SKYLINE CPR Report

2023 – 2024
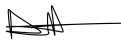
SKY Dept - Paralegal Studies

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Program Information

Assessment Unit Information

Program Type

Instructional

Division

Social Sciences/ Creative Arts (SS/CA)

Assessment Contact

Jesse W. Raskin

Comprehensive Program Review

2023 - 2024

Program Review Update

Fall 2022,Fall 2026

2023 - 2024

Instructional Comprehensive Program Review

Submitter Name:

Jesse Raskin

BACKGROUND

1.A.   DIVISION:

Social Science and Creative Arts (SS/CA)

PROGRAM NAME:

Paralegal

1.B.   YEAR OF REVIEW:

2023-2024

1.C.   PROGRAM REVIEW TEAM

Jesse W. Raskin

1.D.   CONNECTIONS TO THE COLLEGE MISSION/VISION/VALUES:

i. Describe the program, its purpose, and how it contributes to Skyline College's Mission, "To empower and transform a global community of learners."

Skyline College's paralegal program offers students the opportunity to earn a Certificate of Achievement or an Associate of Arts Degree in an inclusive, rigorous, and dynamic online learning environment. The program prepares students for transfer and provides students a pathway to legal employment. The program is approved by American Bar Association; this is the highest level of external approval available to a paralegal program in the U.S. Additionally, students can complete the program 100% online. Students who choose this option have access to all the support services the College has to offer: counseling, financial aid, library services, health services, accommodations, and more.

ii.Alignment with the College Values:

Social Justice,Open Access,Student Success and Equity,Academic Excellence,Community Partnership

For each chosen Value, provide a concrete example of how each connects to your program.

The paralegal program aligns with the college value of social justice by preparing students to meet the legal needs of traditionally under served communities. The paralegal program aligns with the college value of open access by offering an accessible 100% online certificate. The paralegal program aligns with the college value of student success and equity by providing a navigable path to transfer and living wage employment. The paralegal program aligns with the college value of academic excellence by offering an inclusive, rigorous, relevant and high quality academic experience to students. The paralegal program aligns with the college value of community partnership by collaborating with our advisory committee and local employers to meet the needs of the local legal labor market and legal community.

1.E.   PROGRAM PERSONNEL
i. Provide the current Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) of each category of personnel:
Full-time Faculty FTE:

1

Adjunct Faculty FTE:

0.6

Classified Professionals FTE:

0.48

Manager/ Director FTE:

0

Dean FTE (if applicable):

0

ii.Describe any changes in staffing since the last CPR, and how the change(s) have impacted the program. Are there any unmet needs in the program pertaining to program personnel (e.g. staffing, schedule limitations, turnover)? If yes, please specify.

The paralegal program is approved (this is equivalent to accreditation) by the American Bar Association (ABA). To maintain ABA approval, Skyline College has a budget allocation for a part-time PSC position dedicated to the paralegal. However, the position went unfilled for over two years. This significantly impacted the program's ability to serve students and impacts the program's ability to maintain ABA approval. Based on feedback the program has received from applicants, hiring and retention for this position would be greatly aided by making this a full-time position.

1.F.   PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

i. Summarize key professional development that the program personnel have engaged in since the last CPR to meet both the mission of the program, and the aim of the College to increase equity.

Faculty in the program have engaged in professional development focused on overall teaching effectiveness, online/distance education/ and on staying current in the disciplines of law and legal studies. For instance, the full-time faculty member has completed three semester length courses in online education including POCR, QOTL, and Promoting Active Learning Online.In addition, program personnel have engaged in professional development specifically towards the goal of increasing equity. For instance, the full-time faculty member has completed professional learning on the legal rights of undocumented persons, the legal rights of low income persons, and the right to an education under the 14th Amendment.

ii.Are there any unmet needs pertaining to professional development, and potential ways to address these unmet needs? Please specify.

N/A.

CURRENT STATUS

2.A.   ACHIEVEMENTS

Describe the program's achievements since the last CPR.

Since the last CPR, the program has supported students in achieving their goals of transfer, gaining living wage employment, and successful admission to law school. In addition, the program has updated the entire curriculum, designed and won approval of an inclusive and access focused 100% online Degree and an online Certificate in Paralegal Studies, successfully submitted an interim report for re-approval to the American Bar Association, and has collaborated with local legal employers to provide access to internships and jobs for students and alumni. The program has also made significant improvements to the curriculum in the area of instruction in the use of technology; legal research students now have access to the most updated legal research software and the law office technology course now provides students with a clear path towards earning a certificate in legal technology which is recognized throughout the industry. In addition, the program continues to support students in high levels of success and retention.

2.B.   IMPACTS ON PROGRAM

Describe the impacts on your program (positive or negative) by legislation, regulatory changes, accreditation, grantors, community/school partnerships, college-wide initiatives, stakeholders, and/or other factors.

On the positive side, winning approval by the American Bar Association has raised the program's profile among alumni, prospective students and the local legal community. This has opened the door for students to

a greater range of job opportunities. On the negative side, the inability to retain persons hired to position of part-time PSC has left the program without the people power needed to increase service to current, prospective and former students and has placed a heavy weight on the shoulders of the faculty and responsible administrator.

ACCESS

3.A. PROGRAM ENROLLMENT
What enrollment trends do you observe, and what may account for these trends?

Enrollment dropped significantly during the COVID years. Since then, beginning in 2020-21, the program has seen a significant enrollment increase inclusive of unduplicated headcount and enrollments. This differs from the College as a whole where enrollments by term declined consistently from 2017-18-2021-2022. By the next CPR, the program will hopefully have enough data to determine if this trend continues.

3.B. EQUITABLE ACCESS
Provide an analysis of how students, particularly historically disadvantaged students, are able to access the program. Specific questions to answer in your response:

i. PROGRAM ACCESS: How do your program enrollment demographics compare to that of the College as a whole and/or Division? What differences, if any, are revealed? What program, institutional, and/or external factors may have impacted equitable access, whether positively or adversely?

There are several observable trends in LEGL Program enrollment. First, a majority of students enrolled in the paralegal program are over the age of 22. This differs from the College as a whole, where the majority of students under age 22. However it is unsuprising since many students joinu the LEGL program after they have worked in or out of the home and/or after they have earned a baccaulaureate degree. Second, female students outnumber male students by about 3 to 1. This trend is not suprising since the legal support profession and the paralegal career specifically have historically been areas of employment which are female women dominated. Third, the program is racially diverse and enrolls students from all demographics measured by Skyline College. Yet, Pacific Islander students are underenrolled. The reasons for this are unclear.

ii.COURSE ACCESS: Provide analysis of enrollment trends for each course. Which course(s) have declining enrollment, and why might that be the case? What insights do you gain from the impact of course offering patterns?

Course access and enrollment has been relatively steady since during the assessment period except in Spring 2022 when enrollments decreased noticeably from Spring 2021 in LEGL 240, LEGL 245, and LEGL 250. This decline does mirrors Skyline College's overall decline in year-to-year enrollment from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022 of about 10%. There is not enough information currently available to determine if this decline will constitute a trend and if so, what the causes might be.

iii. What efforts, if any, have been made to increase equitable access to your program? If more is needed, consider making it one of your program goals in the Action Plan.

During the current CPR assessment period and to increase access, the program won official approval to offer the Certificate in Paralegal Students as a 100% online degree. To ensure equitable access, students in the 100% online program have access to all support services the College has to offer: counseling, financial aid, library services, health services, accommodations, and more.

EFFECTIVENESS

4.A. OVERALL AND DISAGGREGATED COURSE SUCCESS RATES
Comment on course success rates and with particular attention to any observed equity gaps. Specific questions to answer in your responses:

i. How do the overall course success rates compare to the College and/or Division success rates?

In the current CPR cycle, overall LEGL course success rates are above Skyline College success rates for 3 of the 7 years and below Skyline College success rates for 4 of the 7 years. In 21-22 and 22-23, success rates were more than 5% below the college average. Instructors in the program have anecdotally observed that students in the post-COVID era are less academically prepared than past cohorts and are concurrently facing

serious challenges including an increase in issues related to mental health. The LEGL Program thanks Perry Chen and the mental health wellness team for their efforts to support students facing these challenges.

ii.What have you learned from reviewing the overall and disaggregated course success data? Choose disaggregations which are most relevant to programming decisions (e.g. ethnicity, gender, age, enrollment status, and/or disaggregations that are unique to your program).

From reviewing the overall and disaggregated course success data the program learned the following:

1. As to gender, within the program male success rates of 79% were 3% above female success rates of 76%. However, this trend is not consistent in all courses. Of the nine legal courses offered, male success rate exceeded female success rates in only five. For further context, male student success in the LEGL courses is above male student success for the Skyline College. In contrast, female student success is a few points below Skyline College success rates for all female students. Because the gender gap is not present across all or even a significant majority of courses, further study is needed to understand the results.

2. As to race, unfortunately LEGL enrollment is low enough that dissagregated data is suppressed in multiple years for multiple groups which makes it difficult to determine year to year trends. That said, over the CPR cycle, success for Asian, Hispanic/Latino and Filipino students in the LEGL Program exceeds the Skyline College success for the same groups. In contrast, success for Black and White students in the LEGL Program is lower than Skyline College success for the same groups.

3. As to age, there appears to be a weak trend of lower success rates for students ages 18-22 than for all other age groups. Specifically, of the courses offered in the LEGL program, success rates for students age 18-22 were above or on par with other all other age groups in three of the nine courses offered by the college. As compared to Skyline College, LEGL students ages 18-22 perform lower than the college average.

iii.   If outcomes reveal inequity, what may be contributing factors at the program, college, and/or district level?

The data reveal lower than expected success rates for female students and for students age 18-22. Further discussion is needed determine what may be contributing factors at the program, college, and/or district level.

4.B.   INDIVIDUAL COURSE SUCCESS RATES

Provide analysis of success rates for each active course. Is there a minimum success rate that you consider acceptable, and if so, what is it and why? Which courses are not at the acceptable minimum success rate? Which exhibit a success rate over time that fluctuates fairly dramatically? Which other courses are of concern to you, and why?

The Program views 75% as a minimum acceptable success rate. We developed this view through ongoing discussions with students, alumni, local legal employers, and community college colleagues across the state. The 75% minimum puts the onus on the LEGL Program to support students in being job ready upon graduation while also acknowledging that expectations by legal employers are high in terms of what recent graduates can accomplish on the job. In this CPR Cycle, the following courses are of concern: LEGL 240 and LEGL 245. Further analysis during a non-COVID CPR cycle is needed to understand and give context to these results.

4.C. COURSE AND PROGRAM SLO RESULTS
What notable conclusions were drawn from the assessment results? If available, note any differences in assessment results by key disaggregations (e.g. modality, learning communities, etc.). What have been the implications for the program? Specific questions to answer in your response:
i. What percentage of course SLOs have been assessed during the past five years?

Number of Course SLOs:

21

Percentage:

87.7

ii.How well is the program meeting its PSLOs?

88 of students successfully achieved the PSLOs. Thus, the program is meeting its PSLOs.

iii.   **Are the PSLOs still relevant to your program? If not, what changes might be made?**

Yes, the PSLOs are still relevant.

iv. Drawing from the last six years of course SLO assessment, which course(s) and/or course SLO(s) are of concern (e.g., not met or inconclusive results, those with action plans)?

LEGL 240 and 245 are of concern. During the next CPR cycle - hopefully one without a pandemic or other unexpected major external events - the program will consider whether results during this cycle show a trend or are anamolous.

4.D.   COURSE ENHANCEMENTS

Which course(s) are of concern due to their course success rates, SLO results, and/or other reasons? What efforts, if any, have been made to enhance student learning in those courses? If more is needed, consider which changes may be submitted to the Curriculum Committee in the Fall, and/or making it one of your program goals.

LEGL 240 and LEGL 245 are the only courses of concern, due to success rates below the college average. Instructors in the program have made substantial efforts in both curriculum and instruction to enhance student learning in those courses. Skyline College could provide a dedicated tutor to further support students in those courses.

4.E.   DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES

List each of the degrees and certificates separately. Comment on the number and trends in degrees/ certificates awarded by your program. Specific questions to answer in your responses:

i. What do the data reveal about degree and certificate completion? time to completion?

The LEGL Program offers a Certificate and an A.A. in Paralegal Studies. For the Certificate, the program has seen a +275% increase in certificates awarded 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 with an average time to completion of 6.9 semesters. For the A.A. Degree, the program has seen a +500% increase in certificates awarded 2018-2019 to 2022-2-23. with an average time to completion of 9.7 semesters. Anecdotally, two factors affect the relatively long time to degree completion: (1) for many students in the program, LEGL is not their first majors and (2) many students in the program work full time and are completing the program on a pace that makes sense given their other responsibilities.

ii.What changes do the data suggest are necessary for the program to explore?

A dedicated counselor with expert level knowledge of legal education and the legal field would enhance student time to completion.

4.F.   LABOR MARKET CONNECTION

If appropriate for your program, given labor market data related to your program, discuss current labor trends and how your program is addressing them. How are you incorporating any of the following into program planning: Labor Market and Trends (e.g., Centers of Excellence, Burning Glass), Performance for CTE Programs (Launchboard), and/or Advisory Boards? Report out on whichever source(s) are relevant to your program.

Per the lightcast report provided, the Bay Area is a hotspot for "Legal Occupations". Per the report, earnings and job posting activity is high. Specifically, "Regional Employment Is Higher Than the National Average" and "Regional Compensation Is 58% Higher Than National Compensation". Despite this relatively positive picture, substantial challenges exist for Skyline College students seeking a legal career. A review of job postings in this labor market reveals that many if not most employers are seeking new hires with 3-5 years of experience. Most Skyline College students have no experience in the legal field when they register for the paralegal program. The program supports all students in gaining experience through an internship prior to graduating from Skyline College. Additionally, many jobs prefer a candidate with a 4-year degree and a paralegal certificate. Due to Skyline College's status as a community college, many students do not yet have a four-year degree. In this context, Skyline College continues to make major efforts to prepare students to enter the "Legal Occupations" sector at the entry level.

4.G.   STUDENT FEEDBACK

Describe how and when feedback was solicited from students, whether qualitative or quantitative, and what the results reveal. If feedback was scant, describe the attempts made and speculate why.

The LEGL Program engages in robust efflrts to solict feedback from students including distributing a semester end survey to all enrolled students every semester, in collaboration with PRIE. In addition, the LEGL Program surveys all graduates within six monts of graduation.

The Spring 2023 student survey achieved a high response rate of 84.5%. Results show that at least nine in ten students are highly satisfied with their educational experience in their paralegal courses overall and with the alternative delivery format as a means for delivering paralegal education. For example, 100%% of the responses indicated that students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I developed both relevant legal skills and legal knowledge in this course.". This is consistent with the survey results from recent prior years and gives the program confidence that the transition to a 100% online program is meeting our goal to provide high quality paralegal instruction. Overall, the positive responses by students align with the trend in recent years which shows that the program has managed to continue to provide high quality paralegal education while learning into its commitment to provide open access education. Moving forward, the program continues to see room to grow in the area of enhancing opportunities for students to develop the skills needed to be strong candidates for internships and legal work opportunities.

4.H.   CURRICULUM
Programs are required to update all curriculum and secure approval by the Curriculum Committee. Please indicate whether the following tasks have been completed.

Secured approval of updated courses by the Curriculum Committee

Yes

Updated the Improvement Platform with new and/or changed SLOs, after approval by the Curriculum Committee

Yes

Submitted a current assessment calendar with all active courses to the Office of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness

Yes

Reviewed, updated (as needed), and submitted degree and certificate maps to the Curriculum Committee

Yes

KEY FINDINGS

Using key findings based on the analysis from this CPR cycle, develop a multi-year plan designed to improve program effectiveness and promote student learning and achievement. Commit to three-to-five new and/or ongoing goals total. Enter goals via Step 2: Goals and Resource Requests.

5.A.   CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Considering the results of this year's CPR assessment, identify challenges, concerns, and areas in which further action is needed. Reference relevant sections of the CPR that provide further insight.

The Paralegal Program is as an open access program which provides students with a rigorous and highly supportive academic experience. Program graduates realize positive outcomes of transfer to four year institutions, enrollment in law school, and entry into legal jobs. Challenges include meeting the needs of students who completed high school during the COVID era while also maintaining the rigorous standards expected by legal employers and law schools. A second challenge is recruiting students who may be unaware of the legal support professional generally and the paralegal program specifically. A third challenge is attracting and retaining qualified diverse faculty who often make professional sacrifices to teach in the program. To do meet these challenges, the Paralegal program will continue to make efforts to increase access and support for students and faculty while maintaining the standards expected by local legal employers, four year colleges, and graduate schools.

GOAL

Outreach and Engagement to Prospective Students

Goal and Desired Impact on Students
Increase awareness of the paralegal program among currently Skyline College students and local area high school students.

Year Initiated
2023 - 2024

Implementation Step(s) and Timelines
Program Services Coordinator will conduct in person outreach and recruiting events in collaboration with Skyline College and local area high schools.

Mapping
- SKY Strategic Goals: (X - Hightlight Selected)
- Increased Student Enrollment: X

STATUS

Goal Status Date
01/26/2024

Academic Year Updated
2023 - 2024

Goal Status
On Schedule

Resource Request

Division Name
 Social Science and Creative Arts (SS/CA)

Year of Request
2022 - 2023

Resource Type
Classified Professional/Administrator Position (permanent)

Resource Name
Part-Time PSC

Resource Description
Fill the open Part-Time PSC position.

Funds Type – Mark all that apply.
Recurring Cost

Briefly explain how this request helps to advance the goals and priorities of your program, the College, the District, and/or the California Community College Chancellor's Office.
The position plays two crucial roles for the Program and the College. First, the PSC is central to the Program's student outreach, retention, and recruitment efforts as well as alumni relations. Second, the PSC is equally central to the Program's efforts to engage with the local legal community to foster career pathways for students. The PSC thus helps the accomplish the District's strategic plan to "provide clear and distinct pathways for all students, particularly those from under served populations, to accelerate program completion and successful transitions to work or transfer" and to accomplish the College's Value Statement: "We value a deep engagement with the community we serve through collaborating with local school districts, industry, non-profits, government and the arts. Valuing our role as an academic and cultural center, we are dedicated to meeting the needs of the labor market and community."

Level of need, with 1 being the most pressing
1

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GOAL

Increase Student Access to Academic Support Services

Goal and Desired Impact on Students
The goal is to increase students success by providing access to tutoring and academic support.

Year Initiated
2023 - 2024

Implementation Step(s) and Timelines
Collaborate with The Learning Center to ensure students in the Paralegal Program have access to online and in person tutoring services and academic workshops. Ensure students are aware of the available resources.

Mapping
- SKY Strategic Goals: (X - Hightlight Selected)
  - Student Support and Resources: X

STATUS

Goal Status Date
01/26/2024

Academic Year Updated
2023 - 2024

Goal Status
On Schedule

GOAL

Increase student access to scholarship opportuniuties.

Goal and Desired Impact on Students
Increase access and affordability.

Year Initiated
2023 - 2024

Implementation Step(s) and Timelines
Share information regarding available scholarships with students.

Mapping
- SKY Strategic Goals: (X - Hightlight Selected)
  - Antiracist and Equitable Institution: X
  - Increased Student Enrollment: X

STATUS

Goal Status Date
01/26/2024

Academic Year Updated
2023 - 2024

Goal Status
On Schedule

GOAL

Ensure students are effectively trained to use state-of-the-art legal technology.

Goal and Desired Impact on Students
Ensure that students are proficient in using technology and software commonly used in the legal profession, such as legal research databases, case management software, and document management systems. The desired impact is to provide students opportunities to be competitive on the local legal job market.

Year Initiated
2023 - 2024
Implementation Step(s) and Timelines
Continue providing Westlaw free of charge to students. Purchase NSLT licenses for students annually.
Mapping
- SKY Strategic Goals: (X - Hightlight Selected)
- Antiracist and Equitable Institution: X
- Increased Student Enrollment: X

STATUS

Goal Status Date
01/26/2024
Academic Year Updated
2023 - 2024
Goal Status
On Schedule

Resource Request

Division Name
 Social Science and Creative Arts (SS/CA)
Year of Request
2023 - 2024
Resource Type
Technology
Resource Name
Westlaw
Resource Description
Legal Research Software.
Funds Type – Mark all that apply.
Recurring Cost
Briefly explain how this request helps to advance the goals and priorities of your program, the College, the District, and/or the California Community College Chancellor's Office.
By providing paralegal students with the necessary training in electronic legal research, the program supports the students in their goal of gain living jobs and supports Skyline College in its goal to ensure academic excellence and economic development through high quality career technical education programs and certificates.
Cost
5,000
Level of need, with 1 being the most pressing
1
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Resource Request

Division Name
 Social Science and Creative Arts (SS/CA)
Year of Request
2023 - 2024
Resource Type
Technology
Resource Name
National Society for Legal Training (NSLT) Legal Technology Certificate
Resource Description

The NSLT Legal Technology Certificate provides training for students on the legal software programs commonly used in law offices today.

Briefly explain how this request helps to advance the goals and priorities of your program, the College, the District, and/or the California Community College Chancellor's Office.
By providing students access to this resource, Skyline College makes progress towards its goals of providing excellence in workforce and economic development through career technical education programs and certificates.

Cost
5,500

Level of need, with 1 being the most pressing
1

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