



Fullerton College

Self-study for Paralegal Studies Program

2025

Section 1: Introduction

1. Briefly describe your program, make sure to include how your program helps the College achieve its mission.

The Paralegal Studies Program is a career education program that is designed to get students jobs as paralegals and other legal professionals. In addition, the Program assists in preparing students who want to go to law school. The foundations of law, plus how to find and apply it, help students to succeed in their work, continuing education, and in their personal lives. With these skills and foundations, students can seek diverse pathways that go beyond being merely paralegals. Students are empowered through their legal knowledge and application to be advocates, responsible leaders, and contribute to their communities.

Section 2: Students

2.1 Student Demographics and Enrollment Trends

1. Using the data provided by the OIE, describe the student population your department serves. Which demographic groups have the most enrollments in your program? Which student groups are underrepresented in your program? Has the demographic profile of your program changed over the last four years?

Based on the OIE data, the demographic group with the most enrollments in our Program are Latina/o/x/e, with anywhere from 55 to 65% of the enrollments being from this group.

Black or African American students are largely underrepresented in the Program, ranging from 2% to 5% since 2020-2021.

Our Black or African American student population has seen a small increase since 2020, but overall, the above trends have remained the same, with Latinx students making up the majority of our Program.

2. Briefly describe course-level enrollment trends in your program over the past five years. Have the enrollment trends in your program changed over the last five years? To what do you attribute any changes or lack of changes?

Since 2020, enrollments have dropped, with 2023-2024 marking an all-time low for the Program (555 enrollments compared to 1,004). There has been some upward movement in 2024-2025, which shows some promise. Being a career education Program, many paralegal students begin their journey having some sort of education under their belt, but they are looking for a change. Every time there is a shake-up in the job market (i.e. the COVID pandemic, the real estate market meltdown in 2008, etc.), students are reinventing themselves. Paralegal Studies offers students an opportunity to get decent paying jobs that tend to be stable even when things are not going so well in other fields.

3. How do you monitor and modify course offerings, including time and modality, to ensure that students' needs are being met?

Course offerings in Paralegal Studies are largely not modified other than to change or update elective course rotations to offer a variety of electives from semester to semester. Offerings are generally heavily monitored from semester to semester, with electives adjusted to align with student interest (based on enrollments and student feedback). Further, we have articulation agreements with other institutions, plus new specialty certificates, which dictate what electives are prioritized to ensure students can obtain the maximum benefit from an articulation agreement or obtaining an

additional certificate.

As to day and time, the lack of course modification is largely based on the time of day and modality constraints for our student population. Most Paralegal Studies classes are a mix of evening synchronous (offered in-person and Zoom or HyFlex [in-person and Zoom at the same time]) and online courses. The evening classes work best for most students based on their working schedules and outside responsibilities that make it difficult to attend classes during the day. Further, the flexibility of Zoom and online offerings allows students to have flexibility in how they attend class.

2.2 Student Achievement

1. Using data provided by the OIE, describe overall student achievement counts, rates, and trends in your program over the past five years, these include: course success rates, degrees/certificates completion counts, transfer counts, licensing, job placement, wage improvements (not all of these measures apply to every program).

Based on the OIE data, Paralegal Studies success rates are well above the institutional set standard and in 2024-2025, exceeded the “stretch goal.” Even in prior years, success rates came within a few percentage points of reaching the stretch goal.

From a course perspective, course success rates in gateway classes (such as PLEG 101 and 104) have largely been improving. This is also inclusive of our difficult PLEG 105 writing course, where prior assessments have indicated struggles with student completion and success rates given the difficult nature of legal writing and critical thinking skills.

Lastly, the Program assessment we are required to do for the American Bar Association has yielded very promising results relating to student success. Each year, graduates are surveyed to determine how they are doing, including whether they are gainfully employed in the legal field. Over the past four years, anywhere from 80 to 90% of graduates have reported not only gainful employment as paralegals or related professions, but they have also indicated high levels of job satisfaction.

2. Are there student groups whose success rates are below the institution-set standard or whose success rates are below other student groups? What factors can explain this?

Per the OIE data, the only group that is below the institution-set standard success rate is Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (at 40%). Interestingly, the categories of “Two or more races” and “Unknown” stand at 79% and 81%, respectively. It is possible that success rates could be spread across many other categories based on this data.

3. In terms of your degree and certificate completers, are there any groups who are underrepresented in your completion data compared to the overall enrollment in your program?

No, the data indicates the completions match what enrollments are also indicating concerning student groups.

4. Are your students completing your degree and certificate program requirements in the expected time frame? Are there certain groups whose rates are below other student groups? Discuss any efforts to improve time to completion.

Not entirely, though there are some reasons for this that are particular to the average paralegal student. In most years, just over half of students in the Program were completing their degree within 2 to 5 years of completion [it is not possible to complete our Program in less than two years]. Given that most of our students are part-time [because they are also working at the same time as pursuing their education], it makes sense that their Program would take 3 to 4 years to complete.

Also, the data also seems to account for only degree completions. In California, most employers require a paralegal to have a certificate of completion from a paralegal education program. Further, the American Bar Association requires a student have a degree to obtain a certificate. As mentioned previously, students already possess a degree and often want to merely pursue the paralegal certificate. In meeting with counselors, students are encouraged to obtain the A.S. Paralegal Studies Degree in addition to the certificate, though they often may need to take some additional general education classes to do so. This results in students prioritizing the certificate [to obtain what will get them employment], often either delaying the completion of general education requirements for the degree or returning to complete them later.

2.3 Student Learning Outcomes

1. Describe your program's processes and practices for defining, assessing, and analyzing student learning outcomes at the course (CSLO) and program (PSLO) level. Include a discussion of how your program uses the results of CSLO/PSLO data to inform course and program improvement efforts.

As required by our third-party approving entity, the American Bar Association ("ABA"), the Paralegal Studies Program engages in semesterly review of Course Student Learning Outcomes ("CSLOs"). Additionally, the Program engages in various assessment tools to assess its Program Student Learning Outcomes ("PSLOs").

Specifically, each adjunct faculty member, plus the full-time Department Coordinator, complete a review of whether students have met the CSLOs via the eLumen platform. That information is

compiled into reports at the end of each academic year, where the Department Coordinator then reviews those reports and analyzes the content. That assessment is provided to the ABA faculty, the Program's advisory committee, the Division Dean, and the Vice President of Instruction. The Department Coordinator analyzes both CSLOs and PSLOs using the data received from the various tools. Then, the data and results are compiled into the academic year's assessment and shared as outlined in the prior paragraph.

In relation to the CSLOs and PSLOs, the Program engages in the following forms of assessment to inform course and program improvement efforts:

- Student satisfaction surveys every fall, spring, and summer
- New Student Information Meeting surveys after each meeting fall and spring
- New Student Information and Technology Readiness survey every fall, spring, and summer
- Graduate surveys [both written surveys and phone calls] each year
- Legal community surveys every two years
- Advisory committee feedback twice a year

2. (OPTIONAL/NOT REQUIRED) Using the data provided by OIE, describe the most salient results of CSLO or PSLO mastery rates. Did you find significant differences by race, ethnicity, gender, and other categories?

Section 3: Other Areas of Program Effectiveness

1. Document any substantial changes to your program curriculum since the last review and discuss what prompted these changes. Looking forward, what changes to the curriculum do you plan based on the emerging needs of your discipline, industry, student population, etc.

First, effective fall 2023, updates to degree and certificate requirements were adjusted to meet advisory committee feedback, ABA Guidelines, and changes in the legal field at the time. Specifically, required courses were updated to include legal ethics, plus an advanced legal research and writing course. Additionally, an exciting new elective, Alternative Dispute Resolution, was developed and deployed in spring 2025 to account for an area of law that would contribute to a skillset and potential career pathway related to the law, but not necessarily the traditional law firm or paralegal role.

Second, effective fall 2025, 4 new specialty skills certificates (each one only 15 units) were developed and deployed. These specialty certificates were a result of much collaboration among both paralegal, business, real estate, administration of justice, and computer information systems disciplines. They were also approved by our advisory committee and the ABA. These certificates are

designed to improve and focus students and graduates' skills in technology or a legal area of law to make them more marketable.

2. Please briefly describe opportunities your students have to apply and deepen knowledge and skills through projects, apprenticeship, internships, co-ops, clinical placements, group projects outside of class, service learning, study abroad, and other experiential learning activities that you intentionally embed in coursework or elsewhere in your program.

Students have various opportunities in their required coursework to research and complete legal documents that are true to what they would see in their legal experience, providing them with a portfolio they can use for any job, while also giving them samples or templates to help them while they are working. Every required course uses scenarios based on real-life situations.

Many of the elective courses give students the ability to research legal professionals, applicable law, and legal issues facing society today, with opportunities for discussion and engagement with their peers.

While not a required course, students can take advantage of the PLEG 210 - Paralegal Internship class, where they can complete legal work on actual client cases under the supervision of an attorney. Internship opportunities include private law firms, the OC and LA District Attorneys Offices, Public Defenders Offices, and the Veterans Legal Institute.

3. Describe any laws, regulations, trends, policies, procedures, or other influences that have an impact on your program. These can include things like Vision 2030, CALGETC, Common Course Numbering, etc.

CALGETC can have impacts on Paralegal Studies given the emphasis on degrees for transfer. Given the limitations of ABA Guidelines/accreditation of our Program, there are limits on our local degree patterns that often put keeping the huge impact of maintaining ABA approval at odds with other decisions that are being made.

Further, California law, specifically The Business and Professions Code, governs the working paralegal, including the educational requirements required to work as a paralegal in this state. *See* Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 6450(c).

Section 4: Faculty and Staff

4.1 Population and Demographics

1. Using the data provided by OIE, describe your program's staff (full-time/part-time faculty, nonfaculty, classified). How reflective of your program's student population is your staff?

Paralegal Studies consists of only one full-time faculty. Most of the classes are taught by adjunct faculty, with the sole full-timer responsible for managing, coordinating, and updating the Program. Classified staff assist with administrative requirements for the Program, though the current admin assisting the Program is only 50% devoted to Paralegal Studies, with the remainder of time being devoted generally to the BUS/CIS Division. Unfortunately, that 50% support dwindles based on other demands, resulting in that administrative assistant working longer hours to keep up, or simply not devoting the 50% time to the Program.

While the faculty in Paralegal Studies are diverse in both gender and ethnicity, faculty are not reflective of our Latinx student group even though many of our students are Latinx.

2. Describe your program's staffing changes since fall 2021. How have these changes impacted your program's ability to achieve its strategic action plans?

As to faculty, there have been no staffing changes. However, there have been some fluctuations concerning administrative support. With the temporary departure of the administrative assistant supporting Paralegal Studies, the role had to be filled with professional experts and other staff, which was not ideal. In the meantime, the weight of the administrative requirements associated with the program fell upon the single full-time faculty, creating a situation where there was little opportunity to devote to program development, outcome assessments, marketing, and more.

Mostly, the Program was able to achieve many of its goals in improving tutoring, obtaining funding to reduce technology and access gaps. Student success has largely increased, though it was at the expense of working toward obtaining the last SAP [obtaining a full-time, dedicated Paralegal Studies Technician, such as an Administrative Assistant III – Instructional Support Services].

4.2 Staff Support and Professional Development

1. Describe the regular discussions your program faculty are having about equitable grading, attendance, late work, extra credit policies, and other strategies to support equitable student success.

Each semester, there is an agenda item discussing various aspects relating to the importance of instructor-to-student communication. This includes the importance of timely and effective communication to students based on communication plans. Further, Paralegal Studies faculty have

committed to communication with students in the first few weeks of the semester when they are not attending class, submitting assignments, etc. This is designed to ensure we are encouraging students to keep going even when things are happening that impact them outside of the classroom. Also, during faculty meetings, we explore methodologies relating to exams and grade weighting to give students more opportunities to succeed throughout the semester as opposed to having just one exam/assignment be the end of their success in a course.

2. How have these conversations shaped practices or policies in your program? What action has arisen from these discussions? If no action has been taken, why not?

We have seen a small decrease in the number of students withdrawing from courses early on. For some classes where methodologies have been changed to avoid high stakes midterm and final exam only classes, student success or completion have somewhat improved as well.

3. What additional areas of professional development could help your faculty and staff engage in this work?
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Section 5: Program Planning

5.1 Progress on Previous Strategic Action Plans

1. Please discuss the goals (Strategic Action Plans, SAPs) from your last self-study. Assess and explain your progress on each of the SAP.
 - Closing the technology/low-income gaps for PLEG 104 and 223 classes = we believe we have successfully achieved the goals of this SAP and continue to each year. Students have more access to more specialized programs the Program uses for success in these courses. However, this is only based on the availability of Lottery funds. If this money source is not available in future semesters, this will need to be addressed to ensure those same gaps do not occur again.
 - Dedicated Paralegal Studies Technician (Administrative Assistant III – Instructional Support Services) to improve student success and the student experience through outreach initiatives to increase diverse student pool = There has been no progress to this SAP. The loss fluctuation of division staff impacted making any progress on this.
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2. If additional funds were NOT allocated to you in the last review cycle, how did the LACK of funds have an impact on your program?

The lack of the Paralegal Studies Technician likely had impacts on obtaining a diverse student pool, as outreach initiatives were more limited based on the staff fluctuations and increasing burdens on the full-time faculty/coordinator for the Program. Further, general outreach and planning of initiatives to improve the student experience and a sense of belonging to the Program were largely missing in the past couple of years.

SAPs

Paralegal Studies Instructional Support Services Technician

Short Description:

Increased meaningful outreach, marketing, and college-hosted events that create a sense of community are necessary to implement a feeling of belonging and improve the overall student experience for all underrepresented groups. The Program Coordinator engages in internship outreach and other strategies to foster relationships with the Program, but this is limited based on other demands related to ABA-reporting; data collection; Program Review; teaching responsibilities; and other requirements necessary to keep the Program aligned with institutional and ABA mandates. A full-time Paralegal Studies Instructional Support Technician would support the goal of increased outreach and support of underrepresented students.

Measurable Outcomes:

Improve student success and overall student experience in the Program through outreach initiatives for graduates, new prospective students, and diverse students. This can be accomplished through the combined efforts of a full-time Paralegal Studies Instructional Support Services Technician and the Program Coordinator.

College Goals:

1.5 Outreach strategies for prospective students/family; 2.5 Increase sense of belonging/mattering ; 3.2 Reduce equity gaps in degree/certificate completion

SAP Phase:

Revised

Resource Requests

Paralegal Studies Instructional Support Services Technician

Enhancement:

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outreach and other strategies to foster relationships with the Program, but this is limited based on other demands related to ABA-reporting; data collection; Program Review; teaching responsibilities; and other requirements necessary to keep the Program aligned with institutional and ABA mandates. A full-time Paralegal Studies Instructional Support Technician would support the goal of increased outreach and support of underrepresented students.

Personnel-Related:

Yes. As mentioned before, there is only one full-time faculty member in the Paralegal Studies Program. Adjunct faculty are limited in how much they contribute or interact outside of the classroom, with their assistance largely based on a volunteer basis. Further, with uncertain and fluctuating administrative assistance at the division level, having a dedicated instructional support technician would achieve the goals of the SAP and improve the overall student experience. Generally, students report less availability of adjunct faculty to their needs outside of the classroom (excluding grading, class-specific questions, etc.). This results in students feeling less seen and involved in their educational experience. This position would ensure students have the chance to experience more involvement with their Program beyond just the coursework.

Resource Category:

Non-Faculty Personnel

Quantity:

1

Unit Cost:

\$90,000.00

Total Cost:

\$90,000.00

Resource Requests

Paralegal Mini-Computer Lab

Enhancement:

Students need specific programs to complete their legal work that goes beyond just Microsoft. This includes PDF manipulating software that goes beyond the subscription tools the college already provides to students. Students have reported several issues impacting their success in using technology available at the library, computer labs on campus, and other campus resources. The availability of a mini-computer lab that has four computers with dedicated Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat Pro applications for paralegal students would assist those who have challenges with access. The computer lab would have full licenses of Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat Pro

available, with the ability to do the following in PDF: • Add or delete pages • Apply signatures • Add text or images to a page. • Redact sensitive information • Perform bookmarking, OCR/text recognition, and pagination Needs = one existing space in the 500 building + 4 computers, monitors, and related peripherals + 4 MS Office subscriptions/installations + 4 Adobe Acrobat Pro subscriptions/installations

Personnel-Related:

No

Resource Category:

Computer Software

Quantity:

4

Unit Cost:

\$2,600.00

TotalCost:

\$10,400.00