


Northampton Community College



Paralegal AAS Degree

Academic Program Review 2018 - 2022

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I. Introduction

- A. Provide the current purpose of the program.

The curriculum of the Paralegal program provides students with the practical skills, knowledge and values necessary to become effective members of a legal team. Most of the legal specialty courses are taught by attorneys and focus on knowledge and skills necessary in today's job market. Students learn the ethical rules and standards of practice and develop a framework for resolving ethical dilemmas while maintaining client confidentiality. An internship in a professional office also provides practical experience.

- B. How does the program advance the mission or strategic focus areas (SFAs) of the college? (Reflect on the program's curriculum, success rates, etc. to highlight where the program specifically promotes one or more of the SFAs) **The most impacted portion of the SFAs is the advancement in academic excellence. During the period that this report covers, the Paralegal program did not only meet and exceed the standards set forth by NCC, but of the American Bar Association as an approved program. The American Bar Association's voluntary approval and re-approval is a rigorous process that evaluates not only our courses, but our faculty, staff and student success. The last successful ABA re-approval was in August of 2018. Further, our ABA interim report to determine whether ABA standards were continued to be met was filed and successfully approved in 2021.**
- C. Comment on awards, honors, noteworthy accomplishments, or unique features related to the program during the review period. **During the review period, the Paralegal program maintained the standards set forth by the American Bar Association. During this time, the graduates from the Paralegal program were given awards for academic excellence by the Northampton County Bar Association.**
- D. Catalog Description
1. The current program catalog description is included in [Appendix A](#).
 2. Does this description accurately describe the current program?
Yes X No
- If No, what changes does the program review committee recommend?
Explain reasons for any recommended changes.
- E. Previous Program Review
1. Provide the date of the last program review: February 28, 2018
 2. List the recommendations from that review and indicate the extent to which these recommendations have been implemented. Indicate "I" for recommendations implemented, "IP" for those in progress, and "NI" for those not implemented. For those recommendations not implemented, please explain the circumstances.

Table 1. Status of Recommendations from Last Program Review

Recommendation	Status
The Program should continue to increase its proactive steps to recruit and retain a diverse faculty.	Ongoing – This is aligned with the institution mission and Student Financial Aid.
Because of the rapidly evolving nature of the paralegal profession and paralegal education, the Site Team encourages the College to continue to provide support for the Program Coordinator and faculty to attend seminars, conferences, and/or workshops designed for paralegal education.	Available with budgetary review. As a result of pandemic, many conference modalities moved to online formats and have continued. Programmatic professional development opportunities remain accessible/inclusive and cost effective.
The Program should continue its efforts to monitor the technology needs within the legal community and make adjustments to the curriculum as appropriate, potentially including instruction in software related to specific legal applications, such as time and billing, case management and e-discovery.	Ongoing evaluation by faculty and Paralegal Advisory Committee.
The Program should continue to encourage faculty to regularly attend scheduled faculty meetings.	Ongoing / Standing meeting. Digital platforms allow for better participation.
Faculty meeting minutes should clearly delineate the specific professional development activities completed during the faculty meetings and separate them from standard announcements to help ensure that the activities are of sufficient depth to promote the growth of faculty members as teachers.	Completed – Minutes reflect the recommendations.
The College and Program should continue to ensure that the total time and effort devoted to the program leadership is adequate to accomplish the functions that relate to the Guidelines requirements.	Ongoing – Meeting between Dean and faculty.

II. Program Outcomes

A. Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes (see [Appendix B](#)).

1. Have the PLOs been updated or revised since the last program review?
Yes X No
2. If yes, briefly explain the rationale for the changes (e.g., improving assessability, conforming to best practices, etc.) **The PLOs were updated to reflect the changes in the focus of the program to include Gen Ed outcomes.**

B. Program-Level Performance Indicators

1. Describe the key indicators used to assess the quality and effectiveness of your program relative to its core purpose and the college mission. Best practice is to utilize 8-10 key performance indicators.

At a minimum, provide data related to retention, persistence, completion, and transfer/job-placement/licensure in [Appendix C](#) (year over year trend data for the last five years). Then select four to five other indicators as applicable to include in [Appendix C](#) as well. Suggestions include:

- Indicators of Student Success
- Transfer/job-placement
- National, state, or disciplinary benchmarks
- Student Satisfaction/Feedback, [including CCSSE data](#)
- Alumni Survey (conducted by Institutional Research)
- Employer Feedback/Placement Reports (Career Services)
- Other benchmarks as appropriate

Please consult the data provided through the program review website and discuss the unique indicators that demonstrate how your program is fulfilling its purpose as well as supporting the overall institution and/or other programs (i.e., STEM courses supporting Allied Health programs).

Indicators of Student Success: Each semester data is collected to indicate whether students met academic benchmarks set forth in each course. Aside from the grade assigned, professors reflect on the successes of the semester and what improvements they can make in the course. Successful students are those committed to the course and follow directions and instructions. Students with personal distractions outside the classroom are not putting the time and commitment into the material and that is evidenced by their grade.

Transfer/Job Placement: Based on the success of the internship program (PARL250) sites with open positions have hired our graduates. Students who have applied to a 4-year college or university were successful and continued their education. Some of those who attended a 4-year college or university have gone on to law school.

National, state, or disciplinary benchmarks: The program has been approved by the American Bar Association for the time period of this audit.

Student Satisfaction feedback: Due to the low number of surveys returned to the paralegal program, the information received was inconclusive. Of those surveys returned, all feedback was positive.

III. Environmental Scan

- A. Identify current trends in the program's field or discipline.

Within this audit period, global pandemic has impacted not only education, but the way in which the legal profession operates.

- B. What has the program done to respond to these trends?

Education offerings and professional/industry experience are not the same. Legal profession has returned to the majority in person, while many courses are offered through online modalities due to the demographic needs of our students.

- A. Does the program have any external transfer articulation or joint admissions agreements?

Yes X No

If yes, complete Table 2.

Table 2. Top five program-to-program articulation agreements.

Name of the Institution	Type of Agreement	Average number of student who transfer here each year	Date agreement was last reviewed or updated
Pierce College	Articulation	Unknown	Any program changes are updated with Paralegal Program Coordinator for Peirce. Agreement ongoing
Cedar Crest College	Other	Unknown	Individualized Transfer
East Stroudsburg University	Other	Unknown	Individualized Transfer

Have any problems been encountered concerning the transferability of courses?

Yes No X

If yes, specify the nature of these problems.

B. Does the program have any inbound articulation agreements?

Yes _____ No X

If yes, complete Table 3.

Inbound articulation agreements. **None**

C. Provide regional workforce data with respect to (1) the number of people currently employed in the field; (2) projections for employment growth or decline; and (3) the current salary range. Discuss the implications of these numbers for the program.

Occupation Title: Paralegals and Legal Assistants

Occupation Code: 23-2011

Location	Estimated total employment (excludes self-employed)	Median Hourly Wage	Median Annual Wage	Mean Hourly Wage	Mean Annual Wage	Job Outlook 2021 - 2031
National	352,800	\$27.03	\$56,230	\$28.04	\$58,330	14% (Much faster than average)
State - PA	13,360	\$28.66	\$59,610	\$29.06	\$60,440	
Local Area*	360	\$23.58	\$49,050	\$26.64	\$55,400	

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that this profession will continue to grow as fast as the average for all occupations. While paralegals may not provide legal services directly to the public except as permitted by law, the Labor Department's occupational outlook notes that employers are expected to hire more paralegals as they try to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of legal services. Northampton's student-centered learning approach to paralegal education will prepare you to enter this dynamic, high-demand profession.

D. Does the program have any community partnerships or other associations or memberships of note?

Yes _____ No X

If yes, describe the nature of these relationships

E. Does the program have an advisory committee?

Yes X No _____

If yes, list the names and affiliations of the advisory committee members

Company Attendees:

Paralegal Advisory Member	Company Name
Susan Back, Private Sector Paralegal	Newman, Williams, Mishkin, Corveleyn, Wolfe & Fareri, P.C.
Michael Bernadyn, Member of the General Public Bethlehem	RE/MAX Real Estate
Eleanor Breslin, Esq., Practicing Attorney	Meshkoy & Breslin Attorneys at Law
Sharon Sharkuski, Private Sector Paralegal	Victaulic Company
Denise Donadio, Private Sector Paralegal	Durney & Worthington, LLC
Eileen Duddy, CP, Public Sector Paralegal	Northampton County Office of the Solicitor
Stephanie Flaherty, Realtor/Sales Associate	Iron Valley Real Estate of Lehigh Valley
Gerard Geiger, Esq., Practicing Attorney – Monroe County (Paralegal Advisory Chair)	Newman, Williams, Mishkin, Corveleyn, Wolfe & Fareri, P.C.
Gina Gibbs, Public Sector Paralegal	Register of Wills & Clerk of Orphans' Court
David Gordon, Esq., Practicing Attorney in Monroe & Northampton Counties	Berkheimer, Inc.
Peter Luethi, Member of the General Public	Dreamjet SAS d/b/a LaCompagnie
Irene Montero-Harris, Esq., Staff Attorney	North Penn Legal Services
Lynsi Sheckler, Corporate Paralegal	Florio Perrucci Steinhardt & Fader
Amy Shupp, Paralegal	CrossAmerica Partners
Taisha Tolliver-Duran, Esq., Practicing Attorney	King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul, LLC
Nadine Webb, Paralegal	

F. How often does the advisory committee meet? **Two times per fiscal year.**

Minutes from the last two meetings are in [Appendix D](#).

G. Specify advisory committee contributions to the program's growth and development, including recommended curricular changes. **The Paralegal Advisory Committee (PAC) is encouraged to bring ideas for curricular changes that reflect the current practice of law in the area. Oftentimes, the program coordinator reviews the current curriculum or suggests new courses for PAC feedback and discussion as they relate to the relevancy of the profession. The meetings are unidirectional in hopes of prompting discussions which is a shortfall of the PAC. Recently, the PAC elected a new chairperson who is forthcoming with**

innovative ideas and has been working with the program coordinator on specific exploratory projects such as incorporating AI (Artificial Intelligence) into the curriculum. Further, the introduction of the new Legal Studies, AAS degree was accepted favorably by the committee. Moving forward, the (PAC) will make changes to the structure of the meetings and membership since NCC is no longer under the rules of the ABA and their required talking points, categories of members and unnecessary reporting. Since the membership is comprised of members from our legal community, the PAC will now become the Paralegal and Legal Studies Advisory Committee (PLSAC) for the Fall of 2023. As we are no longer under the rules of the ABA, we can now open our membership of the PLSAC to a broader scope of legal professionals to add a deeper perspective to the committee.

IV. Curriculum

A. Curriculum Matrix

1. The program's most recent curriculum matrix for the program's learning outcomes can be found in [Appendix E](#).
2. The key abilities matrix (see [Appendix F](#)) indicates how the program satisfies NCC's general education core requirements.
3. Based on the curriculum matrix and general education core review, are there any changes that need to be considered?

Yes _____ No X

If so, describe these changes.

B. Program and co-curricular maps are in [Appendix G](#) and [Appendix H](#).

1. Based on the program map, validate the adequacy of the organized, intentional, sequential learning experiences. **The program map and sequence of courses were designed and selected to ensure that a graduate would be able to properly function in a legal office environment with traditional clerical office skills, writing and communication skills and accounting knowledge in addition to their paralegal education. The program map sequence was designed so that a student's paralegal core courses were taken before the semester the student is expected to take PARL250 Internship since a student is expected to have these skills when embarking on their internship.**
2. Based on the co-curricular map, discuss the relationship between student learning and co-curricular experiences.

The co-curricular map directs a student to discover an area of practice that interests them early in their educational journey. As the student builds upon their knowledge, they can select several areas of interest as PARL elective courses and work towards a goal of targeting an area of law for their intended internship site. During the program, the student is often directed to join extra-curricular activities for networking or further career exploration.

3. Are there any changes to the program map or co-curricular map that need to be considered?

Yes No

If so, describe these changes. **The co-curricular map needs to be updated due to the changes in curriculum since AY2018-2019**

- C. Discuss career development and experiential opportunities for students within your program (e.g., internship, capstone, career research courses, service learning, etc.).

The Paralegal program has a required Internship (PARL250 Internship) that spends the first half of the semester preparing the student for the interview process and office procedures. The second half of the semester, the student spends 100 hours at the Internship site.

As of Spring 2023, the program coordinator worked with our NCC Community Education staff to offer a 25% discount on non-credit courses offered for select Microsoft Office products, Quickbooks and courses required to prepare to become a Notary. Thus far, several students have enrolled in the Notary courses and received discounts.

1. Based on a review of these opportunities, are there any changes that need to be considered?

Yes No

If so, describe these changes.

- D. Modality Awareness

1. If courses are being offered in online or hybrid formats, discuss the assessment of the effectiveness of these formats. **Only recently, due to the pandemic, courses were offered in an online format, primarily as blended. Since the Spring of 2020, our student demographic substantially changed from a traditional student to a non-traditional student with either childcare responsibilities or employment responsibilities. Our students continue to choose courses based on the online modality. Our yearly assessment of the courses and their learning outcomes did not differ once students were more adapted to learning online. Since the blended format was a hybrid format, students were expected to do more learning outside the Zoom classroom. Students no longer relied on just the in-class session for their content but were expected to utilize the self-study materials embedded in their courses. This format forced the students to have a higher level of commitment to the course through self-study mechanisms such as pre-recorded lectures, voice-over PowerPoints and interactive text materials.**

2. Are there any changes to these formats that need to be considered?

Yes No

If so, describe these changes.

V. Assessment

- A. Append the current version of the program's Assessment Plan ([Appendix I](#)).
- B. Using Table 4, provide a summary of the assessment activity that has occurred since the last program review.

Table 4. PLO Assessment

Program Learning Outcomes (include all program outcomes that are listed in the College Catalog)	Describe how the outcome has been assessed in the last five-year period.	What have been the results of that assessment?
Understand and apply substantive legal terminology and possible ethical considerations to develop requisite analytical skills necessary to function effectively in a legal work environment.	Each semester all PARL instructors are expected to re-assess one assignment already graded to determine if they the students are successfully meeting the PLO of the program.	The curriculum meets the standards. Students are being assessed properly and Their grades are reflective of their effort.
Demonstrate professional behavior, understand and acknowledge diversity and possess the necessary office skill competencies while under the supervision of an attorney in the completion of legal work.	Each semester all PARL instructors are expected to re-assess one assignment already graded to determine if they the students are successfully meeting the PLO of the program.	The curriculum meets the standards. Students are being assessed properly and their grades are reflective of their effort
Exhibit interpersonal communication skills necessary to share ideas clearly and work effectively with people in the legal profession.	Each semester all PARL instructors are expected to re-assess one assignment already graded to determine if they the students are successfully meeting the PLO of the program.	The curriculum meets the standards. Students are being assessed properly and their grades are reflective of their effort
Demonstrate the ability to use appropriate technology to enhance one's value to a legal work environment.	Each semester all PARL instructors are expected to re-assess one assignment already graded to determine if they the students are successfully meeting the PLO of the program.	The curriculum meets the standards. Students are being assessed properly and their grades are reflective of their effort.

- C. What programmatic changes have been implemented as a result of recent programmatic assessment activities? **No program changes were made. Our courses are designed to meet the outcomes of the program as are our assignments. If a student does not meet the standards of the course, they will not successfully pass the course. Students are encouraged to meet with the professors/instructors and make an appointment with NCC's Learning Center or perhaps engage in the services of a learning coach.**
- D. Identify desired changes as a result of programmatic assessment that have yet to take place. **None anticipated.**

VI. Students

- A. Describe full-time and part-time enrollment trends since the last program review or the past five years.

Table 5. Student Enrollment Data

Academic Year					
<u>FALL</u>	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Full-Time Heads	14	17	32	31	28
Part-Time Heads	52	43	45	46	39
Total Fall	66	60	77	77	67
<u>SPRING</u>	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Full-Time Heads	18	23	25	28	27
Part-Time Heads	34	40	44	41	47
Total Spring	52	63	69	69	74

- B. Describe enrollment trends regarding student age, gender, race, and socio-economic status since the last program review or the past five years.

No data.

- C. Describe any concerns the program review committee has regarding: (1) any enrollment trends mentioned above or (2) other enrollment-related issues.

Enrollment within college and this program continues to be a challenge. Students' preference for online offerings has the potential to help with programmatic enrollment.

- D. Has the program instituted any methods or materials to encourage and increase applications by new students since the last program review or the past five years?

Yes No

If yes, please describe any initiatives.

The program coordinator has attended the local Northampton County Bar Association meetings and spoken about the program as well as surveyed the organization about the needs of the legal community. Also, the Paralegal Advisory Committee was expanded and encouraged to inform those in their professional circles about the program. Currently, a new major entitled, "Legal Studies" has been approved at the college. This major utilizes many courses in the new curriculum from the Paralegal program and may be a gateway major for those who discover they would like to be a paralegal since, through a series of Legal Studies and Paralegal electives, the student can easily graduate from one major and re-enroll into the other for two separate degrees. (NCC does not recognize double majors due to financial aid rules) Currently, there are plans to market not only the Paralegal, AAS degree, but also Legal Studies, AAS degree in a "Law and Legal Major Choices at NCC" campaign which will highlight these degrees as well as Criminal Justice, AAS, bridging the gap between the existing two major law related majors at the college and the new Legal Studies, AAS degree.

- E. Has the program instituted any methods or materials to encourage and increase the recruiting of continuing students to choose this program major or emphasis?

Yes X No

If yes, please describe any initiatives. **As stated above, there is a "Law and Legal Major Choices at NCC" informational campaign has already started.**

- F. Comment on graduation rates since the last program review or the past five years. **Due to the pandemic, our enrollment of traditional students has decreased. Many students decided to take a gap year, and many have not yet decided to pursue their education. Demographics are also suggesting that students opt for a part-time schedule while they either care for their children (due to the high cost of daycare or parental choice) or become employed full-time. The labor market is also such that salaries of starting paralegals are not rising at the rate that other entry level positions are starting. To capitalize on the high salary due to the labor shortage, students are putting their formal education on hold.**
- G. Comment on transfer rates for students who have and who have not graduated from the program. **Most of our students do not transfer to another paralegal program unless they move from the area. Since the program has been gravitating towards a program that can be completed in a blended format, students will only encounter an issue with the internship class. In this regard, the program is looking into inventive ways to overcome this challenge by seeking online internship or working with other programs for a local internship site and remote visits by Internship instructor. Since this program is an AAS degree, many do not transfer to a 4-year institution. However, several students have transferred to Peirce College program-to-program and to Cedar Crest College and East Stroudsburg University by individual course transfer.**

- H. Discuss your program's engagement with and impact of new student orientation, advising, tutoring support, library services, disability support, student life, and career services.

The program coordinator is present at open houses or other campus wide informational sessions. The program also works closely with our success navigators and tutoring through referrals and updates. The program coordinator also reviews the resumes of tutor applicants for the learning center. Our librarian and those in our career services areas are not only on our Paralegal Advisory Committee but work with our students as they navigate different assignments in our PARL courses. Further, referrals to disability services were made for students expressing difficulties in their learning for further evaluation. If a student does receive a disability accommodation, the faculty work with the students to ensure that their needs are met in a reasonable manner. As for student life services, students are encouraged to participate in different organizations in leadership roles.

VII. Physical and Financial Resources

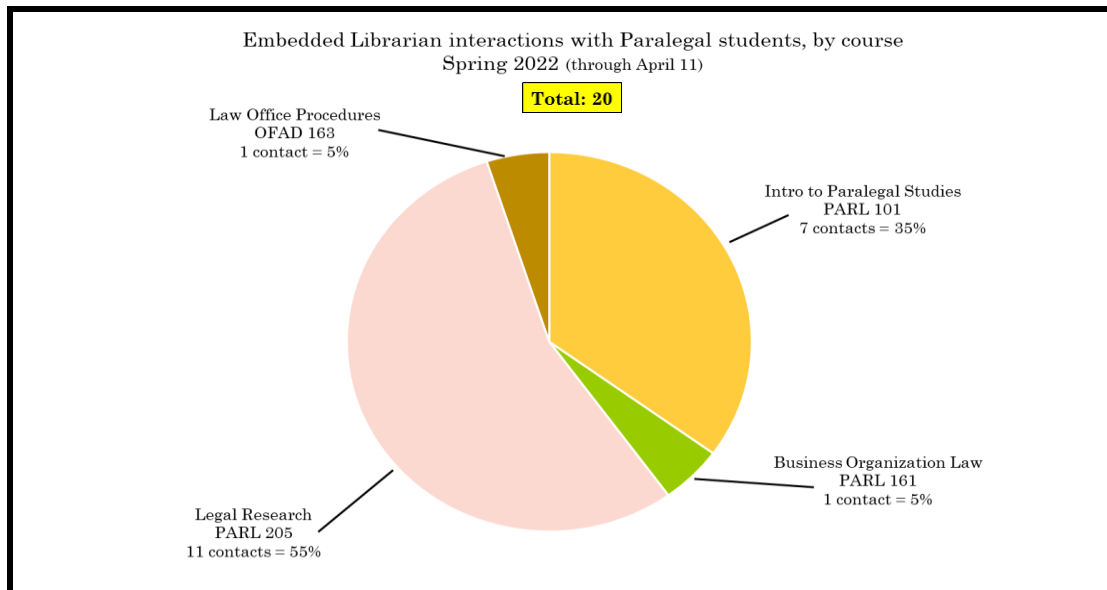
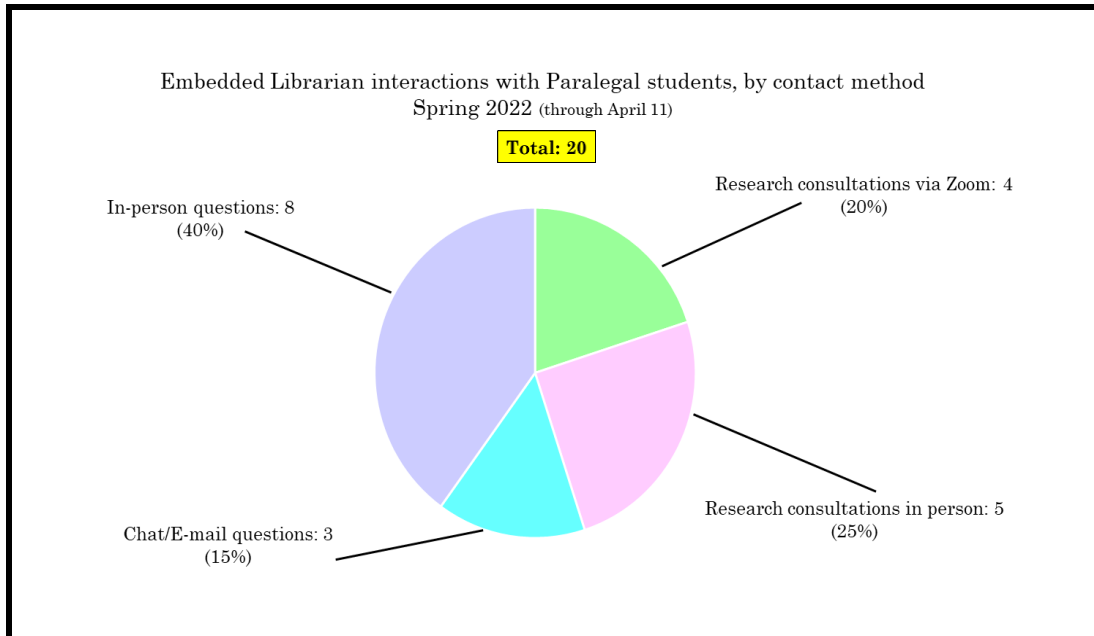
- A. Comment on the availability, adequacy, and use of learning tools, such as computer software, instructional media, laboratories, studios, etc.

The program is connected to our library and their resources. During the timeframe of this audit, both legal resources in print and online are updated for student use. All NCC students have access to Westlaw. The textbooks that are chosen for this major are all published by Cengage and are interactive. Some courses use MindTap which is the learning portal of these texts that serve as teaching and assessment tools.

- B. Discuss the adequacy of (1) instructional space, (2) office space, (3) instructional supplies, and (4) equipment for the program.

Most courses are in the blended format that needs no classroom space. Those courses taught on campus are adequately apportioned with a learning station and projector. For students learning in the blended modality, students must have a computer with a microphone and camera to engage in the course and their assessments. If a student is unable to obtain these items, NCC has computer labs and a loan program for Chromebooks. As for office space, the program coordinator has adequate office space. All instructional supplies and equipment have been provided when requested.

C. Discuss library resources. **Our library resources for the Paralegal program consist of learning guides, an embedded librarian and up to date legal resources in both print and electronic formats.**



- D. Comment on the role of marketing and public relations in supporting the program.

Our marketing efforts need to move away from the college as a whole and focus on the programs offered. A new “LEGAL STUDIES, AAS” degree was just approved by the curriculum committee in November of 2022 and will be marketed not only as a stand-alone major, but in conjunction with PARALEGAL, AAS and CRIMINAL JUSTICE, AAS to form a marketing strategy to showcase all “Law and Legal Majors offered at NCC” in an attempt to not only bring awareness of the offerings of the college, but to attract students to the LEGAL STUDIES, AAS major who know they desire a career in law with undefined focus. Perhaps, by taking the courses which overlap the PARALEGAL, AAS degree, they may find their interest lies in pursuing a career as a paralegal.

- E. Program costs and income. **Program considered/characterized as low cost/high FTE.**

Table 7. Financial Data

Academic Year	FY2022	FY2021	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018
Program Income	226,819	288,547	280,968	257,796	258,591
Tuition	46,314	54,192	47,501	43,807	42,912
Local Reimbursement	109,180	132,639	115,204	102,477	97,982
Operating Reimb.	-	-	-	-	-
Total Income	382,313	475,378	443,673	404,080	399,485
Program Costs					
Direct Costs	238,863	252,116	219,259	243,541	314,439
Indirect Costs	202,907	231,781	210,688	200,044	184,467
Total Costs	441,770	483,898	429,947	443,586	498,907
FTE	41.59	54.79	55.24	52.14	53.46
Income per FTE	9,193	8,676	8,031	7,751	7,472
Cost per FTE	10,623	8,831	7,783	8,508	9,332
Inst. Avg. Cost per FTE	10,058	8,901	7,820	7,933	7,075
Rank	53 of 126	62 of 138	64 of 135	52 of 133	29 of 126
Income over Expense	(59,457)	(8,520)	13,726	(39,506)	(99,422)

- Describe how the program is financed, including college budget (if any) as well as any grants that have been received over the past five years, and outline any major expenses over the past five years. **Operational budget through standard institutional tuition and fees. No extraordinary costs/expenses.**
- If possible, analyze the program's cost-effectiveness (i.e., does current/projected student enrollment cover the cost of faculty, supplies, etc. and/or are the faculty staff, space and/or facilities appropriate for the current/projected enrollment).
- Are you getting additional funding from grants or donors? **No**

VIII. Human Resources

- A. Briefly describe Program Leadership and oversight.

Amy Van Varick-Colarusso, Program Coordinator (Faculty) reports to Academic Dean and is responsible for adjusting the program to fit the needs of the profession by evaluating industry trends, discussing course offerings with the Associate Dean and managing the requirements of the ABA and its approval of the program.

- B. Report the numbers of full-time and part-time faculty, professional staff, and clerical staff currently associated with the program.

Table 8. Faculty Demographic Data

Academic Year	Last Review	Current Review
2018 - 2022	2 Full-Time Faculty 4 Part-Time Instructors 2 Professional Staff 2.5 Clerical Staff	2 Full-Time Faculty 6 Part-Time Faculty 2 Professional Staff 1 Clerical Staff

1. Note any changes that have occurred in these numbers since the last program review or the previous five years.

The organizational restructure of the School of Business and Industry.

2. Briefly explain how these changes have affected the program. **Due to the pandemic, some part-time faculty members preferred not to teach online. As such, new hires were selected and appropriately trained to teach the courses. On a rotating basis, the modalities of the courses offered determine which part-time instructor will teach. Further, the reduction of the clerical staff has overburdened the remaining clerical staff member as they now have absorbed the duties of those who have either been transferred or left.**
- C. What is the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty? What percentage of (1) day sections, (2) traditional evening/weekend sections, (3) distance education/hybrid sections, and total sections are taught by full-time faculty. Comment on the levels of full-time, part-time faculty, and professional or clerical staff.

Last review, the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty were 50% to 33%, respectively.

Staffing is based on current enrollments and projection of data points such as high school graduates, student interest and availability of faculty to teach according to schedule.

Paralegal Full-Time/Part-Time Teaching Ratios										
Five Year Reporting - Fall 2017 - Spring 2022 Semesters										
School of Business & Industry										
Term	Dept.	Sections	Dept. ICHs	FT ICHs	PT ICHs	% FT	% PT	Total Credit Hours Taught as Overloads	Total Credit Hours by Dept. awarded for over-enrollment overload pay	OTHER ICHs (FT) NON-TEACHING ICHS awarded for release time, program maint., cluster coord., FIG, grant duties, etc.
FA17	PARL	9	29.00	14.00	15.00	48.3%	51.7%	0.77		3.00
SP18	PARL	7	23.00	8.00	15.00	34.8%	65.2%			3.00
FA18	PARL	9	26.00	11.00	15.00	42.3%	57.7%	2.83	0.60	2.00
SP19	PARL	7	23.00	11.00	12.00	47.8%	52.2%	1.23		2.00
FA19	PARL	9	26.60	11.60	15.00	43.6%	56.4%			2.00
SP20	PARL	8	26.00	8.00	18.00	30.8%	69.2%	2.60		3.50
FA20	PARL									Covid Pandemic - No Courses Offered
SP21	PARL	8	26.00	8.00	18.00	30.8%	69.2%			2.00
FA21	PARL	8	22.71	4.71	18.00	20.7%	79.3%			2.00
SP22	PARL	8	22.71	4.71	18.00	20.7%	79.3%			2.00
TOTALS		73	225.02	81.02	144.00	36.0%	63.99%	7.43	0.60	21.50

D. Faculty Expertise/Experience

1. Northampton hires faculty members who are well-credentialed (see [Appendix J](#)) and understand and embrace the open-access mission of the community college.
2. How do faculty in this program promote academic excellence through professional development, scholarship, and service?

Professional development offered through CTLT; professional academic development through conference attendance, and when applicable presentations codified through faculty year-end reports.

IX. Analysis of Findings

- A. Based upon the data collected in this document, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your program. *For example: do students' progress successfully through courses; are staffing/equipment/facilities needs filled; are assessment efforts successful; etc.*

The weakness of this program does not have anything to do with the classes, professors or resources, but the current enrollment. Although we were anticipating a reduction of traditional students due to demographic projections prior to the pandemic, Covid-19 hastened this trend. Further, we are attracting non-traditional students who have a busy life beyond the classroom and prefer to attend classes remotely and on a part-time basis, so students are not completing the program in two years. Another factor was our flexibility since our ABA approval seemed to be more restrictive of what we could do with the program and each time a change was made, it was another fee.

The question became, "What is the value added of the ABA approval?" Sadly, over the years, the ABA approval became more burdensome and costly with no true value added. Students surveyed in Introduction to Paralegal Studies were attracted to the major because it was offered at NCC. Their main decision factors were that the cost was affordable, the courses were offered online and if they had to come to campus, the facilities were close to where they lived. Not one student opined that it was the ABA approval that enticed them to enroll at NCC. Many of the students did not even know what the American Bar Association was or that the program was ABA approved. Due to the restrictive nature of the ABA rules that had no effect on the program's quality, it was decided not to seek re-approval but to keep the same educational standards that this program has prided itself on for decades. As of January 1, 2023, NCC has decided to part ways with the ABA to make way for a different vision.

In November of 2022, a new major, Legal Studies, AAS, was created by the Paralegal Program Coordinator and approved by the NCC Curriculum Committee. Legal Studies, AAS combines the two law related disciplines already at the college; Paralegal, AAS and Criminal Justice, AAS. Utilizing some of the major courses from both disciplines, it will increase enrollment in already existing courses with no added cost to the college. Further, students could graduate from one of the majors (Paralegal or Criminal Justice) and reenroll to then transfer credits towards the Legal Studies, AAS degree. (Double majors are not recognized at NCC due to financial aid rules.) Legal Studies, AAS is a degree that is more easily transferrable, course-by-course to a four-year college or university with more flexibility in their choice of transfer majors.

- B. Based on the data collected in this document, discuss the opportunities for improvement available to your program and the internal and external challenges your program faces. *For example, is the program in demand; are graduates employable/able to transfer; what is the future plan for this program; etc.*

For the next academic audit for 2027, the ABA imprimatur and association has been voluntarily removed, specifically but not solely due to undue academic overreach by an external organization. Moreover, the program academic rigor was not dependent upon the association. Students and legal profession felt that it did not give any more weight to the students, internships or potential employment with this application.

- C. What additional data that is currently not available would have been helpful to evaluate this program effectively? **Unfortunately, surveys in general do not have a huge rate of return since most are conducted online and get lost in the shuffle. The days of handing out paper surveys have been determined to be archaic and are not cost-effective. To capture the data of student satisfaction, PARL250 Internship will have an “exit interview” to assess the program from the student’s point of view which will not be graded or influence that course’s grade.**

X. External Review Report

Refer to [Appendix K](#) for the external/accreditor review report.

XI. Action Plan

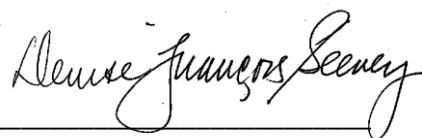
A. Identify 2-3 program goals for the future.

1. Goal **Withdrawal from ABA (In-progress).**
 - i. Timeframe: **By end of Academic Year 2022-23**
 - ii. Responsible Party(ies) **Faculty, Dean**
 - iii. Resource Implications: **None.**
2. Goal Creation of Legal Studies, AAS degree
 - i. Timeframe: **By end of Academic Year 2022-2023 for FA2023 enrollment.**
 - ii. Responsible Party(ies) **Faculty**
 - iii. Resource Implications: **None.**
3. Goal
 - i. Timeframe:
 - ii. Responsible Party(ies)
 - iii. Resource Implications:

Based upon the internal review of the document; it is the recommendation of the Dean and faculty of record, the program continues.

Amy Van Varick-Colarusso

Amy Van Varick-Colarusso, J.D.
Associate Professor, Paralegal/Business Law



Denise François-Seeney, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Business & Industry

Appendix A: Program Description



Paralegal, Associate in Applied Science

Narrative

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that this profession will continue to grow as fast as the average for all occupations. While paralegals may not provide legal services directly to the public except as permitted by law, the Labor Department's occupational outlook notes that employers are expected to hire more paralegals as they try to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of legal services. Northampton's student-centered learning approach to paralegal education will prepare you to enter this dynamic, high-demand profession.

Paralegals may not practice law or provide legal services directly to the public, except as permitted by law. Northampton Community College Paralegal program's approval by the American Bar Association commenced in August of 2003 and will voluntarily end on January 1, 2023. This withdrawal does not affect the content, academic rigor or quality of the Paralegal program.

Features

The program offers numerous substantive legal courses and a required internship at a local legal office. You will learn how a paralegal working under the general supervision of an attorney contributes to the delivery of legal services. You will also learn how to master state-of-the-art computer software and hardware, and become a productive and efficient professional within the ever-changing legal profession. Most of the legal specialty courses (PARL) are taught by attorneys and incorporate pleadings, forms, and software used in local, state, or federal practice.

Graduates will be ready to accept positions such as paralegals, trust coordinators, title searchers, settlement clerks, or litigation specialists. If your quest for knowledge is not complete after two years of study, it is possible to transfer to four-year institutions to complete your baccalaureate degree.

Contact the Admissions Office at 610.861.5500 for further information.

Career Potential: Paralegal, Legal Assistant, Trust Coordinator, Title Searcher, Settlement Clerk, Litigation Specialist

Appendix B: Program-Level Learning Outcomes



Graduates of the program will:

- Understand and apply substantive legal terminology and possible ethical considerations to develop requisite analytical skills necessary to function effectively in a legal work environment.
- Demonstrate professional behavior, understand and acknowledge diversity and possess the necessary office skill competencies while under the supervision of an attorney in the completion of legal work.
- Exhibit interpersonal communication skills necessary to share ideas clearly and work effectively with people in the legal profession.
- Demonstrate the ability to use appropriate technology to enhance one's value to a legal work environment.

Appendix C: Program-Level Performance Indicator Data



Graduate Survey Results

<i>Number of Graduates</i>	<i>Continuing Education</i>	<i>Employed</i>	<i>Job Huntbig</i>	<i>Not Seeking Employment</i>	<i>Moved</i>	<i>No Report</i>
18	1 9%	10 91%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	7

Of the Total Number of Gr.uates Employed:

<i>Employed Related</i>	<i>Employed Unrelated</i>	<i>Employed Unrelated by Choice</i>
9 90%	0 0%	1 10%

Employers of Graduates

Fisher & Fisher Law Offices
 Forry | Ullman Attorneys at Law
 Hemstreet Nitchkey & Freid!
 Law Office of Robert E. Goldman, LLC
 Law Offices Vasiliadis Pappas
 McFall, Layman & Jordan, P.C.
 Messa & Associates, P.C.
 Peters, Moritz, Peischl, Zulick & Landes

The Office of the Northampton County District Attorney

Positions Secured
 Estate Administration Paralegal
 Legal Secretary
 Litigation Paralegal
 Paralegal (5)
 Summary Appeals Specialist

Summary of Hourly Starting Salaries

<i>Number Reporting Salary</i>	<i>2021 Lowest Salary</i>	<i>2021 Highest Salary</i>	<i>2021 Mean Salary</i>	<i>2021 Median Salary</i>	<i>Previous Year Median Salary</i>	<i>Median Percent Change</i>
6	\$15.00	\$19.00	\$17.13	-	\$19.98	

Institutions to Which Graduates Transferred

Peirce College

Appendix D: Advisory Committee Minutes





Northampton Community College

NCC Paralegal Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, April 12, 2022, 4:00 PM via Zoom

Zoom Attendance: Susan Back, Michael Bernadyn, Anne Bittner, Denise Donadio, Eileen Duddy, Denise François-Seeney, Gerard Geiger, Gina Gibbs, David Gordon, Gary Guidetti, Peter Luethi, Annie Laurie Meyers, Irene Montero-Harris, Jennifer Napierkowski, Sharon Sharkuski, and Amy Van Varick-Colarusso

Guest: Stephanie Flaherty

Absent: Eleanor Breslin, Darryl Johnson, Jean Magilton, Lynsi Sheckler, Taisha Tolliver-Duran, and Nadine Webb

Recorder: Diane Belles

Call to Order

Amy Van Varick-Colarusso called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

Approval of Minutes (November 9, 2021)

Gerald Geiger moved to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2021, meeting; Eileen Duddy seconded; motion passed.

Old Business

PAC Survey from Fall 2021 meeting

Eleven members of the PAC responded to the Omni Analysis Report with representation from Monroe (36%) and Bethlehem (64%). All participants have only one location. The majority of the firms had lawyer-employees of ten or more. In those firms, 40% had one to two paralegals employed. Our PAC has a three-way tie in areas of specialized law: Business/Corporate, Employment and Estates/Trusts. Other specializations were Bankruptcy, and Family and Domestic Law. We also have Litigation which is at 90% Municipal Law (60%), Real Estate (60%) and Wills (50%). Paralegals routinely perform calendar and tracking deadlines (91%), draft legal documents (82%), and a four-way tie of word-processing, maintaining files, legal research and coordinate litigation prep (73%). Other responsibilities performed by their paralegals were accounting, bookkeeping, and operating Zoom. 9% or one person did not employ a paralegal.

Skills required for a potential paralegal new hire were written communications skills (82%), organizational skills (73%) and computer skills (64%). Professor Van Varick-Colarusso thanked David Gordon for making sure paralegal students can write. This response to the survey is on par with what NCC received from Northampton County Bar Association. Minimum educational credentials that are required for an entry-level paralegal, 80% responded 2-year degree, 10% certificate, and 10% 2-year degree of any major. The importance for the ABA approval to hire a

paralegal is somewhat (50%) to extremely (25%) important, no factor at all (25%). Specialized skills to hire an experienced paralegal on a full-time basis, would include Litigation Paralegal (55%), Trusts and Estates Paralegal (18%) and Other (18%). Overwhelmingly, the type of software of choice was Microsoft Office Suite (91%), Microsoft Teams (55%), Lexis/Nexis (27%), Westlaw (45%) which is what the college uses, and Quick Books (18%). Professor Van Varick-Colarusso was looking to see if WordPerfect Suite is still prevalent at 9% versus MSOffice 91% in this survey. Word Docs is being used by two respondents that was not listed.

Covid-19 pandemic has changed the work environment working remotely (9%), flexible schedule (55%); and lastly, paralegals are expected to work in the office and not remotely (30%). As the pandemic changes, perhaps this may be an issue. Covid-19 has not changed the way law offices function as much as other areas of law. Initially, law offices allowed staff to work remotely through Covid. All staff have returned to the office. Files are mostly electronic. There was not a huge change in how the law offices' function.

New Business

PALS Club Report

Annie Laurie Meyers reported that there will also be a resurgence of the Pals Club in the Fall and we are excited. Two interim officers will work with Professor Meyers over the summer for programming and recruiting purposes.

Internship: Professor Meyers' students are out working in their internships and doing well. There is a variety of places where her students have chosen to work this semester. Former students are now calling to see if their firm could participate in the Internship program. Professor Meyers also thanked Gina Gibbs for participating this semester as well.

Professor Meyers will be going on a 3/5th schedule starting in the fall semester which means she will be teaching three classes instead of five. She will continue to teach and oversee placement in the Internship Paralegal program.

Paralegal Program Update/Committee Business

Curriculum Changes for Fall 2022

There have been a few changes made to the Paralegal program. WordPerfect has been removed from the program and CISC101 Introduction to Information Technology replaced the three 1 credit OFAD courses; WordPerfect, Excel, and Outlook. CISC101 covers similar subjects as did the three 1 credit OFAD courses but is also an easily transferrable course. This change is better for the paralegal students who want to continue their education at a law school. The other change made to the paralegal program was changing the course identifier from OFAD163 Law Office Procedures to PARL150 Law Office Procedures.

Professor Van Varick-Colarusso asked the committee if it is important to keep OFAD101 Keyboarding and Formatting, a secretarial course built in the Paralegal program and, if so, should the WPM be increased from 30. Some paralegal programs do not have secretarial courses

built in their program. Professor Meyers also asked paralegals or employers of paralegals, what percentage of their task base is based on document preparation and the accuracy and speed to produce work product? Denise Donadio spends a lot of time on document prep producing mostly correspondence. In the past, students learn keyboarding in high school, but does not know how true that is anymore. She thinks it is important to keep the course in the paralegal program and to increase WPM to 40 words/minute. At this time, we do not know if bolstering the WPM will make a difference, but good technical skills and formatting is important for paralegals to be able to draft a document. Jennifer Napierkowski from Career Services agrees that employers hiring paralegals are looking for good technical skills, formatting and document production with accuracy.

Susan Baker agrees and thinks it is critical that a paralegal be able to draft a document and correctly format it before being sent out even if it is done by a secretary. Ms. Baker thinks 30 words/minute is extremely low and suggests 40-45 words/minute. She finds the speed is not an issue with the interns in her office.

Gina Gibbs' personal experience when she started working with two attorneys was very particular about the formatting of letters. It reflects on the office how the letters are typed and formatted. She is not as concerned about the speed as she is about the accuracy of the documents and following the format established by the attorneys.

Irene Montero-Harris does not think speed is as important as the work product. She would be more concerned about the work product and formatting than the speed. Nowadays, most people are tech savvy and type faster than 30 words/minute.

Stephanie Flaherty agrees that accuracy and formatting of prepared documents is more important than speed. She is not a fast typist but is quick with the preparation of documents, which is what she did for most of her work experience as a paralegal. There were several students in her classes that were on their second and third career that did not have much experience with computers, typing or formatting; and therefore, thinks it is important to keep the secretarial courses in the Paralegal program for those type of students.

Anne Bittner thinks if the college did not require OFAD101 it would be a disservice to the students removing this course from the Paralegal program. Students entering the program may be fast at texting, but do not know how to format a document, paginate, or merge, and are not comfortable with Microsoft Office products. Students look at Excel and panic. They do need to have the basics in order to progress in the program successfully.

Michael Bernadyn thinks there needs to be some type of requirement, words per minute may not be a requirement, but knowledge and accuracy of the files is important to him whether it is writing contracts or addendums from a Real Estate perspective, and for any agent, paralegal or secretary.

Peter Leuthi looks at the letter on how it is drafted. Speed has nothing to do with layout. How the letter is written is more helpful.

Sharon Sharkuski remembers having to type 50 words/minute as a student in the paralegal program and thinks keyboarding should remain included in the curriculum.

Modality Choices for Fall 2022

The modality is changing for Legal Research and Legal Writing courses. Atty. David Gordon is teaching virtual modality. Since Atty. Gordon started teaching for NCC, he has not taught on campus. He is used to sitting in front of his computer and looking at boxes of students on his screen. In Spring 2022 semester, the Legal Research course was offered as an accelerated seven-week course that ended right before spring break. Most of his students did well in the accelerated course. There were a few that struggled and ended up withdrawing from the course.

Legal Writing accelerated seven-week course recently started and he is finding the same results that most of the students are doing well and has a few students that are struggling. In his opinion, the Paralegal students that are doing well are comprehending the information better due to the intense format and being forced to keep up with the subject matter. Legal Writing is more writing intensive, no MindTap or quizzes, it is writing assignments, week-to-week. Students are getting into the larger writing assignments now. He recently gave the students a research memo and an opinion letter to write based upon a fact pattern that he created and, in a week or so he will give the students a final project which will be an appellate brief. Students will be required to argue their appellate brief in some assemblance of a jury or judge panel for their last project. This group in Atty. Gordon's Legal Writing class is the first class that he knows all the students because he had these same students in his Legal Research accelerated seven-week course.

Legal Research/Legal Writing Accelerated Pilot Program Update

In the Fall, the courses will be a hybrid modality that incorporates elements of both online and in-person learning, taught in 14 weeks to see how receptive hybrid modality is received by the paralegal students. Legal Research is difficult to teach online, it is easier to teach this course in-person. Therefore, we are going to test this out to see what works best for the students.

Early on teaching Legal Research, Atty. Gordon was able to share his computer screen using Westlaw for his online students. Real early on during David's first semester teaching research, the library was closed due to Covid, and it was challenging to teach. All Atty. Gordon had to work with was Westlaw and now they can see how to compare technological research using Westlaw and Lexis/Nexis.

Many of the firms that are PBA members are using what is called Fast Case, technological free legal research if you are a member of the PBA. Atty. Gordon felt students would benefit from this type of service, however, Professor Van Varick-Colarusso believes that the PBA issues individual licenses and students are not eligible as members. Atty. Gordon shared with his students what Fast Case looks like for when the paralegal students enter the real-world.

NCBA Award Winner: Leah Humes

The award winner, Leah Humes has a 4.0 and will receive the award from the Bar Association. Professor Meyers will be presenting the award to Leah Humes at the Awards Convocation.

From the moment Professor Meyers and Professor Van Varick-Colarusso met Leah Humes, Leah Humes was regarded as one of the best and brightest students in the paralegal program. Ms. Humes is extremely conscientious. She has a great combination of being professional and

friendly at the same time. Always engaging in class and made her deadlines. Ms. Humes performed her internship with her current employer at the time and received glowing reports from her supervising attorney. She recently has moved on to another position and is working for Goudsouzian and Associates in Easton. Ms. Humes is a very qualified, capable and deserving student as she goes forward with her career. She also has an undergraduate degree. Professor Meyers looks forward to presenting to Ms. Humes the Bar Association award with the President of the Bar Association from Northampton County.

Resignation of Debbie McClellan – Chairperson Nominations

Debbie McClellan felt she was on the board for a very long time and thought she should step down to give someone else an opportunity to be chair. Professor Van Varick-Colarusso asked the committee members if anyone would be willing to resume the responsibility of being the paralegal committee chair. Professor Meyers nominated Atty. Gerald Geiger to be chair. This will be the first time the advisory board has had a chair representing Monroe County.

Irene Montero-Harris asked Professor Van Varick-Colarusso what the duties of the PAC chair were. VanVarick-Colarusso explained the chair is the facilitator that runs the advisory meetings by going through the agenda reading each topic to be presented and discussed with the committee. Atty. Montero-Harris declined to be chair and was merely inquiring.

Career Services Report

Jennifer Napierkowski wanted to go in a different direction that goes nicely with the Paralegal Advisory Committee Survey that Professor Van Varick-Colarusso reported on. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) puts out career competencies. NACE is the organization for all career services nationally, leading source of information, hiring trends, forecast, labor market, and is headquartered in Bethlehem.

In 2015, they began the work of defining what college graduates need to know or what behaviors do they need to demonstrate in order to be successful from college to career. The eight major career readiness categories are: Career and Self Development, Communication, Critical Thinking, Equity and Inclusion, Leadership, Professionalism, Teamwork and Technology. (Please see Appendix A, Career Readiness PowerPoint slides.)

They have looked at these eight career readiness competencies over the last couple of years and Ms. Napierkowski is providing the most up-to-date versions of these competencies. These competencies are helpful for teachers and mentors to know what the recommendations from employers are for students who are coming out of college with an associates or bachelor's degree.

Definitions of the Eight Career Readiness Categories:

- **Career & Self Development:** Having someone understand employees are responsible for their own career development, awareness of their strengths, weaknesses, and navigating career opportunities.
- **Communication:** Written communication for Paralegals.
- **Critical Thinking:** Ability to look at problems and solve the problems through a logical process.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Use to be called Global and Cultural Fluency and is now called Equity and Inclusion – Being able to engage with wide swaths of populations in the workforce.

- **Leadership**
- **Professionalism:** Knowing what is required of being a professional in the world of work and work habits.
- **Teamwork:** Being able to work collaboratively.
- **Technology:** Due to the change in the work world, the Technology competency has been tweaked to move towards technology like Zoom and similar platforms that all of us have had to adapt too especially over the last two years.

Ranking of what Employers feel is most important. Critical Thinking came out on top. Communication, teamwork, Equity & Inclusion, etc. Professor Van Varick-Colarusso concurred with this list of rankings that these results align with the response from the Paralegal Advisory Committee surveys.

Employers rated where their new hires fall at 55.8% on the scale. There is a gap between the importance of Critical Thinking competency versus proficiency by the percentage of respondents. The only place where there is not a gap is in technology where 81.5% employers deem technology very important and 79.8% of students are matching the skillset expected by employers. This slide demonstrates where work still needs to be done with college students.

The slide, “Percent of Employers and Students Rating New Grads” is like the employers rated of “Where Their New Hires Fall” slide which also demonstrates technology is the one competency where employers and students rate technology extremely important. These are the competencies that are set forth by NACE. Professor Van Varick-Colarusso found the information shared by Ms. Napierkowski interesting because the students seem to rate themselves a lot higher than their employers do, except for technology.

Gina Gibbs thinks employers have been in the workforce for a long time and know how to approach a task or question and are skewed in their expectation based on their own current experience versus starting in the workforce as an intern. The supervisor is there to teach and guide until the intern or employee becomes knowledgeable. Employers want to see the new hire as experienced or knowledgeable as they are on the job. It is not that they are lacking in skills. Sometimes Gina has to catch herself when she is working with a new hire, having high expectations and may not provide enough detail on the job assigned.

Ms. Napierkowski conveyed that all the competencies set forth by NACE are built in the Paralegal curriculum. The majority of NCC’s paralegal students should be on point in all the eight competencies listed as they graduate from the program. Working with a new employee or intern is basically making them aware of the eight pillars of knowledge that they would need to develop. Career development is a lifelong process.

Librarian Report

In the spring semester, Ann Bittner had interactions with a total of twenty paralegal students. The first PowerPoint slide provided a pie chart that demonstrated the different types of interactions Ms. Bittner had with these students: In-Person Questions from 8 students (40%); Research Consultations In-Person with 5 students (25%); Research Consultations via Zoom with 4 students (20%) and Chat/E-mail Questions with 3 students (15%). (Please See Appendix B, Embedded Librarian Interactions with Paralegal students, by contact method Spring 2022 (through April 11). Records are kept of these statistics to learn whether the library can see the activity is more online, in-person and any kind of hybrid ways that the library communicates with students.

When it reads, Research Consultation, it means an appointment is where a student has reached out to Ms. Bittner in advance requesting a scheduled meeting at a specific time either online or in-person. In-person questions are drop-ins where students walk in and ask Ms. Bittner a question on the spot without any advanced preparation. Walk-ins usually are simple questions. The research consultations tend to be more in-depth questions, for example, sharing screens on zoom to look at Westlaw together. She had a few people ask about books, but most were inquiring about Westlaw.

Chats is a 24/7 service where a student can send a quick question, “I am having trouble logging in, where is Westlaw? An email can be a question like, “Can you help me with this brief?” all the way up to, and “I do not understand what the Miranda Ruling is.” Students ask all kinds of questions and if the question requires more than one email to answer the student’s question to resolve, Ms. Bittner would suggest a research consultation that is scheduled for a longer appointment. Based on the statistics, the library had 40% of in-person interactions, but had a fair amount of research consultations as well.

The next slide provided statistics based on interactions with the paralegal students by course. (Please see Appendix B). Legal research was out front with 11 contacts (55%) of her business. Ms. Bittner was surprised that paralegal students were requesting help with their legal research final and thought the students were starting extremely early in the semester and forgot Legal Research is now being offered as an accelerated seven-week course. The paralegal students were coming into the library for help at the last minute and realized she needed to start working with these students immediately for their final. Once the seven-week accelerated course ended, the program moved into the Introduction to Paralegals Studies with 7 contacts (35%). Ms. Bittner had one student each from Law Office Procedures and Business Organization Law which is why both courses were only 5% of the contacts.

These statistics provide the kind of activity that occurred in the library. Ms. Bittner also met with the entire Introduction to Paralegal Studies class in a more structured overview of Westlaw and talked about the library services and research guide that offers diagrams, handouts and videos to help assist the paralegal students so they can help themselves as well.

Expiration of terms on 5/22

David Gordon, Esq. (renewing term), Lynsi Sheckler (renewing term)
David Gordon and Lynsi Sheckler renewed their terms at the last paralegal advisory committee meeting in November 2021.

Selection of FALL 2022 Meeting Date

Tuesday, October 18th at 4:00 was chosen as the spring meeting date of the committee.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 5:04 PM.

Appendix A



Paralegal Advisory Board – Spring 2022

Overview of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)
Career Readiness Competencies

Jennifer Napierkowski, MS, Assistant Director, Center for Career Development

An infographic titled "Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce Overview" from NACE. The infographic is set against a blue background with a white central panel. At the top left, it says "CAREER READINESS". The main title is "Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce Overview". Below this, it lists "Competencies" and states "There are eight career readiness competencies, each of which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways." The eight competencies are: Career & Self Development, Equity & Inclusion, Teamwork, Communication, Leadership, Technology, Critical Thinking, and Professionalism. Each competency is accompanied by a small icon. On the right side, there is a box titled "What is Career Readiness?" which defines it as a foundation for demonstrating requisite core competencies. Below this is a URL: "naceweb.org/career-readiness-competencies". At the bottom right is the NACE logo, which includes the text "NACE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND EMPLOYERS". On the far right edge of the infographic, the words "CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES" are written vertically in large, light blue letters.

Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce Definitions



Career & Self Development

Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.



Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.



Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.



Equity & Inclusion

Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.



Leadership

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.



Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.



Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.



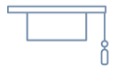
Technology

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

naceweb.org/career-readiness-competencies

Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors



Career & Self Development

Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Show an awareness of own strengths and areas for development.
- Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback.
- Develop plans and goals for one's future career.
- Professionally advocate for oneself and others.
- Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn.
- Assume duties or positions that will help one progress professionally.
- Establish, maintain, and/or leverage relationships with people who can help one professionally.
- Seek and embrace development opportunities.
- Voluntarily participate in further education, training, or other events to support one's career.

naceweb.org/career-readiness-competencies

Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors





Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, and non-verbal/body language, abilities.
- Employ active listening, persuasion, and influencing skills.
- Communicate in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand.
- Frame communication with respect to diversity of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities, and cultural differences.
- Ask appropriate questions for specific information from supervisors, specialists, and others.
- Promptly inform relevant others when needing guidance with assigned tasks.

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Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors





Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Sample Behaviors


- Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment.
- Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem.
- Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps.
- Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes.
- Effectively communicate actions and rationale, recognizing the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of stakeholders.
- Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment.


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Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors





Equity & Inclusion

Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.

Sample Behaviors


- Solicit and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to make inclusive and equity-minded decisions.
- Actively contribute to inclusive and equitable practices that influence individual and systemic change.
- Advocate for inclusion, equitable practices, justice, and empowerment for historically marginalized communities.
- Seek global cross-cultural interactions and experiences that enhance one's understanding of people from different demographic groups and that leads to personal growth.
- Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking.
- Identify resources and eliminate barriers resulting from individual and systemic racism, inequities, and biases.
- Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to diverse environments.
- Address systems of privilege that limit opportunities for members of historically marginalized communities.


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Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors





Leadership

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Sample Behaviors


- Inspire, persuade, and motivate self and others under a shared vision.
- Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others to inform direction.
- Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods.
- Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude.
- Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust.
- Plan, initiate, manage, complete, and evaluate projects.


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Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors





Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

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Sample Behaviors

- Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others, and the organization.
- Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with organization and personal career values.
- Be present and prepared.
- Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or meetings).
- Prioritize and complete tasks to accomplish organizational goals.
- Consistently meet or exceed goals and expectations.
- Have an attention to detail, resulting in few if any errors in their work.
- Show a high level of dedication toward doing a good job.

Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors





Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

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Sample Behaviors

- Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting.
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience.
- Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables.
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others.
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile.
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals.
- Build strong, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers.

Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

Definition and Sample Behaviors





Technology

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Sample Behaviors

- Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies.
- Use technology to improve efficiency and productivity of their work.
- Identify appropriate technology for completing specific tasks.
- Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective, and timely decision-making.
- Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies.
- Manipulate information, construct ideas, and use technology to achieve strategic goals.

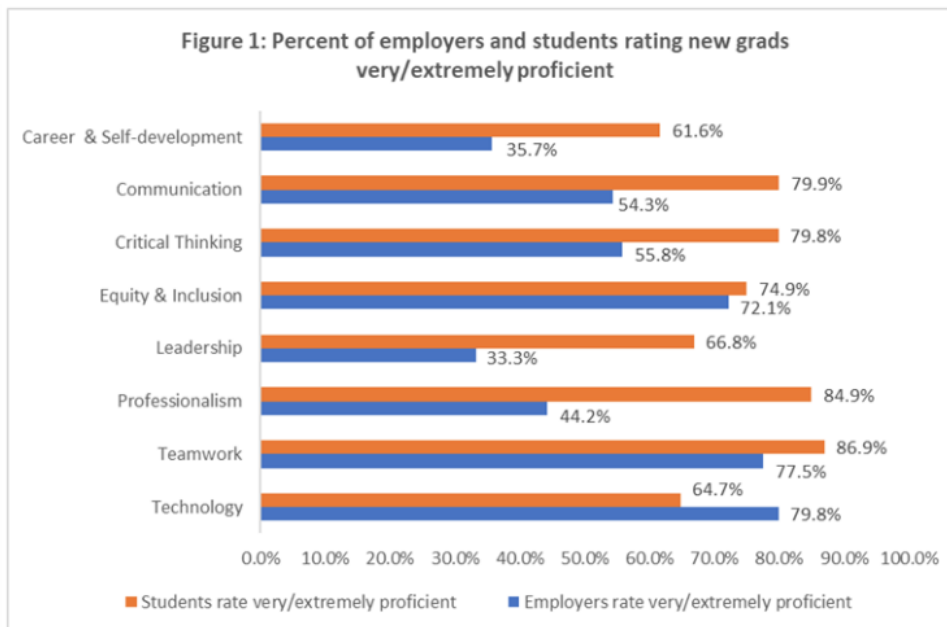
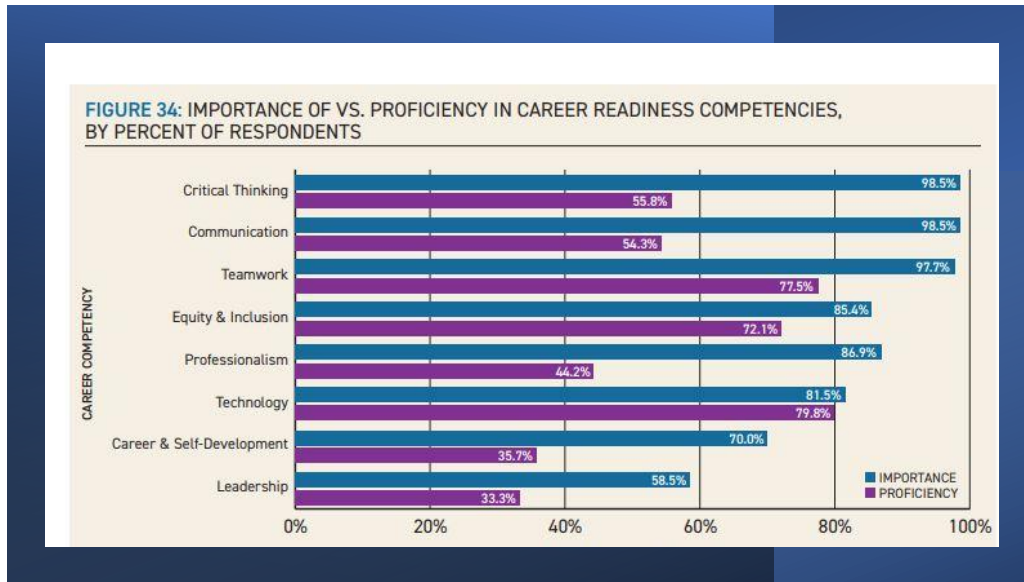
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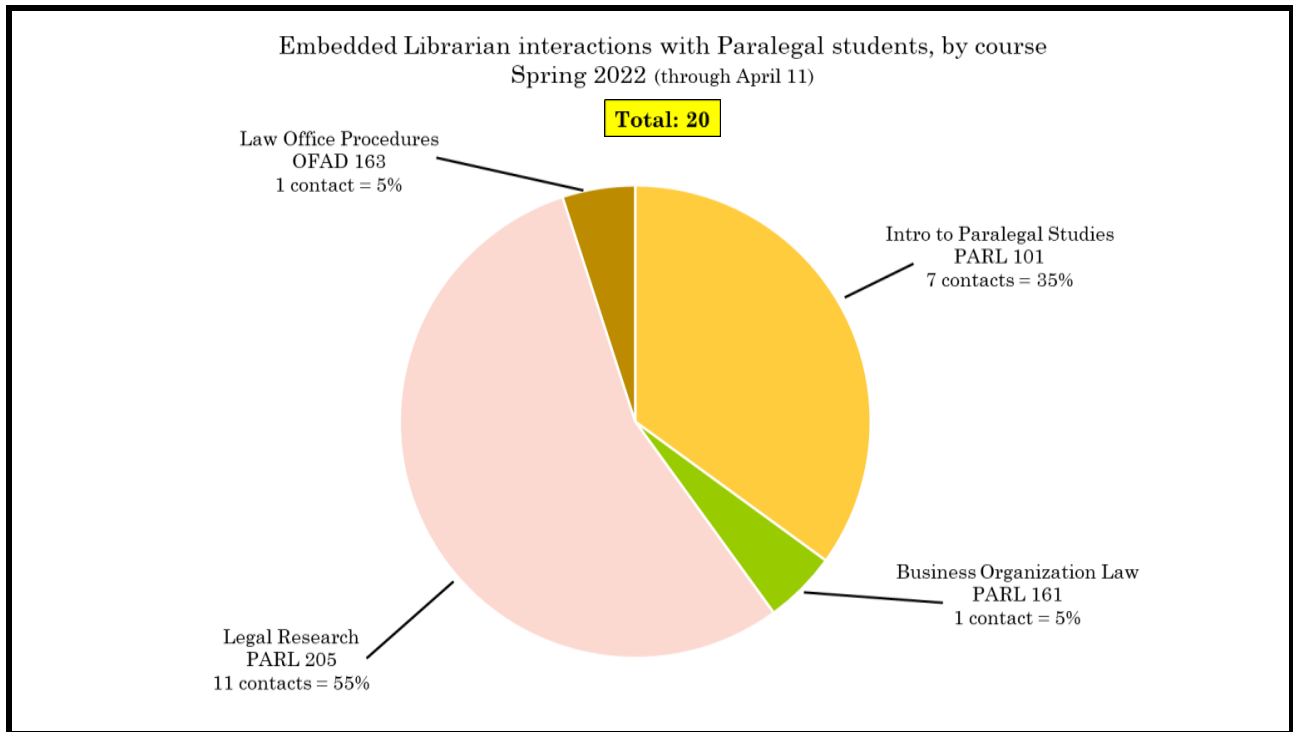
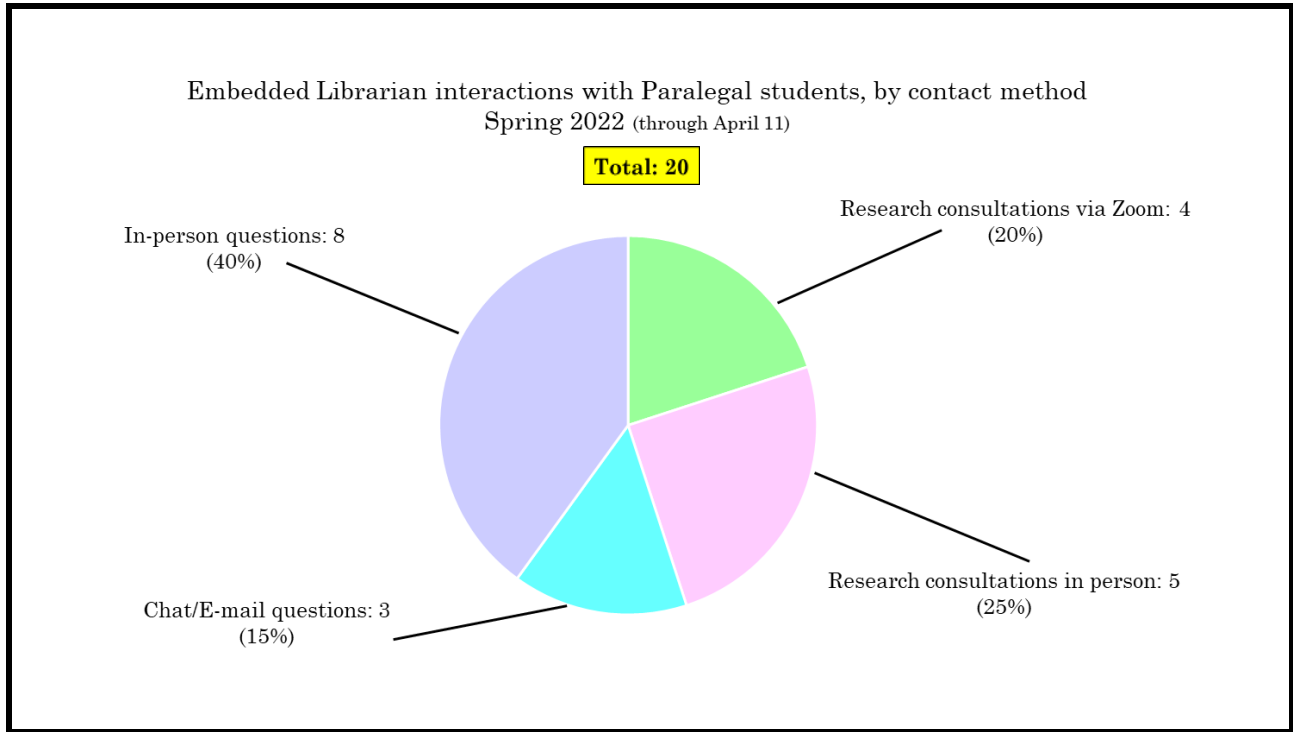
FIGURE 32: EMPLOYERS RATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES

COMPETENCIES	WEIGHTED AVERAGE RATING*
Critical Thinking	4.57
Communication	4.56
Teamwork	4.49
Equity & Inclusion	4.33
Professionalism	4.20
Technology	4.05
Career & Self-Development	3.82
Leadership	3.68

*5-point scale, where 1=Not at all important, 2=Not very important, 3=Somewhat important, 4=Very important, 5=Extremely important



Appendix





Northampton Community College

NCC Paralegal Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, October 18, 2022, 4:00 PM via Zoom

Zoom Attendance: Susan Back, Michael Bernadyn, Anne Bittner, Stephanie Flaherty, Denise François-Seeney, Gerard Geiger, Gina Gibbs, David Gordon, Gary Guidetti, Jennifer Napierkowski, Sharon Sharkuski, Lynsi Sheckler, Amy Shupp, Taisha Tolliver-Duran, Amy Van Varick-Colarusso and Nadine Webb

Absent: Eleanor Breslin, Denise Donadio, Eileen Duddy, Darryl Johnson, Peter Luethi, Irene Montero-Harris and Annie Laurie Meyers

Recorder: Diane Belles

Professor Amy Van Varick-Colarusso called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM. Committee Chair, Atty. Gerard Geiger began the meeting by asking the committee members for a brief introduction to meet new and current members.

Approval of Minutes (April 12, 2022)

Sharon Sharkuski moved to approve the minutes from the April 12, 2022, meeting; Michael Bernadyn seconded; motion passed.

Old Business

None.

New Business

PALS Club Report

Professor Annie Laurie Meyers was unable to attend today's meeting. Amy reported on the PALs Club on Annie Laurie's behalf. Students that are in the Paralegal internship did not have time to put together a PAL's Club report. Annie Laurie is anticipating the Paralegal students will be more involved in the SP23 semester and will have officers that will be able to hold events. The enrollment is a little low, which is part of the issue. In the future, we are expecting there will be a PAL's Club report.

Amy has been shadowing Annie Laurie's Internship course. She will be taking over the PARL250 Internship course in the Spring 2023 semester. There are eleven students. All students have been placed and all is positive with the internship course.

Paralegal Program Update/Committee Business

ABA Update

We are investigating whether ABA is worth the return on our investment. It was decided the program is not receiving any benefits from being members, therefore, as of Fall 2022, the college will be discontinuing our membership and no longer ABA approved. As a big proponent of being ABA approved, Amy learned in her research that there are only 22% Paralegal programs that are ABA approved. It's a voluntary approval. The rules are extremely restrictive, and every time the Paralegal faculty want to make a change to the program, there is a \$500 fee here, \$250 fee there, so the fees are excessive. Amy also wanted to find out why NCC students were choosing NCC's Paralegal program. After speaking with the paralegal students, ABA approval program did not play a factor in their decision. Students based their decision on the college's reputation, the cost of attending Northampton is economical, and the location. As Amy discussed with the committee at the last meeting, attorneys are looking to give Paralegals more duties. Annie Laurie attended the AAFPE Conference this past fall, which Amy will report on later in this meeting. Annie Laurie learned the movement is really on the west coast right now. Some states are moving towards giving paralegals more duties, but nothing in the northeast. Therefore, NCC will most likely not see this movement for a while if we do at all. Amy discussed the Oregon ruling which goes into effect next year and they do not even mention that the program needs to be ABA Approved. All they mentioned was that the program is accredited and NCC is accredited with Middle States.

In addition, there are two Paralegal organizations that had requirements where it use to read, if you graduated from an ABA approved program, you could take a test. Amy does not know when these changes were made, but these two organizations dropped the ABA from any of their requirements. If NCC Paralegal graduates want to earn a certificate or any additional accolades, there are no restrictions now that the Paralegal program is no longer an ABA Approved program. Amy previously thought if we were not an ABA approved program, we would be inferior to other schools that were approved by the ABA but that is not at all a factor. It was only a perception. Boston University and other high-ranking colleges do not require students applying to have an ABA approved Paralegal degree.

It does not mean NCC's Paralegal program will change. In fact, the Paralegal program will not change. We will still need help from the paralegal advisory committee and will continue to meet once a year. Our target market does not support ABA anymore. There will be a few requirements that NCC College will need to complete to be removed from the ABA Approval program. We will have to pay \$500 to disengage, send a confirming letter to all the Paralegal Advisory committee members and notify all the Paralegal students by the end of this week. The college's website will reflect this change that the college will no longer be ABA Approved as of January 1, 2023. We must submit a report, Dean, Dr. François-Seeney will need to sign off on the report and then it comes back to Amy basically requesting that we are no longer ABA approved and removed from the ABA Approval program.

Atty. Gerald Geiger asked if there is a PA Bar Association approval program. Amy will look into Atty. Geiger's inquiry. She is a member of Northampton Bar Association and will address any questions they may have on the removal of the ABA Approval program.

Everything remains the same. We must notify our Paralegal students that they can no longer assert that they graduated from an ABA Approved program past January 1, 2023. The Paralegal Advisory Committee will continue to meet. Our articulation agreement stays in place with Pierce College which is the primary college that NCC's Paralegal students may attend if they want to continue their education to obtain a 4-year degree in Paralegal. There really is no downside from withdrawing from the ABA Approval program. NCC will no longer have to go through the ABA Approval process and for those committee members that were a part of that process, the last report submission was not pleasant. It is the right decision for our college and students. It also allows Amy to introduce new programs.

Enrollment

There has been a dip in enrollment. Since Spring of 2022, we had quite a few students that left for medical or other reasons, therefore, we did not have a lot of people that filtered into the program. The paralegal program has several part-time students, which means we cannot guarantee which courses these students will take next making it difficult to know which courses they will enroll. Part-Time students taking courses at a part-time rate may take one or two classes. Amy is happy to report that the Fall of 2022 class has 17 students and hoping most of these students will finish the curriculum and will filter into the upper classes. Due to the program being low enrolled, Dean François-Seeney said, "We will need to think outside the box." We were coming upon the ABA Approval Report due in 2023 in the Fall and a site visit in 2024. One of Amy's favorite sayings that our Associate Dean, Gary Guidetti always says, "Is the juice worth the squeeze?"

Articulation Agreement with Peirce College, Philadelphia

Atty. Geiger inquired where Peirce College is located. Peirce College is in Philadelphia. The program is mostly online. There aren't that many paralegal colleges, they're usually community colleges. Pierce College is opening up more options because there are a lot more courses that are transferable. Paralegal courses taken at NCC will most likely end up as electives transferring to a 4-year school.

Atty. Geiger asked who NCC's closest competitor is. NCC's closest competitor is LCCC. LCCC's paralegal program is a lot different because they are adhering to the ABA rules. Last that Amy checked, NCC offers many more blended classes which is a lot more schedule friendly. What Amy sees is that LCCC does not offer blended classes which means when their students are on Zoom, they are on Zoom for three hours a week. LCCC's modalities are different, mostly for the reporting that the ABA requires. For online classes, the ABA says, faculty need to interact with their students and even suggested faculty tweet their students to have them interacting. The level of what ABA wants does not make sense. NCC is accredited by Middle States and what the ABA wants goes beyond Middle States requirements. Middle States level of accreditation holds high standards. Therefore, LCCC's course modalities are held to the letter of the ABA rules. In NCC's demographics, a twenty something mom wouldn't want to be sitting in front of a computer screen for three hours and would much rather attend a blended modality for half the time, working on their homework the rest of that time that is convenient with their work/family schedule. LCCC is NCC's closest competitor but there are other schools that are entirely online. Physically, NCC's competitor is LCCC.

Gina Gibbs questioned, “What is the difference between being ABA approved vs. being accredited?” NCC is ABA approved and accredited. ABA approval had its time back in the day when the Paralegal program at NCC was first starting. There really is no difference in all honesty. The only difference is the label being ABA approved.

Atty. Geiger asked if the student body is aware of NCC Paralegal program removing the ABA approved accreditation. Informing the students is part of the terminating process. There is a strategic way that the ABA requires the college to handle the removal of ABA. Students will be informed via the modality that the Dean and Amy had discussed. Then the advisory committee needs to be informed. All had already been announced.

Dean François-Seeney elaborated on the ABA removal process. The process is quite simple. All bodies that have a connection to the paralegal program has to be informed. The minutes are submitted to the ABA, emails will be sent to the Paralegal students and minutes will be submitted to the ABA saying that the people had been informed. That really is simply it. The folks are aware and the NCC Paralegal program is moving along. The curriculum is not changing, nothing else is changing except removing ABA from all marketing materials and moving forward as if ABA did not exist. The Paralegal program vigor continues to remain the same. In answer to Gina’s question on the difference between ABA and Accreditation, the ABA is specifically for a Paralegal program. Accreditation simply means that all courses regardless of whether it is programmatically specific as in the ABA, all courses under the umbrella of Northampton meet a high-level of rigor. We are a part of Middle States area of colleges’ rigor that says, when you come to our institution, you are receiving a high-level of integrity program. That’s what accreditation means. When you come to Northampton you are good to go. Once you leave NCC and transfer to a 4-year college, all your courses will transfer with you regardless if you go to a Middle States school or go to a SAT school or go to any other accredited institution.

Atty. Geiger asked if there are any scholarships that students would not be eligible for because NCC is not ABA approved. The Dean confirmed that the ABA has nothing to do with whether a student receives a scholarship or not. The only difference is if the scholarship criteria require ABA. Outside of that, if a student wants to receive a scholarship based on their GPA or other criteria, they will be eligible for that scholarship.

Susan Back, Atty. Geiger’s paralegal assistant inquired if the students will be made aware its Northampton deciding to leave the program rather than the program leaving Northampton? The letter stipulates we are voluntarily removing ourselves from the ABA. Why is that important to the student? We are telling them why. We are saying nothing changes, the academic rigor doesn’t change, and we are deciding to their benefit that we remove ourselves from ABA. We are giving them more access for their academic and professional journey. We are being hamstrung by the ABA.

New Legal Studies Curriculum

In an effort to boost enrollment, Amy is proposing to repurpose our classes to create two new majors starting in 2023/24. The two majors being introduced are: Paralegal Studies Concentration AAS Degree and Legal Studies AAS Degree. Most of this already is a part of the Paralegal program. It's a brand-new major that is basically Paralegal studies and what Amy did was added a few more courses in combining forces with the Criminal Justice Program. Technically, it is a double major, but because the degree is less than 15 credits, it becomes a concentration. American Legal System course, Ethics and Moral Problems course, legal elective studies, paralegal courses or take a business course, those are the Paralegal Studies Concentration AAS Degree.

The Legal Studies AAS Degree offers similar types of courses: Paralegal studies, psychology, technology, legal writing, very similar to the Paralegal studies program. These two degrees allow students to be enrolled in a double major and allows students to be able to transfer more credits.

Paralegal Technology Training

Monroe County is building an addition to their courthouse which will double the size of the courthouse. He has been working with Monroe County's president judge on adding the most up-to-date technology that the courthouse can get for trial presentations in the courtrooms. They are even discussing the potential of virtual reality trial presentations in future jury trials. The judge is looking forward to what technology would be available. One of the concerns that the judges had and the committee that Atty. Geiger have had is that a lot of the lawyers are resistant to the new technology in a way of presenting a trial to millennials who require or expecting a high-tech presentation. It appears to Atty. Geiger, a very marketable thing for lawyers who are tech deficient or who are shy about learning technology to hire paralegals who are very adept at these high-tech trial presentations using such software like Trial Director, using Elmo devices for trial presentations and things like that. He was wondering what technological training NCC Paralegal program has to make paralegals marketable because lawyers will be looking for that if they are in the courtrooms and that could be a real selling point.

As far as technology is concerned, NCC does not have the funding for students to work on. The paralegal faculty try to nail down what is the technology even for billing and everybody is all over the place, so the college really does not have the opportunity to work with the programs or the technology. We do have a course that Annie Laurie has taught for many years that is now going to be taught by another professor and will be added in and that is Law Office Procedures. This course will talk about the technologies used in the law office. NCC also offers a technology course, CISC101 called Introduction to Information Technology that covers Excel, PowerPoint, and Microsoft Word. That is the extent of technology.

David Gordon teaches in Legal Research and uses WestLaw. In Legal Writing, he uses MSWord and tells students to get used to using Adobe Acrobat. Paralegal students will get more involved in e-filing not only at the federal level with Pacer, but now with Counties going e-file. Creating a document in MSWord and saving the document. The Bankruptcy courts or Federal courts require converting the document in a PDF format to lock down the file before the document is uploaded and file it. In addition to acquiring conformed signatures. Those are the software topics that he touches on.

Moving forward, Atty. Geiger thinks NCC needs to start thinking about the cutting edge of new trial software technology in how paralegals can help. The Dean expressed that the NCC Paralegal program is beholden to the legal environment. It is quite comical that we have to find someone that can type on a typewriter most recently so when Atty. Geiger talks about lawyers being resistant to technology, he is correct. It would be of interest to the Dean and Amy as someone responsible when you hear about these things, it would be nice to know at least from a professional development opportunity. When you talk about virtual reality, we will not be able to infuse virtual reality into the curriculum. Implementing virtual reality into the program is not going to be a reality because not every lawyer is going to be using virtual reality, but we could create professional development opportunities for those individuals who are interested in learning how to use virtual reality in their practices. If there are ways in which we can help those practicing attorneys to be a part of the 22nd Century, that is a way we can help, but we are not going to be able to necessarily bring that into the curriculum. 1) The financial component; and 2) majority of the attorneys are not going to want paralegals to have experience using virtual reality trial software as a skillset, but we can provide that as a professional development opportunity for the legal profession.

In Atty. Geiger's reference to virtual reality, Monroe County is looking at 10 years out. Some courts are experimenting with virtual reality, but right now, there is a lot of technology already in use in all of their federal courts. It's very common for every trial to involve the use of Trial Director Software to show exhibits to the jurors, many of whom will have a screen right in front of their seat. The latest technology is being used in the Federal Courts now, not so much in the county courts, but in almost all the federal courts. Gina said, the county courts are sometimes using software called Laser Fish when they must file documents for Appeals to the Superior Courts which requires Adobe Acrobat or PDF redacting and metadata. It has become a must for the past two years even when you file reports with the Department of Revenue the documents have to be in PDF format, so it is increasing rapidly from the court side.

Atty. Geiger thinks it would be marketable for a lawyer to hire a paralegal who is adept at those types of skills. It doesn't have to be done right away, but this type of technology is soon. He didn't expect that most of his hearings would be on Zoom, but then the pandemic hit. Lawyers would never have virtual hearings before the pandemic, now it's common so lawyers are being dragged into the 21st Century technology. It has improved their technological game, and the paralegals have to be dragged along with them and could be leading the way for the lawyers who are unwilling to learn. He thinks it is a marketable skill that the college should be thinking about moving forward.

The Dean is happy to invest in this type of technology as long as the percentage of lawyers is greater than 50% that is an investment the college would consider. At this juncture, that's not something the college would realistically entertain at this point in the college's financial life to invest in. We could offer this type of skillset to those attorneys that are interested in this type of technology as a professional development opportunity.

Susan Baker elaborated on what Atty. Geiger is discussing on what is coming that she has always felt a little short on knowing the technology. She happened to be lucky enough to start out as a paralegal working with Atty. Geiger who is a computer geek. He taught her tons about

PDF filing online and electronically. It is no longer; do you want to do this type of filing. They are required to submit PDF filing electronically. You must be able to work on those programs. She is finding, not only did she not have the skills to use Adobe Acrobat, but many of the interns did not have the skills to use Adobe Acrobat. Those skills would give paralegals the one up being able to guide almost every attorney on things that they have no choice but to do.

Atty. Geiger shared that not all the technology is expensive. Some of the Trial Directors software like their district attorney's office uses this software routinely in murder trials. Their County detectives are trained in this software to help them present these high tech presentations. This happens every month in Monroe County courts and they have not been known to be the most advanced place in Pennsylvania. This type of technology is coming whether we like it or not. It really is not that expensive for paralegals to learn Trial Directors Software. It is a few licenses that is not expensive and there is no hardware to it.

Amy asked if there are Trial Directors software courses offered online that NCC paralegals could take. Atty. Geiger doesn't know at this point. Everything is on YouTube, but he isn't sure about this. It's a thought moving forward long range, maybe even shorter range that the college needs to investigate virtual reality technology to keep NCC paralegal students competitive.

AAfPE Conference Update

Annie Laurie went to the AAfPE Conference in Orlando. This is the first conference since the pandemic that was held in-person. The conference was attended about 50% of normal capacity based on past attendance. There was a discussion about licensing paralegals. Some states are licensing paralegals, but the states that are doing it are through the educational requirements, no mention of ABA. Experience, standardized tests such as PACE, and other requirements as to how to become a paralegal being able to do other things. There was big news at the conference. Annie Laurie met some people from the CIA. CIA is actively hiring paralegal candidates that have a 3.5 GPA, have critical thinking skills, have attention to detail and can work well with others. She chatted with the legal software person. Although there were good educational opportunities at the conference, the venue to hold this conference should have been held online.

Career Services Report

Jennifer Napierkowski put together a brief presentation on Paralegal Trends in 2022 and beyond. She did some research on Paralegal trends and narrowed down to five emerging paralegal career trends nationally. The paralegal field still remains a career in an increased demand but is now offering a little more flexibility than it did before pre-pandemic. Increased focus on writing and communication, and stronger, diversified technology skills. Outsourcing offers opportunities to work remotely and a project-based approach.

#1 According to the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the paralegal job growth rate is at 12%, higher than average. Most occupations job growth rate are about 5%. Paralegal annual job openings are about 43,000. Competition is high for experienced paralegals resulting in more remote opportunities.

Salary Job Outlook for the Profession:

2021 Median Pay: \$56,230 per year; \$27.03 per hour.

Typical Entry-level Education: Associate's Degree

Work Experience in a Related Occupation: None

On-the-job Training: None

Number of Jobs, 2021: 352,800

Job Outlook, 2021-31: 14% (Much faster than average.)

Employment Change, 2021-31: 49,900

#2 **Flexibility**, more remote work, part-time opportunities, hybrid arrangements and changing in a way usual business is done.

When you look across the board of other areas for telework, legal came at the top of all occupations.

#3 **Writing and Communication**, consequence of remote work is writing more requiring accurate written communication. Being able to communicate through emails, Zoom and conference calls and the adaptability to the multifaceted needs of a situation, (e.g., composing an email, virtual meetings, and writing a client letter.)

#4 Need for Strong and Updated Tech Skills:

- Microsoft Office Certification would be helpful.
- Embrace emerging technologies.
- Paralegals may need to take on "Tech Support" roles.
- Broad familiarity with various software packages.

#5 Outsourcing

- Widely accepted practice for law firms in recent years.
- The use of "Contract Paralegals" will be expanding.
- Hiring individuals for specific tasks.
- Reduces overhead costs associated with hiring new employees.
- Drives revenue.

In general, what college graduates are looking for is not really specific to paralegals. Students graduating from college are looking for job security, develop job specific skills, develop soft skills, and work with friendly coworkers and a good benefits package.

NCC's most recent graduate data:

- Paralegal program has 18 paralegal graduates which is a strong number.

The 2021 NCC Paralegal Employment Data reported 10 graduates employed. The employers included:

- Fischer & Fischer Law Offices
- Ferry & Ullman Attorneys at Law
- Hemstreet Nitchkey & Freidl
- Law Offices of Robert E. Goldman, LLC
- Law Offices of Vasiliadis Pappas
- McFall, Layman & Jordan, P.C.
- Messa & Associates, P.C.
- Peters, Moritz, Peischel, Zulick & Landes
- The Office of the Northampton County District Attorney

One graduate reported continuing their education with Pierce College.

Highest Salary Reported: \$19.00

Mean Salary: \$17.13

Lowest Salary: \$15.00

(Only 6 reported salary information.)

Librarian Report

This semester, Ann assisted 12 paralegal students, thus far. Keep in mind, the introduction students have started their research assignment so there will be plenty more that will be coming up to see Ann in the next few weeks. It looks like PARL210G Legal Writing students win again. They are the students that ask for help from Ann the most, 7 contacts (58%). The library also had a few students from PARL166 Criminal Law and Procedure, 2 contacts (17%). It is funny that Jennifer mentioned paralegals becoming tech support. Librarians have taken on a big chunk of tech support functions as well. The folks in BUSA152 Business Law I who came to the library asking questions like, “how do I save a document to a flash drive?” “How do I attach a document to an email?” Their questions were not about the content, but rather working their way around the technology. She didn’t need to report on all the modalities on how she met with the students because all were met in-person. There are a lot more students coming on campus using the library in-person which is very nice. Ann enjoys meeting people in-person. She feels more confident understanding when students don’t understand something.

Is it a generational issue when students ask Ann for advice on legal writing? For instance, when Ann described answering the question on how to attach a document to an email, Atty. Geiger thinks a high school student may know that, but maybe someone coming back into the workforce after a long period of time would not. Ann felt that that may be the case as well, but the younger students also have difficulty with things like Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel and attaching documents to things. In her observation, if the students cannot perform the task with two thumbs on their phone, they can’t do it. The younger students are not familiar with these software packages that we as adults have had to use in the workplace. Students can google all day long, but when it comes to using all of these products, the younger students are as much at a loss as some of the returning adults that haven’t been working. They all need this kind of help regardless of age.

Expiration of Terms in May 2023

Eleanor Breslin, Esq., Denise Donadio,
Irene Montero-Harris, Esq., Nadine Webb

Atty. Geiger asked if there are term limits. Amy explained, now that we are no longer under ABA rules, there are no term limits. Dean François-Seeney interjected by adding, the committee is no longer obligated to ABA requirements. The committee does not necessarily need to meet twice per year.

Usually if the member is attending and producing during the meetings, Amy will offer to renew their membership. It's usually a three-year term. Some people decided not to renew their membership and some people decided to stay on. It is a voluntary decision for members to renew their membership. Nadine Webb was asked if she would renew her term and she accepted. Amy will check with Atty. Eleanor Breslin and Atty. Irene Montero-Harris to see if they plan to renew their membership.

It may be a good idea to meet in the spring with the advisory committee members to report how things are progressing post ABA and what is happening with the pre-legal studies/criminal justice program. That might be helpful to make the committee members aware and move forward with starting a new cycle.

Selection of SPRING 2023 April Meeting Date

The committee voted to hold the spring PAC Meeting on Tuesday, April 4th at 4:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Gina Gibbs motioned to adjourn. Sharon Sharkuski seconded the motion. All agreed. Meeting was adjourned at 5:02 PM.

Appendix E: Curriculum Matrix



Curriculum Matrix [Program Learning Outcomes, Gen Ed Learning Outcomes] and Assessment Plan

Name of the Academic Program: Paralegal AAS

Academic School: Business & Industry

Completed by: Amy VanVarick-Colarusso & Annie Laurie Meyers

Date: MAY 18, 2021

Step one: List all of the program learning outcomes for the program of study (delete extra rows or add additional rows if necessary). For each learning outcome, identify what specific course(s) address the specific outcome (*list the courses across the top of the table*). Then make “I” for a learning outcome that is introduced (*addressed for the first time*), “R” for a learning outcome that is reinforced (*addressed again, but not emphasized in a major way*), and/or “M” for a learning outcome that emphasized (*addressed in a major way, emphasis toward mastery*) under each specific course.

Please note: Not every course will address every program learning outcome.

Step two: Identify the alignment between Gen Ed outcomes and the courses within your program of study. At the bottom of your matrix are the Gen Ed learning outcomes. For each Gen Ed learning outcome, identify what specific course(s) address and ASSESSES the specific outcome (*list the courses across the top of the table*) – focus on the program courses and important electives. Place an “A” in corresponding spot in the table. If possible, identify the specific assignment/activity in which the learning outcome is assessed.

Please note: Not every course will assess every Gen Ed learning outcomes.

Program Learning Outcomes <i>(Upon completion of the program, students will be able to...)</i>	PARL 101	PARL 153	PARL 187	PARL 205	PARL 210G	PARL 250	OFAD 163	PARL 151	PARL 156	PARL 161	PARL 162	PARL 163	PARL 166	PARL 175
1. Understand and apply substantive legal terminology and possible ethical considerations to develop requisite analytical skills necessary to function effectively in a legal work environment.	I	I,M	I,M	I,M	M	M	I,M	I,M	I,M	I,M	I,M	I,M	I,M	I,M
2. Demonstrate professional behavior, understand and acknowledge diversity and possess the necessary office skill competencies while under the supervision of an attorney in the completion of legal work.	I	R	R	M	M	M	I,M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

3. Exhibit interpersonal communication skills necessary to share ideas clearly and work effectively with people in the legal profession.	I	R	R	M	M	M	I,M	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
4. Demonstrate the ability to use appropriate technology to enhance one's value to a legal work environment.	I	R	R	M	M	M	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R

Appendix F: Key Abilities Program Matrix



The five Gen Ed Key Abilities help students navigate the world. In each class they take, they should expect to be challenged to develop and deepen their key abilities. After they graduate, these abilities will help them continue learning, adapt to change, and become citizens who can make wise choices and contribute to their communities.

1. **Communicate**

- *Students are able to share their ideas powerfully and clearly.*
 - *Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content and sources that illustrate knowledge and understanding of the topic.*
 - *Assignments are organized and understandable. Distinct intro, body, and conclusion, as appropriate for the discipline.*
 - *Language is clear and understandable. Executes assignment within conventions of a specific discipline, including source citation.*

2. **Analyze and Solve Problems**

- *Students are able to see and solve the problems around them, using solid data to draw and communicate reasonable conclusions.*
 - *Identify and understand an issue, concept, or problem, any data needs, and constraints that have to be considered in order to analyze an issue or solve a problem. Students recognize multiple perspectives*
 - *Use various tools, representations, notation, etc. to help them organize data and see relationships or identify assumptions related to the issue, concept or problem*
 - *Evaluate any conclusions drawn, implications made, or plans for solving a problem, including evaluating any assumptions and any evidence gathered.*

3. **Use Technology**

- *Students are able to select and ethically use appropriate technology to create, communicate and discover.*
 - *Effectively select and use the appropriate technology applications or resources to accomplish specific goals.*
 - *Be an active and responsible participant in online communities.*
 - *Understand the legal and ethical facets of technology in a global society.*

4. **Understand Diversity**

- *Students are able to understand how each individual's experiences shape our society, and how societies, in turn, shape the way local and global resources are used.*
 - *Explain how the range of human differences shape the historical and current formation of artistic, economic, social, scientific, cultural or political institutions*
 - *Explain how individuals experience equality and inequality with a society, its institutions or its cultures*
 - *Analyze how individuals and institutions have addressed persistent global challenges, including physical resources and social values.*

5. **Engage in Ethical Questions**

- *Students are able to identify ethical choices, consider alternatives and consequences, and choose actions and choose actions keeping in mind everyone affected.*

Indicate in the table below the program courses in which a key ability is assessed ("A"- Assessed) – if possible, identify the specific assignment/activity in which the key ability is assessed. Focus on the required courses and designated program electives.

Gen Ed (Key Abilities) Learning Outcomes <i>(Upon completion of the program, students will be able to...)</i>	PARL 101	PARL 153	PARL 187	PARL 205	PARL 210G	PARL 250	OFAD 163	PARL 151	PARL 156	PARL 161	PARL 162	PARL 163	PARL 166	PARL 175
Communicate: Share their ideas powerfully and clearly.	I	R	R	M	M, A S2022 F2023 S2025 Legal Memo	M	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Analyze and Solve Problems: See and solved the problems around them, using solid data to draw and communicate reasonable conclusions.	I	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, M, A F2022 S2024 Legal Memo	I, M	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Understand Diversity: Understand how each individual's experiences shape our society, and how societies, in turn, shape the way local and global resources are used.	I, A F2022 S2024 Intervie w Paper	R	R	M	M	M	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Engage in Ethical Questions. Identify choices, consider alternatives and consequences, and choose actions keeping in mind everyone affected.	I, A F2021 S2023 F2024	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, R	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, M	I, M

	Ch 4 Ethics and Prof. Resp - MindTap													
Use Technology. Select and ethically use appropriate technology to create, communicate, and discover.	I	R	R	M, A S2023 F2024 Legal Research using WestLaw	M	M	I, M	R	R	R	R	R	R	R

Step three: Develop an assessment plan for Program Learning Outcomes. All program learning outcomes must be assessed and documented within a span of 5 years. List in the table below which outcome(s) y [corresponding to the numbered PLOs in the curriculum matrix] you plan to assess and report on each year. Annual assessment planning will be completed each Spring with assessment collection and analysis completed the following Fall and/or Spring. The table below will ultimately contain ALL program learning outcomes – it can either be completed at once to guide annual assessment planning or completed annually as you engage in the annual planning process. All PLOs must be represented in this table by the end of 5 years.

	Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
AY 2020-2021	1, 2, and 3
AY 2021-2022	1, 2, 3 and 4
AY 2022-2023	1, 2, 3 and 4
AY 2023- 2024	1,2, 3 and 4
AY 2024-2025	1, 2, 3 and 4
AY 2025-2026	1, 2, 3 and 4

Step four: Engage in Gen Ed Assessment. Using the Curriculum Matrix, identify the courses and assignments/activities that will be used to document Gen Ed assessment following the plan below. Ideally, assignments/activities will be assessed using the Gen Ed approved rubrics and in coordination with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Gen Ed Core committee. To view the approved Gen Ed rubrics please visit the CTLT Faculty Resources page: <https://ctl62.wixsite.com/ctl/gened>.

Appendix G: Program Map



Paralegal, Associate in Applied Science (2022-2023 Catalog)

SEMESTER-BY-SEMESTER PROGRAM MAP FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS
 Courses are listed in preferred order of completion
 Plans can be modified to fit student needs by adding more semesters

Choose your courses with your Advisor.

Developmental Education Courses (if required)		<input type="checkbox"/>	MATH020	Pre-Algebra		
<input type="checkbox"/>	ACLS050	Introduction to Academic Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	MATH022	Elementary Algebra	
<input type="checkbox"/>	ENGL027	Writing Skills Workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	MATH026	Intermediate Algebra	
complete	Course #	Course Title	Credits	Gen Ed	Pre-requisites / Co-requisites	
Semester 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	COLS101	College Success	1		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	ENGL101	English I	3	Comm	PRE: Per ENGL Placement Policy
	<input type="checkbox"/>	CMTH102	Introduction to Communication	3	Comm	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	OFAD101	Keyboarding & Formatting Essentials I	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL101	Introduction to Paralegal Studies	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL153	Real Estate Law	3		PRE or CO: PARL101; PRE: Word Processing Skills
	Total Semester Credits:			16		
Semester 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	ENGL151L	English II (Literature)	3	Comm	PRE: ENGL101
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL150	Law Office Procedures	3		PRE: Word Processing Skills (MS Word)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL187	Litigation Practice & Procedure	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL205	Legal Research	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL	Paralegal Elective +	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		General Education Elective	3	AH, SIT, SSHB	Depends on Course Selected
Total Semester Credits:			18			
Semester 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACCT101	Financial Accounting I	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	CISC101	Introduction to Information Technology	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL210G	Legal Writing	3		PRE: ENGL101, ENGL151, PARL205
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL	Paralegal Elective+	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL	Paralegal Elective+	3		
Total Semester Credits:			15			
Semester 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL250	Internship	3		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		General Education Elective	3	AH, SIT, SSHB	Depends on Course Selected
	<input type="checkbox"/>		General Education Elective	3	AH, SIT, SSHB	Depends on Course Selected
	<input type="checkbox"/>		Math (QL) or Science (SCI) Elective	3/4		Depends on Course Selected
	<input type="checkbox"/>		Elective	3		Depends on Course Selected
Total Semester Credits:			15-16			
Total Degree Credits			64-65			
General Education Requirements			+ Paralegal Elective options: PARL151, PARL156, PARL161, PARL162, PARL163, PARL166, PARL175. -For the General Education Elective and the Social Science Electives, students must select courses so that at least two of the following categories are represented: Arts & Humanities (AH); Social Science: Societies and Institutions over Time (SIT); Social Science: Scientific Study of Human Behavior (SSHB). • Completion of ENGL151L satisfies Diversity and Global Awareness (D) requirement. • Completion of PARL210G satisfies the Writing Intensive (WI) requirement.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	ENGL151L	Diversity				
<input type="checkbox"/>	PARL210G	Writing Intensive				

Appendix H: Co-curricular Map

PROGRAM NAME: AY 18-19	PARALEGAL PROGRAM			
	0-16 credits	17-34 credits	35-49/50 credits	50/51+ credits
Get the Courses You Need	Take the following courses: <i>COLS101-College Success (1)</i> <i>CMTH102-Intro to Communication (3)</i> <i>ENGL101-English I (3)</i> <i>OFAD101- Keyboarding & Formatting Essentials 1 (3)</i> <i>PARL 101 Introduction to Paralegal Studies (3)</i> <i>PARL153 Real Estate Law</i> 16 cr <i>For details on course requirements, see the Program Map.</i>	Take the following courses: <i>ACCT151-Financial Accounting II (3)</i> <i>ENGL151L- English II (Literature) (3)</i> <i>PARL187- Litigation Practice and Procedure (3)</i> <i>PARL205- Legal Research (3)</i> <i>PARALEGAL ELECTIVE (3)</i> <i>SIT OR SSHB ELECTIVE (3)</i> 18 cr <i>For details on course requirements, see the Program Map.</i>	Take the following courses: <i>ACCT101 – Financial Accounting (3)</i> <i>OFAD144 – Introduction to Outlook (1)</i> <i>OFAD142- Introduction to Excel (1)</i> <i>OFAD130- Introduction to WordPerfect (1)</i> <i>Paralegal Elective (3)</i> <i>PARL210G Legal Writing (WI) (3)</i> <i>MATH OR SCIENCE ELECTIVE (3 or 4)</i> 15/16cr <i>For details on course requirements, see the Program Map.</i>	Take the following courses: <i>PARL250- Internship (3)</i> <i>PARALEGAL ELECTIVE (3)</i> <i>SIT OR SSHB ELECTIVE (6)</i> <i>ELECTIVE (3)</i> 15cr <i>For details on course requirements, see the Program Map.</i>
	Engage with the Spartan Experience	-Create Academic Plan -Join the PALS Club (Paralegal Club) -Community Service -Seek NCC scholarship opportunities	-Continue PALS Membership -Apply to NCC Leadership Training Class --NCC and National Scholarships -Study Abroad -Community Service -Seek NCC scholarship opportunities	-Continue PALS Club Membership and run for a club officer position -Meet requirements for PTK Honor Society -Study Abroad -Community Service -Seek NCC scholarship opportunities
Get Ready for Life after Completion – Career Readiness		-Complete the career readiness GPS to help select a potential practice area of interest as a paralegal. -Attend Career Service Sessions	-Arrange to speak to fulltime paralegal faculty (advisor) concerning specific paralegal careers --Explore internship opportunities via Career Services -Attend Career Service Events	-Participate in Career Services Networking Events Table Talk Luncheon - Attend Executive in Residence Event -Prepare resume

<p>Get Ready for Life after Completion – Transfer Readiness</p>	<p>-Speak to your advisor about possible careers or transfer opportunities. -Begin researching possible transfer institution paralegal programs such as Peirce College. --Attend Fall Break Transfer Night</p>	<p>-Attend Transfer Days Event -Visit the Transfer Advisor to begin to make a transfer plan -Visit/Interview at transfer institutions. Begin to narrow your selection. -Choose electives that will transfer and fulfill elective requirements</p>	<p>-Visit Transfer Advisor to gain knowledge of application process -Choose your transfer institution and gather application materials -Ask a professor(s) for an “excellent” reference</p>	<p>-Apply for graduation -Apply for transfer to a college or university at the beginning of the semester.</p>
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Courses:

- In the list of courses, identify the milestone courses
 - Courses that must be completed (in that term) to stay on path for graduation
 - Indicate if there is a critical grade for success
 - Courses that are critical to program – give students key information that will lead to their success

Spartan Experience:

- List activities that connect with the Spartan Experience – Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and/or Spartanship – choose activities that tie to the program
 - Spartanship activities include campus and civic engagement: join a college club; service learning; study abroad
 - Leadership activities include:
 - Entrepreneurship activities:

Career Readiness:

- Complete the CareerGPS career assessment
- Attend job fairs
- Job shadow – list potential employers
- Internships, externships – list potential experiences
- Write and update resume
- Apply for jobs
- Sit for licensure/accreditation exams
- Complete stackable credentials

Transfer Readiness:

- Talk with an advisor about transfer
- Identify transfer colleges/universities – list transfer articulation agreements or other transfer opportunities
- Sit for licensure/accreditation exams
- Apply for transfer

Appendix I: Assessment Plan



									MSCHE Visit	
	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025
Diversity Outcome	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan
Ethical Qs Outcome		Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze
Communicate Outcome			Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess
Analyze Outcome				Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan
Technology Outcome					Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze	Evaluate & Plan	Assess	Analyze

Appendix J: Teaching Faculty Credentials



Amy Van Varick is the current Program Coordinator. Amy is a licensed attorney in the state of New Jersey and in Washington, D.C.; she is a member of the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, a member of the American Bar Association and a member of the Northampton County Bar Association. She graduated from the paralegal program at Montclair State University; her J.D. is from Seton Hall School of Law. She previously taught at Montclair State, Kean University, Seton Hall School of Law and Fairleigh Dickenson University.

Annie Laurie Meyers has been teaching at NCC for 18 years. She holds an A.A.S. in Legal/Office Administration from NCC, an A.A.S. in Paralegal from Gannon University, a B.S. in Political Science, and an M.Ed. in Human Development from Lehigh University. Annie Laurie mentors the paralegal graduates in their 100-hour required internships and works with graduates to continue their academic/career path to law school or employment.

Preferred Name	Position	Highest Degree	School Name	Degree	Field of Study
David Gordon	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	Dickinson School of Law at Penn State University	JD	Law
David Gordon	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	Syracuse University	BA	Political Science
Maura McGuire	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	University of Scranton	BS	Political Science
Maura McGuire	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	Villanova University	JD	Law
Susan Pettit	Adjunct Faculty, Business Administration	JD	East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania	BA	Political Science
Susan Pettit	Adjunct Faculty, Business Administration	JD	Temple University	JD	Law
David Rakowski	Adjunct Faculty, Business Administration	MPA	Arcadia University	MPA	
David Rakowski	Adjunct Faculty, Business Administration	MPA	SUNY College at Oswego	BA	Political Science
Jennifer Stauffer	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	American University	JD	Law
Jennifer Stauffer	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	Connecticut College	BA	Classics
Paul Trainor	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	New England Law-Boston	JD	Law
Paul Trainor	Adjunct Faculty, Paralegal	JD	University of Massachusetts	BA	Business Administration/Management

Appendix K: External Review Report



Kerry S. Freidl, Esquire
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Easton, Pennsylvania 18042
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October 4, 2023

Dr. Amy R. Van Varick-Colarusso
Northampton Community College
3835 Green Pond Road Bethlehem,
PA 18020

VIA: email only

Re: Report of the External Auditor - Paralegal AAS Degree Program

Dear Professor Van Varick-Colarusso:

Please consider the following as my report as the external auditor regarding the Paralegal AAS Degree Program at Northampton Community College (hereafter NCC). In preparing this report, please note that I participated in and/or reviewed the following:

1. Various phone calls and emails with you;
2. Review of the syllabus for the Intro to Paralegal Studies class, together with attendance at same on January 30, 2023;
3. An extensive interview with a recent graduate of the program;
4. A review of the most recent semester's course offerings and content;
5. A review of the Academic Program Review ("APR") dated March 20, 2023.

My first task in pursuance of this assignment was my attendance at the Intro to Paralegal Studies class on January 30, 2023. I note that the class was conducted virtually, and my participation was virtual as well. The syllabus was most helpful in that it broke down the weekly topics and expectations for the students regarding each of the subject matters taught. I was particularly pleased to see a focus in week three of the inter-workings of the law office. This is particularly crucial to the paralegal student in that, almost without exception, none of them have law office experience. One individual, however, in the class that I attended virtually had such experience. As might be expected, she was a good source of information necessary to augment Professor Van Varick-Colarusso's lectures. Of no less importance was week four's focus on ethics and professional responsibility. It has been my experience professionally that this critical obligation is often misunderstood by both the attorney and the paralegal. The focus on this aspect of the educational curriculum is crucial. I was also pleased to see the focus on both week eight and week nine on legal research and analysis, coupled with online research. This is an area that attorneys, even recent graduates of law school, are woefully inadequate to perform such tasks.

As such, attorneys will always rely on paralegals to pull up necessary research materials and be able to do so quickly. A focus on this area is absolutely appreciated. It is understood that this is simply an

introductory class into paralegal studies, and my expectations in no way extend to more comprehensive understandings of each of these components. However, the various weekly topics as selected and taught provide a very good overview of the broad functions of today's paralegal. Obviously, the focus on some of the practice areas such as tort law, product liability, etc., is of less importance as they touch directly on the substantive law responsibilities of the attorney in charge. However, a basic understanding of these areas is helpful in moving from "the forest to the trees" in the day-to-day functions of today's paralegal. In sum, the course gives a very good outline of the expectations that the graduating paralegal will be confronted with upon entry into the modern work force.

The following are some observations specific to my attendance at the aforementioned Zoom class. Professor Van Varick-Colarusso augmented some very important aspects of the function of the paralegal, one of which is the critical thinking component of the paralegal's vocation. I suspect that this was an effort on her part to set aside preconceived notions and biases in favor of the facts in case before the paralegal at the time. Her discussion of fee arrangements in law offices was also helpful as paralegals will often be required to compile and mail monthly billing statements to clients. She also emphasized the importance of social media in today's law practice, as well as the pervasive use of emails as a preferred form of communication, especially among the larger firms. It was particularly appreciated when she discussed the importance of confidentiality as it is something that I and my colleagues routinely stress to any member of our office.

The only drawback I observed during the classroom was no doubt a limitation endemic to most if not all virtual classrooms. I could not ascertain whether the students were paying attention to a lot of what the Professor was emphasizing during her lecture. One disturbing incident occurred when one student, who was listening to the class laying down on a couch, had his cat cavorting about during the lecture. This was somewhat disturbing to myself as an observer, and no doubt failed to enhance that person's understanding of the materials. My only suggestion in this regard would be that more strict requirements be in place for students in a virtual setting, i.e., sitting in a chair with no distractions whatsoever during the class. While this may seem a bit harsh, I believe the requirement is reasonable given that the most significant accommodation of all, i.e., being allowed to participate virtually, is a privilege and not a right.

While on the topic of virtual and blended classrooms, I note that Professor Van Varick-Colarusso's syllabus in this case was very careful to admonish students to not rely on Zoom sessions for all subject matter content. This is important to emphasize in all courses as I believe it would be very easy for students in either a virtual or blended classroom scenario to believe that the class is a primary source of exam material. Of course, the professor has control over the time and content of the lecture while students spend time in the classroom; it is beyond her control to assure that all the students will perform as expected outside of same. Nonetheless, Professor Van Varick-Colarusso's syllabus clearly explained that this is not the case and that expectations are in fact greater outside of the classroom than inside of same.

The next phase of my preparation to issue this report was to conduct an interview with an outstanding recent graduate of the paralegal program. In fact, this individual had the remarkable distinction of having recently won the outstanding paralegal graduate award for her efforts. I chose this candidate not just because of her recent academic achievements, but also because of her recent experience after graduation in several legal environments. Thus, she would be an excellent resource from which to determine the practical success of her academic achievements. My belief that she would provide an excellent resource for information to help me in this regard was in fact rewarded.

The aforementioned interview occurred on May 5, 2023, at my office. This graduate attended classes at NCC from January 2018 through December 2020. Her observation was that the legal writing course was clearly the most beneficial in helping her in her day-to-day function as a paralegal. She cited the amount of writing that she is accustomed to performing daily for this conclusion. She also stated that the legal research course was very helpful as well. This graduate had the dubious distinction of attending classes during the height of the most recent pandemic. She believed that the curriculum managed to successfully overcome those difficulties; however, she was of the equally strong opinion that the in-class course curriculums were preferred over the virtual or blended formats. She added that Zoom meetings are an accepted day to day function of convenience for the modern law office and that they are certainly beneficial under the right circumstances. She distinctly recalled her legal writing professor explaining that when you tell a story you want to go through the facts smoothly with detail, and explain clearly so that the person who is reading what you ultimately write knows exactly what you mean. This is probably one of the most crucial lessons learned and carried into the day-to-day practice of the law. She also appreciated the training she received in document preparation. She also mentioned that the curriculum offered her an opportunity to prepare a brief which was, in her words, an eye opener, and was a great experience and a skill she could carry forward into the workplace.

Applying her work experience, she also pointed out that she believes that paralegals are often underutilized in the modern workplace.

At my request, Professor Van Varick-Colarusso provided me a copy of the current semester's offerings about the curriculum. I was very pleased with the selection of topics including family law, real estate law and legal research. There is a very strong need for competent paralegals in each of these areas throughout the greater Lehigh Valley. She also allayed my fears pertaining to AI's encroachment into academia. She explained that the curriculum is ready to address this challenge head-on, and that if the use of AI is not specifically authorized by the professor, it will be considered cheating. This is an excellent stop-gap measure.

I next turn to the APR that I mentioned earlier. After reviewing the document, I had several concerns. On page 6 of 16, under the subsection 3 Environmental Scan, and in response to the question: (what) has the program done to respond to these trends (referring to the global pandemic impact). The reply was the "(l)egal profession has returned to the majority in-person while many courses are offered through online modalities due to the demographic needs of our students." This response is problematic as it may set up an expectation with the paralegal student that their functions will be exclusively virtual as well when they enter the workforce. This is not the case. While some paralegal institutions and firms that employ paralegals regularly have kept some form of online modality, the greatest expectation is the return to the workplace. While cognizant of the demographic needs of the students, I believe this format can likely create an unrealistic and dangerous expectation on the part of the paralegal student. A further example of this concern was in the modality awareness portion of the APR (page 11 of 60, toward the top). In the modality awareness section it was stated, "(s)ince the blended format was a hybrid format, students were expected to do more learning outside of the Zoom classroom. This format forced the students to have a higher level of commitment to the course through the self-study mechanism such as pre-recorded lectures, voice-over power points and interactive text materials." Perhaps time will tell if this blended format produces better quality paralegals; however, my experiences with paralegals from a completely classroom setting as opposed to the hybrid or blended modality learning systems is markedly different. This could of course be attributable to the age and lack of experience of the recent graduates.

However, based on my observations, research, and the interview with the recent graduate, I am of the firm conclusion that a shift back to a classroom format is the most effective way to produce graduates that employers are likely to value and retain. The danger of course is that we have now created an expectation of online courses, ostensibly for the convenience of the students, when in fact we are not benefiting them at all by not offering them the classroom experience that serves to better enrich their understanding of the paralegal studies. Referring again to the APR, my concern in this regard is amplified by the language at the top of page 14 of 60 wherein, "(e)nrollment within college and this program continues to be a challenge. Students' preference for online offerings has the potential to help with problematic enrollment." This seems to imply that virtual classrooms are likely to be an inducement to enrollment, perhaps to the exclusion of the importance of the quality of in-classroom education. This should not be a concern when implementing a quality paralegal studies program. I am not insensitive to the recent challenges faced by academia, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. However, it is not reason to abandon instructor practices and techniques that have been successful for decades.

On another positive note, the ratio of students to faculty and staff is clearly consistent with my prior experiences with paralegal programs. I am likewise not concerned about the decision not to seek ABA approval for the program. In the everyday workday world, these types of approvals are not nearly as significant as they may once have been. Employer requirements for prospective paralegals has also been somewhat diminished in the wake of the pandemic, this is obviously to create a wider net for available candidates and not exclude prospective employees based on rigid but ultimately unnecessary requirements.

I hope this report has met your needs consistent with its intended purpose. Should you have any questions or concerns at all, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very Truly Yours,



Kerry S. Freidl

KSF

cc: Diane M. Belles (via: email only)