student retention, success, and/or goal achievement.
SLO data plays a critical role in shaping our ongoing efforts to enhance course design, improve student retention, and support goal achievement in our program. We regularly review SLO data to identify trends, challenges, and areas of improvement within individual courses and the program as a whole. Data is reviewed at the department meetings, by the program director, and by our advisory board. This reflective process allows us to make data-informed decisions that directly address student needs and contribute to their overall success.
One significant way that SLO data informs improvements is by highlighting specific skills or content areas where students may be struggling. For example, in the case of PARA 170 – Worker's Compensation, SLO assessment data revealed that many students were struggling with the basic math computations required to accurately determine a client's disability rating. This was a clear barrier to student success, as the ability to perform these calculations is essential to the course and the profession.
Upon recognizing this challenge through SLO data, faculty members convened to discuss the issue and explore potential solutions. We collaborated with math faculty to develop targeted instructional resources aimed at helping students build their skills in these essential computations. The result was the creation of handouts and supplementary materials that break down the calculation methods step-by-step, along with instructional tools and practice exercises. These resources were integrated into the course and made available to students early in the semester, giving them the tools they needed to succeed before the calculations were tested in assignments and exams.

Degree and Certificate Programs

For each degree and certificate indicate how many awards were conferred in the past five years. Please comment on any trends and provide context to explain any increases or decreases.
In the past five years, our program has conferred a total of 78 Associate of Science (AS) degrees in Paralegal Studies. The number of awards per year has fluctuated, with a general trend of awarding between 11 and 22 degrees annually:

- **2019:** 16 graduates

- **2020:** 15 graduates

- **2021:** 11 graduates

- **2022:** 14 graduates

- **2023:** 22 graduates

Overall, the data shows some variability from year to year, with a noticeable dip in 2020 and 2021. The decrease in 2020 and 2021 can likely be attributed to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected student enrollment, completion rates, and overall program progression. Like many other programs, we saw challenges related to remote learning, changes in student employment, and shifting academic priorities. The lower number of graduates during these years was part of a broader trend seen across many educational programs during the pandemic.

However, in the 2022-2023 academic year, there was a slight increase in the number of graduates, with 22 degrees awarded. This represents a recovery from the pandemic's effects and could be due to a few factors, including:

1. **Improved Student Support:** We have implemented more targeted outreach efforts to support students nearing completion. This includes increased communication about the graduation application process, advising, and offering personalized support for students who were at risk of not completing their degree. These efforts may have helped students who had been lingering in the program for various reasons to successfully complete their studies.

2. **Clarification of Pathways:** We believe that increased efforts to clarify the professional benefits of completing the AS degree—such as compliance with California Business and Professions Code §6450, which governs the use of the title "paralegal"—have contributed to a rise in completion rates. Many students are now more aware of the value of the degree in meeting legal employment requirements and the importance of certification for those intending to work as paralegals in California.

In summary, while we observed some variability in the number of degrees awarded each year, the overall trend indicates a recovery and potential for growth in the number of graduates. The increase in the 2022-2023 academic year may reflect our more intentional efforts in supporting students through graduation and a renewed awareness of the importance of earning the AS degree for professional and legal career advancement. We will continue to monitor these trends closely and refine our outreach and support efforts to further increase retention and graduation rates in the future.

Indicate when each degree and certificate was last reviewed and updated (semester), if this information is available (e.g., via internal program records or Curriculum Committee minutes).
The PARA AS degree regularly gets updated with the general changes to curriculum as it calls out the specific GE pattern for PARA. An error in our Catalog Page was corrected in April 2024. The degree was reviewed and updated in Feb 2024 and before that in June 2023.

Can students complete the degree/certificate requirements within a two-year period?
Yes

How is your program currently assessing its PLOs? Please select all that apply.
SLO-to-PLO Mapping

Please provide the following for each degree/certificate: ? The most recent semester each of your program(s) assessed PLOs; ? Brief summary of findings; and ? Overview of changes made as a result.

Our PLOs are assessed in a multiple tool method on a regular basis. Every semester we assess SLOs which are mapped to PLOs and we conduct graduate surveys. Once per year we dive into PLOs in the advisory committee meetings. Every other year we complete an employer focus group with the California Community colleges of the region examining our PLOs with the employers of our graduates.

Graduate Survey
The Graduate Survey evaluates each program goal and objective when asking Graduates to reflect upon if the Program prepared them to communicate effectively through writing and speaking and through an inquiry about further development of their critical thinking skills, as responses to these questions the Graduate reflects upon and shares their perspective on Program Learning Outcome 1. Program Learning Outcome 2 is evaluated when Graduates reflect and respond to a prompt regarding if they feel the Program has adequately prepared them to function ethically and professionally in their career. Each question includes room for students to provide details and additional comments.

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Overwhelmingly students have reported on the graduate surveys a positive response that the program is indeed meeting the goals. Students enjoyed and supported the emphasis on ethics in every single course and state they are using what they learned in their current positions. For the two negative responses in all of the survey results, one was that they didn't feel there was enough group projects to increase interactions with others that would have mirrored a law office scenario. The other student that felt they could have been more prepared for the level of writing they would be called upon to compose after graduating, indicating that they wanted more "repetitive practice" rather than trying any one type only once or twice. We have taken this feedback seriously and discussed it with the Paralegal Advisory Committee. Upon review and discussion, developed a practicum legal specialty elective course as a supplement and alternative to the internship course. This will be a course for students that are unable to leave their current positions for an internship or that do not feel strong enough about their skill development from coursework to jump into an internship experience. The course is going to be offered for the first time in the Spring 2025 academic semester.

Program Review and SLO's
Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) are assessed every Fall in class offered that semester and every Spring in every class not assessed in Fall. The assessment tool varies by instructor but each student participating in the assessment is recorded. Each SLO is mapped to a Program Learning Outcome (PLO). The PLO Program Matrix indicates which course specific SLO evaluations are used to demonstrate and review that the program is meeting the stated Goals and Objectives of the Program Learning Outcomes. You can also see that every course SLOs link to one of the two PLOs. When the instructor reviews the how the individual students performed on specific assignments that relate to the SLO that are further mapped to the PLO we are able to analyze how the program is meeting each of the specific goals through the assignments they complete in the courses demonstrating that we are meeting our stated goals or need to improve.

All SLO assessment data is entered into a data base called Trac Dat and then used by the program in their Comprehensive or Annual Update to Program Review – Paralegal Studies. The 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2023-2024 annual program review updates. This document captures the progress on the preceding year's goals and objectives and sets the vision for the next year. There is no separate PLO assessment tool at this time other than the program director monitoring the status of the SLOs from each class.

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- **Effective Assessments**:

  - Assignments included real-world tasks such as drafting legal documents, conducting research, and analyzing statutes.

  - Projects like filing claims, drafting memorandums, or preparing bankruptcy petitions promoted practical application of skills.

- **Challenges and Recommendations**:

  - Some courses (e.g., PARA 135) identified attendance as a critical factor for student success.

  - Faculty recommended more interactive learning experiences, like collaborative projects and hands-on activities, especially for complex topics such as civil procedures and bankruptcy.

We are leaning into Work Based Learning and now highlighting SLOs that are monitored through assignments that meet this standard which often shows success of our first PLO through the creation of documents composed that demonstrate the application of the research, analytical skills and college-level writing abilities necessary to assist attorneys in the practice of law. PLO number two is incorporated into every legal specialty course as there is always an SLO dedicated to ethics in the profession in every course. Once again the high success rates demonstrate our students are deeply exposed and learning the ethical standards to ensure they know the expectation of how to act in an ethical and professional manner when confronted with a law office related conflict scenario.

Employers and the Legal Community:

The Advisory Committee and Employer Focus Group regularly share their feedback on how we are doing developing students towards our two stated Program Learning Outcomes and how we can further refine and enhance the program and make sure students are developing skills needed in our local legal community.

The Employer Focus Group (EFG) was conducted in 2014, 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023. These are conducted regionally, with local community colleges to prevent oversaturating the local market with requests for feedback from the local community colleges. Within the EFG we ask specifically about expectations of new paralegals regarding the elements of our PLOs. We have specific questions on research, analysis, writing skills, ethics, and professionalism which allows us to reflect on how well we are preparing the students for the needs of our local legal community. Although we appear to be meeting our stated PLOs based on feedback from the EFG, there is always something new to learn and a way for the program to continue to improve.

These have been very helpful in the past having led to recommending the prerequisite of ENG 120 for the entire program. The 2016 group lead to the BOT courses rather than only focusing on a Word requirement. In 2018 legal technology training was held to ensure PARA instructors modernized their Canvas shells and used more technology in their courses. After the 2021 focus group we were able to see that our Advanced eDiscovery course, PARA 176 was a good addition to meet the needs of the employers as technology needs are ever expanding.

Students:
Annually we hold an All-Hands Meetings where we gather: the Faculty, Advisory Committee, Student Organization and Student Body. Students report that overall they feel they are progressing with the goals of the program when given the opportunity to comment, but also strongly support the addition of a practicum course for those who are unable to take time off of work before entering the Paralegal workforce as discussed with the Advisory Committee.

Are all of your degree maps completed?
Yes

Are the degree maps posted to the college website?
Yes

How are you currently assessing your PLOs? If you are not currently assessing PLOs, what is your plan to assess PLOs in the future?
We gather feedback from graduates of the program on PLOs through a graduate survey. We regularly reflect upons success of our PLOs through SLO assessment and mapping. Additionally we conduct Employer Focus Groups regularly to get feedback from employers of our graduates to assess how we are meeting our program goals. Annually we review PLOs with the advisory board.

How are your PLO assessments informing improvements/changes to your program?
All of our various PLO assessments are used to inform if we need to develop or modify the program content to respond to the legal community needs. With review and reflection on each of the tools we modify course outlines, course assignments, and develop more tools to support students so more are able to achieve the PLOs and thrive in the workplace.

Student Access and Achievement

Please describe any enrollment changes (increases/decreases) over the past 4 years and the context for these changes.
Over the past four years, enrollment in the PARA program has ranged from a high of 96 to a low of 64 students, reflecting a downward trend. This decline appears to be influenced by multiple factors, including shifts in outreach strategies, program modality, and alignment with target demographics.
Key Factors Influencing Enrollment:

Comprehensive Program Review

1. **Target Demographics and Outreach**:

   o While community presentations and outreach efforts have predominantly focused on high school counselors and students, the program's typical demographic consists of women aged 20 to 40+. This mismatch in outreach focus may have contributed to the declining enrollment, as the primary audience was not adequately engaged.

2. **Shifts in Modality**:

   o In 2021, enrollment numbers were slightly higher, likely due to the synchronous online course offerings during that period. The transition to HyFlex, while innovative, may not have been equally appealing to all student demographics, possibly leading to decreased participation. Other community college Paralegal Programs in the region appear to have greater success focusing on student demand for online courses rather than industry preference for face to face instruction for critical topics.

3. **Community and Partner Engagement**:

   o Current engagement strategies focus heavily on feeder high schools, which may not immediately yield increased enrollment due to the lag time between high school graduation and entry into the PARA program. Additional in-reach activities targeting the existing adult learner community could help bridge this gap as well as targeting the legal community who have employeese that may want to advance within the firm they are currently employed.

If your program has seen a significant decline in enrollment over the past 4 years, what resources or support would be helpful to improve program enrollment and access?
The PARA Program has seen a significant decline in enrollment over the past 4 years. Our program would significantly benefit from a marketing campaign targeting women ages 20-40+ via social media in the San Diego County and IVC. We have submitted this in our program budget request and hope to start the campaign before Fall 2025.

What is the program doing to increase student enrollment or access?

The program has engaged with the community whenever possible to increase enrollment. We activity participate with Campus Outreach when they host events on campus. Additionally, we regularly participate at high school career day tabling and presentations. We have support access by offering courses in the evening and weekends. Instructors as often as possible use free or low cost materials, for subjects where that is not possible we are accumulating a loaner collection of textbooks to increase access to our courses for limited means individuals. We have leaned on our Advisory Committee to help spread interest in the program. Additionally PARA has ventured into social media on Instagram and Facebook. We have created a significant collection of pictures featuring the BPS mascot Jamul at various legal sites to highlight and reach out to the public.

What is your program's overall course success rate? How has it changed over the past 4-5 years?
Paralegal Studies' overall course success rate is 77% for Fall 2023 and exceeds the college's overall success rate for Fall 2023 which was 75%. Paralegal studies average overall success rate is 73%, whereas the college's overall success rate is 74%, showing that we are close to the campus overall but currently doing better. Our success rate is trending upward in the last few years and we believe this is due to the support offered for our students and engaged instructors.

Which groups are experiencing equity gaps in your program for success rate and/or retention rate?
Equity gaps have been identified with success of African American students in our average, however in the last two years we have closed those gaps so as this is maintained the overall average will drop over time as the gap appears to have been closed. All other previous equity gaps have been closed and appear to be stable.

What department/discipline (or institutional) factors may be contributing to these lower rates of success for these groups of students?
Our department takes equity seriously and has taken strong efforts to complete training and implement equity minded teaching methods. In PARA 100, the introductory course all PARA students must engage in a module has

been developed to highlight contributions of various groups within the legal community with regular expansion based on student input. We also embrace a diverse faculty including diverse genders, races, sexuality, and physical abilities so students can see themselves reflected in their faculty and materials.

We have also increased our diverse adjunct fauclty and provided various opportunities for them to engage with our students so students can see how everyone belongs in the legal community and all can thrive.

How has this data shaped your comprehensive program review goals and action steps?

Our department takes equity seriously and has taken strong efforts to complete training and implement equity minded teaching methods. In PARA 100, the introductory course all PARA students must engage in a module has been developed to highlight contributions of various groups within the legal community with regular expansion based on student input. We also embrace a diverse faculty including diverse genders, races, sexuality, and physical abilities so students can see themselves reflected in their faculty and materials. We have addressed the equity gaps and will continue to embrace inclusive teaching techniques supporting new faculty to complete training.

Discuss your department/discipline's plan for diversifying department faculty in alignment with the GCCCD Board Resolution 20-015.

We are a very diverse faculty in PARA. We have three African American adjuncts in the department, one Asian adjunct, one Hispanic adjunct, two LGBTQ instructors, and three Caucasian adjuncts and one Caucasian full time faculty, and we have one blind. Our faculty includes four women, four men, and no known non-binary instructors.

What other qualitative or quantitative data, if any, is the department/discipline using to inform its planning for this comprehensive program review?

PARA also relies upon data gathered to support the ABA report with this comprehensive program review. We gather student surveys, graduate student surveys, employer focus groups, advisory committees and information disbursed by the ABA. It is notable that enrollment in Paralegal Studies in down across the nation. Our program is showing that our graduates are able to find employment or continue their education and that they feel we have achieved our program goals. Additionally students and graduates highlight our PARA 130 and PARA 132 courses as the most valuable in the program for working as a paralegal.

Attach Related Documents - Student Access and Achievement

MainReport - ABAParalegals Application Report-Post Correction Submission.pdf

Distance Education Course Success (If Applicable)

If your department offers distance education classes, how do you ensure Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) is being implemented?

Our department regularly uses tools available fully. We embrace welcome letters and videos to guide students on how to navigate the Canvas environment and how to use the communication tools. Announcements are heavily used throughout the course to share information with students generally. We use an introduction module to explain the lay out of the course. A student resources module is created to helps students with the course in addition to finding resources Cuyamaca offers to support them.

Courses are designed to include opportunities for ample regular contact in discussion forums, the grade comment sections and other tools. Students also have multiple means of contacting the instructor and are encouraged to do so throughout the course including email, canvas messages, comments on grade feedback, comments on discussion boards, and office hours.

Courses make use of a variety of tools and methods available for unstructured student-initiated interaction to accommodate a variety of communication styles. Courses are designed to facilitate student interaction and are responsive to the variety of cultures and communication styles in the learning community.

Rubrics are included with assignments to explain how participation will be evaluated and include descriptive criteria and include models of "good work". Assessments are designed to mimic authentic environments and match the objectives to the learners for each assessment. Multiple types of formative and summative assessments are used (research project, objective test, discussions, ect.). Frequent assessments occur at regular intervals throughout the course, providing students with timely feedback on learning and performance. Instructions are written clearly and with exemplary detail to ensure understanding. Students are encouraged to apply feedback to improve learning and performance. There are regular opportunities throughout the course for student self-assessment that encourage students to seek timely additional help.

Career Exploration and Program Demand (Career Education Programs Only)

Please share your observations about the employment rate for your program over the last 4 years.

The employment rate data most current that is available is for 2020-2021 from Perkins IV Core Indicators for Paralegal. The employment rate listed is 78.57% for the area total and 91.67% for female students. We appear to be slightly more successful that the state level at 76.88%. This makes sense that our students are generally successful finding employment as the San Diego region is strong and we are aware many students have continued on with their education and that employers have been inquiring about new graduates, so I expected our employment rate to be high. Economically disadvantaged was only 66.67% which is concerning because there are employers seeking out our graduates and these students are clearly in need.

What is the institution-set standard for your program's employment rate?

The institution-set standard for the Paralegal program's employment rate is 73.23%. I feel like 70% should be the lowest acceptable employment rate floor as opportunities abound for our graduates to immediately begin in the workplace and we hope to help all graduates reach their goals be that employment now, or continuing education.

What would you like your program's employment rate to be, ideally (stretch goal)?

Ideally, our stretch goal is 80% employment. Employers have been inquiring about our grads, our students are being introduced to the Career Center early, and we have been actively sharing these opportunities with them. We are launching PARA 251 in SP 2025, so students who are currently employed outside of the industry and unavailable to intern to build their confidence within office skills and interview techniques. We are hopeful for even greater success as we continue to support our students in demonstrating their value for employers.

What do the latest labor market data reveal about the careers (including those for transfer students) for which your program prepares students?

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad region of California employed 7,208 paralegals in 2023 at an annual mean wage of $61,697. USBLS also lists the San DiegoCarlsbad area's regional employment growth in July 2024 higher than the national average by 1.2% from 2023 to 2024 for Paralegals. The California Employment Development Department estimates a 20.4% job growth by 2030 for paralegals in San Diego County. Top distinguishing skills by demand include electronic discovery, which is indicated as a salary boosting skill and has a projected growth of 11.3% showing why it's so important that we have embraced the skill through our electronic discovery course and advanced electronic discovery course.

Attach Related Documents - Career Exploration and Program Demand
LMI PARA.pdf

Strengths, Challenges & External Influences

Please describe your program's strengths.

Paralegal Studies program's strength includes our 22 years of ABA approval, dedicated and knowledgeable faculty, our active student organization, and the guiding hand of our advisory board. Our faculty shows up during office hours and regularly make themselves available for our students to help with questions and mastery of the subjects. Faculty teach in areas they have extensive experience and care deeply about their students. Our student organization is creative and dynamic always coming up with interesting ideas for student engagement and they help to facilitate communication and opportunities for our students. The Paralegal Studies Advisory Board is

consistent thoughtful and insightful about the current state of our legal community and the evolving needs for growth.

Please describe your program's challenges.

Our program faces two large challenges. We need to recruit students that are our more typical demographic to help with program enrollment. Another challenge that we are facing is regarding our student desire for online courses, and the real push of our advisory committee and legal community to maintain a minimum face to face courses. Students retain less information from fully online courses and yielding to this desire will lead to diminishing the program's reputation in the community and our student success.

Please describe external influences that affect your program (both positively and negatively).

ABA approval is crucial to the value to our AS degree as it is required to comply with Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §6450 in order to use the Paralegal title. We have recently completed our reapproval process completing the last 7 year cycle. This is a huge positive for the program and a win for our students. We will have our interim report due in 3 years.

External influences that are a challenge for our program come from the number of ABA approved programs in the area offering fully online education. This has created an opportunity for students unable or not willing to take in person courses with our program taking synchronous courses offered by Miramar and SWC and transferring those units back to graduate from our program. Students have started attempting to use AI during in person courses despite being advised not to use it and told to craft their own responses. This is an issue and danger we need to emphasize throughout the program as it is a confidentiality issue on top of the fact they need to develop their own ability to understand composition is correct rather than be misled.

Given these factors, what opportunities exist for the service area to advance the College's goals in the next 4 years?

The Paralegal Studies Department is well-positioned to support and advance the college's goals over the next four years. Here are specific opportunities aligned with each goal:

1. **Increasing Equitable Access**:

   o Focus outreach and marketing efforts on adults over 20, including working professionals, career changers, and those re-entering the workforce. Collaborate with community colleges, adult education centers, and local employers to raise awareness of the program's benefits for individuals seeking practical, career-oriented education. Cuyamaca makes strides currently to support access for all high school students, but does not put forth sufficient effort to connect with adults making life changes who need training. The Paralegal Studies Department has attended countless opportunities to recruit students and the vast majority of them each semester are aimed at high school students with one or two only directed towards adult learners. The majority of PARA students are these adult learners and we will keep working on these types of events to connect with and increase access to this population at Cuyamaca.

   o Enhance online and evening course offerings to accommodate the schedules of adult learners who may be balancing jobs, family responsibilities, or other commitments. This flexibility will help reduce barriers to enrollment for this demographic. PARA offers courses in the evening, online, hyflex and now on Saturdays to increase equitable access for students.

   o Low Cost learning Materials- PARA has made efforts to decrease the cost students bear beyond the cost of tuition. We have adopted OER materials when possible, used tools and software hosted with the Cuyamaca Library such as Legal Information Source, and CEB OnLaw to decrease textbook costs. We have also leaned in to the San Diego County Law Library to increase out use of their collection available online. Some classes do require a more current textbook, and for that the department has successfully developed a loaner set of textbooks that is now being used in 3 classes.

   o Develop a legal resource on campus to support students and members of the community as they face common legal concerns and challenges. A smaller version of this is currently on campus with the

Together We Rise Center hosting the HELS Group on campus focused on immigration, but there is a greater need to access to legal information on campus that can be met with a center focusing on legal issues in areas such as domestic and unlawful detainer. Given the timing, that we are at a small break in our need to write reapproval reports for the ABA progress could be made to begin developing this for Cuyamaca.

2. **Eliminating Equity Gaps in Course Success**:

   o PARA has actively worked to eliminate equity gaps in retention and success for our students and made great progress by Fall 2023, with data no longer indicating equity gaps for African American or Hispanic/Latino students.

   o Implemented targeted academic support, such as tutoring services within challenging courses like legal research and writing. In the future workshops focused on challenging topics like AI in the Law and select topics in Bankruptcy Law will help support student success in the program and within industry upon graduation.

   o Incorporate culturally relevant course materials and examples to engage students from varied backgrounds more effectively. In PARA 100, Introduction to Paralegal Studies there is a page developed to highlight different communities and their contribution within the law. This can be carried forward into many other courses and perhaps as an example to other areas on campus where there is more resistence to major changes in curriculum to allow students to see themselves present in the materials.

3. **Increasing Persistence and Eliminating Equity Gaps**:

   o Establish a mentorship program pairing current students with alumni or legal professionals, particularly those from underrepresented groups, to provide guidance and foster a sense of belonging. Currently our student organization is very active holding events monthly to support engagement with our students, but we can continue to grow that with alumni connections.

   o Enhance academic advising and early intervention systems to identify and support students at risk of dropping out, with a focus on addressing unique challenges faced by underrepresented populations. Many of our students are working full time and raising children. It's important that students are connected with resources on campus such as Cuyamaca Cares to support the challenges that they face in life to be present within the classroom.

4. **Increasing Completion and Eliminating Equity Gaps**:

   • Strengthen internship partnerships with diverse law firms and community organizations, helping students gain practical experience that aligns with career goals and builds confidence to complete their studies.

   • Support the new practicum course for students who do not have time to undertake a traditional internship course during the workday.

   • Continue reminders and sessions on applying for graduation in coordination with our Student Organization, CAPS.

   5. **Increasing Hiring and Retaining Diverse Employees**:
• Actively recruit diverse faculty and staff to reflect the student population and serve as role models for students. Job postings should be widely disseminated to networks and organizations serving underrepresented communities.

- Provide professional development opportunities that foster an inclusive work environment, ensuring that diverse faculty and staff feel supported and valued.

- The Paralegal Studies Department has been actively attempting to recruit diverse faculty, and has had some success. We can boast about our faculty who include experts in their fields of law, and allow students to see themselves in their faculty. We have faculty that are former judges, attorneys and paralegals. We currently are the only department on campus to employ a blind member of the faculty. We also have faculty that include a fairly even split of men (4) and women (4). We also include faculty affiliated with the LGBTQIA+ community, members of the African American community, South East Asian community, Armenian community, and Caucasian. We could benefit from greater representation of the hispanic community in our faculty as Cuyamaca is a Hispanic Serving Institution.

By focusing on these opportunities, the Paralegal Studies Department can directly contribute to achieving the college's goals while empowering students with the skills and resources needed for success in the legal field.

Attach Related Documents - Strengths, Challenges & External Influences
01-02-2024 FINAL Cuyamaca SVR-1.pdf;
Cuayamaca Reapproval Report ABA May 2023 Update.pdf

Program Goals

Program Goals Status
Updated progress on my previous goals & added new.

Program Goals Mapping
Mapping for all active Program Goals complete.

Submission