**Sinclair Community College - Continuous Improvement Annual Update 2011-12**

**Program:** Paralegal *Submitted 12/16/11 by PAR Chair Mike Brigner*

**Section I: Trend Data**

* 1. **Program Trend Data– Please include the three most recent years of data in each area so that trends may be examined.**
     1. **Course Success Rates – Please report the course success rates for:**
        + - **Highest enrollment courses**
          - **Any courses that deviate - high and low - from the typical success rate for your department**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Success Rates – PAR** (Success = A B C P or S) | | | |
|  | **2008-09** | **2009-10** | **2010-11** |
| **Course Seat Count Ranges** |  | | |
| Lo: PAR 202 Bus Law II | 8 |  | |
| Hi: PAR 106 – Principles Tech | 104 |
| Lo: PAR 245 Admin Law |  | 12 |  |
| Hi: PAR 106 – Principles Tech | 118 |
| Lo: PAR 212, 245, 246 |  | | 19 |
| Hi: PAR 106 – Principles Tech | 107 |
|  | | | |
| **Course Success Rates Ranges** |  | | |
| Lo: PAR 131 – Real Estate | 68.42% |  | |
| Hi: PAR 235 – Bankruptcy | 97.67% |
| Lo: PAR 247 – Legal Tech Res |  | 71.43% |  |
| Hi: PAR 241&242 – Internships | 100.00% |
| Lo: PAR 106 – Principles Tech |  | | 70.64% |
| Hi: PAR 246 – Juvenile Law | 94.74% |
|  | | | |
| **Success Rates:** | *Seats/Success* | *Seats/Success* | *Seats/Success* |
| Sinclair College | 70.62% | 69.76% | 68.68% |
| BPS Division | 72.27% | 71.48% | 70.36% |
| PAR Program | 1,136/ **84.66%** | 1,242/ **84.82%** | 1,251/ **80.79%** |
|  | | | |
| **Success Rates,**  **Highest Enrollment Courses:** |  | | |
| PAR 105 Paralegal Principles | 102/ 69.61% | 113/ 73.45% | 107/ 72.90% |
| PAR 106 Principles Tech | 104/ 73.08% | 118/ 73.73% | 109/ 70.64% |
|  | | | |

* + 1. **Degree and certificate completion (where applicable)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Academic Year | AC2006−07 | AC2007−08 | AC2008−09 | AC2009−10 | AC2010−11 |
| 0423−Paralegal Program Degrees | **37** | **31** | **34** | **36** | **32** |

* + 1. **Any additional data that illustrates what is going on in the program (examples might include course sequence completion, retention, demographic data, data on placement of graduates, graduate survey data, etc.)**

See attached Analysis & Summary of Assessment Results for PAR, prepared for 2011 American Bar Association Interim Report for continued ABA program approval status.

* 1. **Interpretation and Analysis of Trend Data Included in the Section Above *Suggestions of questions that might be addressed in this section:***  *What trends do you see in the above data? Are there internal or external factors that account for these trends? What are the implications for the program or department? What actions have the department taken that have influenced these trends? What strategies will the department implement as a result of this data?*

SUCCESS RATES

Study of the PAR program success rates show that they exceed Sinclair averages. Except for introductory-level courses that serve to persuade a few students each term that their interests are better suited to career paths outside the law, PAR courses display a student success rate of 85-90%. These figures have been consistent for AY 08-09 through AY 10-11. In the paralegal internship courses, where students near graduation can demonstrate their employment skills to the legal community, the success rate rises to 95-100%. For FY 2010-11, the BPS division overall success rate was 70.36%, and the college overall success rate was 68.68%%.

ENROLLMENT RATES

PAR enrollment has grown by about 17% in recent years, from an FTE of 190 in FY 2007-08 to 222 in FY 2009-10. This growth is probably attributable to the growth in FTE at Sinclair College, which tracked at 27% during the same period. Paralegal courses operate at or near the seat capacity in each scheduled classroom.

DEGREE COMPLETION RATES

PAR.AAS program graduation numbers have remained steady for AY 2006-07 through AY 2010-11, with 32 paralegal students completing their degrees in AY 2010-11.

ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION

Enrollment in the PAR Program is about optimal, given the following constraints: (1) The department is small, with only four full-time faculty. (2) One of those four faculty members is also responsible for chair duties for three departments, PAR, LAW, and RES. (3) Some PAR classes are limited in capacity to 16, because they require extensive writing assistance for students, and are heavy in grading demands. (4) Almost all PAR courses require computer-equipped classrooms, which maxes classroom size at 24 for most classes. (5) All PAR students are required to complete two internships prior to graduation. (6) The Dayton area legal market has not shown the ability to absorb more high-quality Sinclair paralegal interns and graduates than are currently entering the job market annually; additionally, the legal marketplace has contracted recently with the rest of the economy.

The PAR Program has added sections at times to meet enrollment demands, and has accepted additional students over course capacity at other times. The latter strategy is unsatisfactory, as it results in some students working in the classroom without computer access and increases the grading load of the instructor.

Historically, when applications to the PAR Program have increased significantly, additional introductory courses have been scheduled to accommodate the demand. However, this strategy eventually has negative consequences, as sufficient upper-level courses cannot be scheduled with existing faculty, and as graduating students ultimately find insufficient internships and job placements to meet their numbers.

ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Given the highly structured nature of the PAR Program, with prerequisite courses cascading forward in a logical fashion, and students advancing in cohort groups, and considering the other constraints above, incremental increases in enrollment cannot be successful. The pipeline is full and the output is capped by local employment demand. The only logical blueprint for growing the Paralegal Program would require three phases: (1) a concentrated effort to educate the local business and legal communities about the value-added results of hiring professional paralegals; (2) essentially doubling the size of the PAR department – every individual aspect of the PAR program is interdependent and operating at capacity, so every aspect would have to be duplicated to retain the same successful results; (3) a commitment to a student recruitment program that would compete with commercial paralegal schools for the students who are not choosing Sinclair for their paralegal studies. The second two phases would be costly undertakings. So at this time the PAR department has no plans for significant enrollment growth.

However, the PAR Program will work with the Sinclair Career Services Office to better educate the local legal community and business community about the advantages of using professionally-trained paralegals to deliver legal services at lower cost. If the local demand for paralegals can be increased, the needs of the marketplace could justify addressing the other constraints discussed above, primarily the number of full-time faculty in the department.

**Section II: Progress Since the Most Recent Review**

1. What was the fiscal year of the most recent Program Review for this program? (The most recent Program Review self-study can be found at <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/administrative/vpi/pdreview/> ).   
     
   2005-06
2. Briefly summarize the goals that were listed in Section IV part E of the most recent Program Review Self-Study (this section of the Self-Study asks “What are the department’s/program’s goals and rationale for expanding and improving student learning, including new courses, programs, delivery formats and locations”)?

Expanding short-term (1.5 quarter-hour) PAR electives, when appropriate

1. What Recommendations for Action were made by the review team to the most recent Program Review?

After the 6/2/06 review, the review team made the following Recommendations for Action.

1. *Incorporate quantitative data, as well as qualitative, to supply evidence of student attainment at course and program outcomes level*
2. *Provide evidence of how the department applies information from student learning outcomes to improve the courses and program*
3. *Identify and implement revisions to the research and report writing course relevant to the departmentally identified concern about written communication skills*
4. *Identify and develop, based on a prioritized needs analysis, continuing education courses for returning students and/or graduates*
5. *Revise mission statement to be more specific to the PAR program*
6. *Continue to pursue additional transfer opportunities and/or agreements for PAR students*
7. *Engage IPR to assist with additional research on curricular experiences of students in the “preprogram” to analyze areas of improvement before students begin the PAR program*
8. *Cross train technical support workers across the division to reduce reliance on a single provider and pursue a sustainable solution to tech support challenges*
9. Have the goals in your self-study changed since your last Program Review Self-Study as a result of the Review Team recommendations or for any other reason? If so, please describe the changes.

The PAR Program remains committed to adding electives that will serve current market demands. In addition, it is recognized that some electives may need to be eliminated or combined with others, when it appears that the legal community’s needs have changed. The consolidation process began during the curriculum review undertaken during the semester conversion process. For example, courses in Social Security and Workers Compensation were eliminated, due to lack of specialized jobs in these fields. With the guidance of the PAR Advisory Committee, certain other elective courses may be added for subjects where market demands appear to be developing, such as elder law and health care law.

1. What progress has been made toward meeting any of the goals listed in the sections above (b, c, and d) in the past year?
2. *Incorporate quantitative data, as well as qualitative, to supply evidence of student attainment at course and program outcomes level*

In 2010-11, the PAR Department developed its first Assessment Plan. Also see Section III.

1. *Provide evidence of how the department applies information from student learning outcomes to improve the courses and program*

Student learning outcomes are reviewed at quarterly department meetings, semi-annual adjunct faculty meetings, and the annual department retreat held for a full day each summer. The learning outcomes were reviewed and revised in 2010 by the PAR Advisory Committee, and the revised outcomes were incorporated into the Q2S conversion process during the past year.

1. *Identify and implement revisions to the research and report writing course relevant to the departmentally identified concern about written communication skills*

Additional writing assignments were added to the following required paralegal courses: Criminal Law, Real Estate Transactions I, Business Organizations I, Legal Research & Writing I, Legal Research & Writing II, Litigation I, and Litigation II. Students were referred to the Writing Center or Tutoring Services when their performance required. Beginning in the AY 2010-11, every student in the introductory Legal Research & Writing course were required to take their major writing assignments to the Writing Center for review and advice; this process was coordinated with the Writing Center staff.

1. *Identify and develop, based on a prioritized needs analysis, continuing education courses for returning students and/or graduates*

Despite faculty interest in this objective, the paralegal program has lacked the faculty resources to expand into the continuing education business. Additionally, the pool of practicing paralegals in the region is small, presenting a limited target audience. PAR graduates are already entitled to audit any PAR course. Realistically, this means graduates might take PAR elective courses that they did not take as part of their degree program. Few do. Offering additional continuing education opportunities would require curriculum development, a time-consuming assignment, for a limited audience. The combination of high time investment, limited faculty resources, and small prospects for return has kept this a low departmental priority.

1. *Revise mission statement to be more specific to the PAR program*

The Paralegal Program Advisory Committee reviewed the prior statement and on February 16, 2007 adopted a new mission statement: The Paralegal Program provides a practical and interactive learning environment that prepares ethical, competent paralegals with analytical, communication, and technical skills necessary to excel in a diverse legal community.

1. *Continue to pursue additional transfer opportunities and/or agreements for PAR students*

It is anticipated that new articulation agreements can be negotiated after all state schools have announced their semester programs.

1. *Engage IPR to assist with additional research on curricular experiences of students in the “preprogram” to analyze areas of improvement before students begin the PAR program*

This item is due for discussion with RAR.

1. *Cross train technical support workers across the division to reduce reliance on a single provider and pursue a sustainable solution to tech support challenges*

Most of the technical support needs of the PAR Program are met by specific service contracts with Marina Dodaro, a PAR graduate who also serves as an adjunct instructor for paralegal courses in legal technology. Ms. Dodaro maintains certification in two of the specialized legal programs taught to the paralegal students. Other departments in the division do not need the specialized legal technology programs used in the Paralegal Program, and it is unlikely that other technical support workers in the division could acquire the expertise and certification needed to maintain those specialized legal technology programs; nor would they have the paralegal degree or other legal education required to teach the application of those specialized programs in the legal environment.

**Section III: Assessment of Outcomes**

The Program Outcomes for this program are listed below. **At least one-third of your program outcomes must be assessed as part of this Annual Update, and across the next three years all of these program outcomes must be assessed at least once**.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Paralegal** Program Outcomes | In which courses are these program outcomes addressed? | Which of these program outcomes were assessed during the last fiscal year? | Assessment Methods  Used |
| **1)** Competently prepare and interpret legal documents.\* (See note below.) | PAR 121  PAR 122  PAR 131  PAR 201  PAR 211  PAR 215  PAR 291  PAR 292 | ASSESSED IN  FY 09-10 | * Simulations * Performance appraisals |
| **2)** Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team. | PAR 220  PAR 291  PAR 292 | ASSESSED IN  FY 09-10 | * Simulations * Performance appraisals |
| **3)** Competently conduct factual and legal research and communicate the results clearly and concisely. | PAR 111  PAR 112  PAR 115  PAR 205 | TO BE ASSESSED IN FY 12-13 | * Simulations * Performance appraisals |
| **4)** Demonstrate competency in current technology. | PAR 106  PAR 211  PAR 215 | ASSESSED IN  FY 11-12 | * Simulations * Performance appraisals |

For the assessment methods listed in the table above, what were the results?

**ACCREDITATION TREND DATA:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | |  | **FY 2006-07** | **FY 2007-08** | **FY 2008-09** | **FY 2009-10** | **FY 2010-11** |
| **PAR Outcome** | | Courses Evaluating This Outcome | Success Count/Total Count = **Success Rate** | Success Count/Total Count = **Success Rate** | Success Count/Total Count = **Success Rate** | Success Count/Total Count = **Success Rate** | Success Count/Total Count = **Success Rate** |
|  | | | | | | | |
| 1. Competently prepare and interpret legal documents | | PAR 121  PAR 122  PAR 131  PAR 201  PAR 211  PAR 215  PAR 291  PAR 292 | 325/362 | 291/327 | 318/349 | 368/415 | 346/407 |
|  | | | **89.8%** | **89.0%** | **91.1%** | **88.7%** | **85.0%** |
|  | | | | | | | |
| 2. Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team | | PAR 220  PAR 291  PAR 292 | 115/122 | 94/102 | 104/112 | 142/150 | 111/122 |
|  | | | **94.3%** | **92.2%** | **92.9%** | **94.7%** | **91.0%** |
|  | | | | | | | |
| 4. Demonstrate competency in current technology | PAR 106  PAR 211  PAR 215 | | 167/212 | 149/195 | 152/185 | 174/213 | 158/165 |
|  |  | | **78.8%** | **76.4%** | **82.2%** | **81.7%** | **95.8%** |
|  | | | | | | | |

1. *Paralegal Program Outcomes: Competently prepare and interpret legal documents.*

**PAR 291 & PAR 292; Intern Evaluations:** Student interns are evaluated each quarter at the end of each internship experience. Internship supervisors evaluate interns in a variety of areas. Supervisor evaluations are compiled each quarter and assessed to identify areas that need improvement. As to PAR Program Outcome #1, competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law to prepare and interpret documents: when asked to evaluate the quality of student performance, the supervising attorneys in 2009 rated the students at 4.38/5.00 for “Understanding legal concepts.” The attorneys rated the students at 4.46/5.00 for “Ability to apply legal concepts.” The ratings and the supervisor comments concerning quality of work in a legal setting indicate the paralegal students were able to competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law.

**PAR 291 & PAR 292; Internship Supervisor Interview Assessments:** The internship director also meets one-on-one with every internship supervisor every quarter, to obtain feedback on the interns’ performance and also to determine what additional skills, if any, should be included in the curriculum. The supervisor comments are summarized in categories and analyzed by the faculty to advise changes in policies, procedures or curriculum. As an example, the most recent report offered both suggestions and confirmation of the success of past adjustments:

*Internship Supervisor Site Visits Feedback – Spring 2011*

*Business Organizations* – Suggestion was to have a Secretary of State records search for a business owner “dba.” The intern knew about finding business entities, but was unfamiliar with the “individual, doing business as” concept when searching.

*Research and Writing* – Some students really like to conduct research and are often disappointed when they find out that most firms do not use paralegals to do research. I think it is important to explain to students they need to do research and writing, so they understand legal concepts and they need to improve writing skills. But, with rare exceptions, most paralegals will not be doing a lot of research. Students need to know that up front.

*Letter Writing* – Interns do a lot of letter writing. The Program’s efforts to increase letter writing seem to be paying off.

*Family Law* – Several supervisors mentioned the need for more discovery skills. Family law is intense litigation, now, with requests for banking, job, pension, and asset information. Request for Production of documents and interrogatories were mentioned often. This type of discovery is not quite the same as in a personal injury case. Advanced litigation (in semesters) will be a help for family law students.

Overall, there was a lot of praise for Sinclair’s paralegal students and the skills they bring to the internship.

*2) Paralegal Program Outcomes: Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team.*

**PAR 291 & PAR 292; Intern Evaluations:** Student interns are evaluated each quarter at the end of each internship experience. Internship supervisors evaluate interns in a variety of areas. Supervisor evaluations are compiled each quarter and assessed to identify areas that need improvement. As to PAR Program Outcome #2, exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team: When asked to evaluate the quality of student personal characteristics in the areas of personal appearance, punctuality, professional demeanor, and dependability, the supervising attorneys in 2009 rated the students overall at 4.66/5.00. The ratings and the supervisor comments indicate the paralegal students exemplified ethical and professional behavior in a legal setting.

**PAR 291 & PAR 292; Internship Supervisor Interview Assessments:** The internship director also meets one-on-one with every internship supervisor every quarter, to obtain feedback on the interns’ performance and also to determine what additional skills, if any, should be included in the curriculum. The supervisor comments are summarized in categories and analyzed by the faculty to advise changes in policies, procedures or curriculum. As an example, the most recent report offered both suggestions and confirmation of the success of past adjustments:

*Internship Supervisor Site Visits Feedback – Spring 2011*

*Ethics/Professionalism* – An administrator praised the program for its commitment to teaching students about being a professional - attire, interview skills, ethical knowledge, and expectations (do whatever is needed to get the job done). She said it was clear the PAR Program stressed how to act and be part of an office environment. She also stressed how important the internships were for students to experience, firsthand, the office environment and said we did a good job preparing them. She said she’d hire someone who had done an internship over other applicants who had not.

*4)**Paralegal Program Outcomes: Demonstrate competency in current technology.*

**The PAR 106; Paralegal Principals Technology:** Students are required to complete Amicus Attorney File and Calendar entries throughout the quarter. The students' work was analyzed using a common rubric to determine if students were able to create a client contact card, open a client file and enter events into the calendar system. For their final exam, they must perform two of these tasks for assessment: Client File Folder creation and Appointment/To-Do Calendar entries. The results in PAR 106 for Fall, 2011, are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Class-section#** | | **106-01** | **106-02** | **106-50** | **Total** | **Average** |
| Points earned by students/points available | | 75.5/100 | 77/100 | 80.5/95 | 223/295 | 74.3 |
| **% by student** | **100%**  **80%**  **< 80%** | 8  7  5 | 10  5  5 | 12  4  3 | 30  16  13 | 10  5.3  4.3 |

In PAR 106, Calendar entries seemed to be the weakest area. Most students don’t have trouble making the entries in general, the weakness tends to be in following printing instructions. Stronger emphasis will be added to follow instructions carefully. This is a program that students must use throughout their PAR Program education, therefore they will be reminded continually, to follow those instructions carefully. Long before graduation, most student understand the importance of using Amicus and following the program’s policies on printing and entries.

**Analysis:**

**File Creation**: Classes Average

106-01 106-02 106-50 40.5

41.5 39 41

**Calendar Entries**: Classes Average

106-01 106-02 106-50 37.1

34 38 39.5

1. Were changes planned as a result of the data? If so, what were those changes?

*1) Paralegal Program Outcome: Competently prepare and interpret legal documents.*

This program outcome is evaluated in these courses: PAR 121, Litigation I; PAR 122, Litigation II; PAR 131, Real Estate Transactions; PAR 201, Business Organizations I; PAR 211, Probate Law I; PAR 215; Family Law; and PAR 291/PAR 292, Internships. Cumulative course student success rates during the past five fiscal years (2006-07 through 2010-11) calculate to 89.8%, 89.0%, 91.1%, 88.7%, & 85.0%, respectively in these courses. These student success rates are consistent and acceptable for program outcomes. However, in the interest of continuous improvement, the following changes were implemented:

PAR 131 & PAR 201 Writing Assignments:Additional writing assignments were added to the following required paralegal courses: Criminal Law, Real Estate Transactions I, Business Organizations I, Legal Research & Writing I, Legal Research & Writing II, Litigation I, and Litigation II. Students were referred to the Writing Center or Tutoring Services when their performance required. Beginning in the AY 2010-11, every student in the introductory Legal Research & Writing course was required to take major writing assignments to the Writing Center for review and advice; this process was coordinated with the Writing Center staff. In response to specific suggestions by internship supervisors and the PAR Advisory Committee, two specific assignments were added to the Business Organizations I course, one the preparation of a county vendor’s license application, and the other an online search activity to identify individuals and businesses “doing business as” (dba) a fictitious business name.

During the semester conversion process, the PAR Program prepared suggested student schedules that encourage them to complete the three required English courses early in the program, to better prepare paralegal students for the communication skills demanded in the substantive paralegal courses. Some students were referred to Tutoring Services to address English language deficiencies during AY 10-11.

*2) Paralegal Program Outcome: Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team.*

This program outcome is evaluated in these courses: PAR 220, Paralegal Ethics; and PAR 291/PAR 292, Internships. Cumulative course student success rates during the past five fiscal years (2006-07 through 2010-11) calculate to 94.3%, 92.2%, 92.9%, 94.7%, 91.0% in these courses. These success rates are consistent and acceptable for program outcomes. However, in the interest of continuous improvement, persistent attention to ethical issues in all PAR courses should be continued, in addition to the ethical training students receive in the mandatory Legal Ethics course.

*4)**Paralegal Program Outcome: Demonstrate competency in current technology.*

This program outcome is evaluated in these courses: PAR 106, Paralegal Principles Technology; PAR 211; PAR 215, Family Law. Cumulative course student success rates during the past five fiscal years (2006-07 through 2010-11) calculate to 78.8%, 76.4%, 82.2%, 81.7%, & 95.8% in these courses. These success rates are acceptable for program outcomes, and show a positive trend. However, in the interest of continuous improvement, the following areas of improvement are planned:

* Review printing instructions from Technology Manual to ensure they are clearly written.
* Ensure that the instructions are clearly written on the assignments and quizzes.
* Provide students with more explanation of why following the instructions is important, not just “busy work” as they often feel such work is.

1. How will you determine whether those changes had an impact?

*1) Paralegal Program Outcomes: Competently prepare and interpret legal documents.*

By monitoring student success rates in the courses in which this outcome is assessed.

By analyzing future annual internship supervisor evaluations and supervisor site visit interview results.

*2) Paralegal Program Outcomes: Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team.*

By monitoring student success rates in the courses in which this outcome is assessed.

By analyzing future annual internship supervisor evaluations and supervisor site visit interview results.

*4) Paralegal Program Outcomes: Demonstrate competency in current technology.*

By monitoring student success rates in the courses in which this outcome is assessed.

By analyzing future annual internship supervisor evaluations and supervisor site visit interview results.

c) Starting with next year’s Annual Update, this section will ask about assessment of general education outcomes. For FY 2012-13, you will be asked how the department is assessing Oral Communication and Written Communication in your courses, and in addition you will be asked to share the results of those assessments. Please be prepared to address this in next year’s Annual Update.

d) Does your department have courses where there are common assignments or exams across all sections of the course? If so, please list those courses, and indicate whether you are currently examining results across all sections of those courses.

Very few PAR courses are taught in more than two sections per quarter, and very few PAR courses are taught by more than one individual faculty member. In most cases where multiple course sections are taught, the faculty member uses common assignments and that one faculty member is in a position to examine results across all sections of a course. Therefore, the department has relied on faculty members to identify changes that may be required and implement those changes. Significant changes are reviewed by the entire department at regularly scheduled department meetings.

**Section IV: Improvement Efforts for the Fiscal Year**

1. **FY 10-11:** What other improvement efforts did the department make in FY 10-11? How successful were these efforts? What further efforts need to be made? If your department didn’t make improvement efforts during the fiscal year, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the department over the last year and how the department plans to address them in the coming year.

SEMESTER CONVERSION

The PAR Department in FY 10-11, completed its reviewed and restructured the program configuration and the curriculum for all PAR courses.

STUDENT ADVISING

PAR faculty personally advised all students who have completed at least half of their program requirements, to assist their planning for program completion in anticipation of semester conversion. The PAR faculty then personally advised most first-quarter students on their academic plans, in order to help them map out the process of beginning their studies under quarters, and completing them under semesters. New planning guides were prepared to assist in this process.

STUDENT ADVISING TOOL

The Paralegal Program put technology to work to improve advising for PAR students. First, the planning tools that students need to map out their quarter or semester degree programs – course offerings, calendars, prerequisites, electives, suggested scheduling paths, etc. – were all posted in the Angel PAR Law Office group. Secondly, all Sinclair academic advisors were then enrolled in this Angel group, giving them electronic access for the first time to the same program-specific tools, in order to better guide paralegal students and help them prepare quality MAPs.

COST SAVINGS

Collaboration between the PAR Department and the Sinclair Library will result in over $10,000 of annual savings from the reduction of book subscriptions. Through elimination of duplicate materials, expanded use of available online resources and shifting some student research functions to off-campus law libraries, paralegal courses will still be able to focus on the essential needs for paralegal student research and also meet the library services requirements of the American Bar Association. Additionally, a change in policy developed by PAR faculty to cut down on printed materials and make more documents for students available online instead, is yielding savings of about $2.000 a year. Department costs for student printing averaged under $2,200 the past two academic years, while the figures for the prior four years averaged over $4,200.

PARALEGAL SERVICE LEARNING

During the academic year, plans for service learning were implemented, with students being paired with attorneys from public interest agencies to do research on actual issues the law offices were working on for their clients, work that might not have otherwise been performed due to budget cuts faced by these agencies. In addition, Legal Research & Writing students visited Miami Valley Career Technology Center, to help the high school students in MVCTC’s Legal Assisting program learn how to use the Lexis online legal research tool.

PERSONNEL

Retirement of a veteran faculty member, Bonnie Shane, led to the hiring and mentoring of a new tenure track faculty member, Nadine Ballard. She will serve as the department’s internship program coordinator, in addition to paralegal teaching duties.

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION APPROVAL REPORT

An extensive report was completed for the American Bar Association as part of the paralegal program approval process. It included the first comprehensive Assessment Plan developed for the Paralegal Program.

1. **FY 11-12:** What improvement efforts does the department have planned for FY 11-12? How will you know whether you have been successful?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SINCLAIR PARALEGAL PROGRAM**  **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TARGETS**  **Academic Year 2011-12** | | |
| **PAR CIT** | **IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES** | **OUTCOMES/ MEASUREMENT** |
| #1 SEMESTER CONVERSION | In AY 11-12, PAR will continue the Q2S conversion process by creating a new curriculum plan for every paralegal course, including the revision of the teaching syllabus for each course, review and selection of new textbooks as required, creation of new learning modules, revision of assignments, revision of classroom activities, revision of classroom presentations, and the revision of quizzes and exams. | New or revised curriculum prepared for all PAR courses. |
| #2 STUDENT ADVISING | All PAR students who will not complete their degree programs in quarters are advised at department level of completion requirements and options, and encouraged to prepare a MAP with a college academic advisor. | All identified students advised. |
| #3 PERSONNEL | A new tenure track hire effective 9/1/11 requires the training and mentoring of a new faculty member. | Training and mentoring was implemented for the new faculty hire, resulting in proficient FPR and positive student survey results. |
| #4 AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION MAJOR CHANGE REPORT | The comprehensive PAR program and curriculum revisions necessitated by semester conversion trigger a mandatory report as “major changes.” to the American Bar Association (ABA) as part of the paralegal program approval process. | ABA approval of the Major Change Report. |
| #5 PARALEGAL ALUMNI CHAPTER | It is a continuing goal of the PAR Department in FY 11-12 to revitalize the Paralegal Chapter of the Sinclair Alumni Association. The most active leadership of that organization have become inactive for reasons apparently related to the demands of the economy. It is the objective to increase the alumni role in mentoring the Paralegal Student Association, presenting the annual Paralegal Day celebration, and educating the local legal and business community about the value of paralegals in the workplace. (Ongoing from prior year.) | New PAR alumni leaders identified, and begin accomplishing organizational goals. |
| #6 SCHOLAR-SHIPS | In AY 11-12 the PAR Department will work the trustees of the designated paralegal scholarships awarded annually, to resolve scheduling, application, and scholarship awarding issues that could not be resolved with the Sinclair Foundation in the prior year. (Ongoing from prior year.) | New directives issued by scholarship trustees to Sinclair Foundation. |
| #7 PARALEGAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION | It is the objective to increase student participation in PSA leadership and activities, and create linkage with the Sinclair Paralegal Alumni Chapter. | PSA conducts at least two activities for students each quarter, and meet with alumni leaders. |
| #8 STUDENT RECOGNITION | In AY 11-12 the PAR Program intends to improve the methods of recognizing students for their service activities, to encourage service and increase the visibility of such activities with prospective employers. | A recognition mechanism is made available to all PAR students |
| #9 SERVICE LEARNING | It is expected that a service learning structure will be applied to some of the volunteer service activities encouraged of PAR students. | At least one service learning project is offered to PAR students during the academic year. |
| #10 ASSESSMENT | In AY 11-12, the department will work with RAR to implement the PAR Assessment Plan that was developed in 2011, in order to complete the surveys and other data gathering necessary for departmental planning, college reporting, and third party (ABA, ACBSP) agency reporting. | PAR Assessment Plan is supported by RAR expertise, and planned surveys are conducted on schedule. |
| #11 PARALEGAL PROGRAM AT COURSEVIEW | The dean of the Courseview Campus Center has set an objective of establishing a paralegal program there in 2014. Assistance in planning that development will require the dedication of increasing blocks of time. | Courseview planning process is supported. |
| #12 PARALEGAL PLACEMENT | A regional study of about 750 job categories in the Dayton area shows paralegal jobs growing at about twice the average rate for all employment. From 2011 to 2016, the local job market is expected to add 5.8% to paralegal employment, compared to 2.4% for lawyers, and 2.4% overall. There are about 400 paralegals and 1,600 lawyers employed in the six-county region. The research covers Montgomery, Greene, Miami, Preble, Clark, and Darke Counties, and was compiled by Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. Despite this and similar bullish state and federal government predictions of continued growth in paralegal employment, some 2011 Sinclair paralegal graduates found it very difficult to locate employment. So, it will be an objective of the program to better educate the local legal community on the value of paralegals, to help encourage future job opportunities. | At least one article, presentation, or other promotion to the local legal community on the value of paralegals is arranged each quarter. |
| #13 ELECTRONIC COURTROOM ENVIRONMENT | In order to better prepare students for courtroom aspects of paralegal work, an authentic electronic courtroom environment would serve as a valuable learning tool. PAR, CJS, & CIS are now planning to create and share the use of Room 19-219 as a courtroom training facility. The room would be configured for classroom use when not engaged as a courtroom environment. | Budget approval for electronic courtroom/classroom in Room 19-219. |

Questions regarding completion of the Annual Update? Please contact the Director of Curriculum and Assessment at 512-2789 to schedule a time to review the template and ask any questions.

**Paralegal Program Assessment Plan**

**Sinclair Community College**

**Assessment Plan**

The Paralegal Program systematically gathers and analyzes information from various sources to measure program outcomes, in order to improve student learning, and to meet reporting requirements of the college and accreditation or approval agencies.

**Program Mission Statement**

The Paralegal Program provides a practical and interactive learning environment that prepares ethical, competent paralegals with analytical, communication, and technical skills necessary to excel in a diverse legal community*. (Approved 2/16/07)*

**Paralegal Program Outcomes**

To meet the needs of the legal community for well-trained paralegal professionals, students who successfully complete the program will be able to:

1. Competently prepare and interpret legal documents.
2. Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior individually, and as a member of a legal team.
3. Competently conduct factual and legal research and communicate the results clearly and concisely.
4. Demonstrate competency in current technology. *(Approved 10/22/10)*

**Assessment Tools**

The Paralegal Program uses a variety of methods to measure program outcomes.

* External Assessment Tools
  + American Bar Association Approval Reports
  + Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) accreditation
  + Paralegal Employer Surveys
  + Paralegal Recent Graduate Surveys
  + Paralegal Survey of All Graduates
  + Internship Supervisor Evaluations
  + Advisory Committee Input
  + Participation in Local Legal Community Activities
* Internal Assessment Tools
  + Student Course/Faculty Surveys
  + Collegewide Student Satisfaction Survey
  + Internship Exit Interviews
  + Department Self Study
  + College Department Reviews
  + College Continuous Improvement Annual Program Update
* Embedded Assessment Tools
  + Student Portfolios
  + Graded Assignments Using Rubrics

**Assessment Activity Timeline**

The Paralegal Program implements the assessment tools on a structured timetable.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | | **Program Outcomes** | | | | |
| **Assessment Method** | **Frequency** | **Responsible Party** | **Distribution of Results** | **#1** | **#2** | **#3** | **#4** |
| American Bar Association Approval Reports | Reapproval every 7 years.  Interim reports every 3 years. | Program Chair | -Full-time Faculty  -Adjunct Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean | X | X | X | X |
| Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs accreditation | Reassessment every 10 years.  Quality Assurance Report every 2 years. | Program Chair | -Full-time Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -College website  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Paralegal Employer Surveys | Every other year, in odd-# years | Program Chair & College Research Dept. | -Full-time Faculty  -Adjunct Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Legal Community Surveys | Every 3 years | Program Chair & College Research Dept. | -Full-time Faculty  -Adjunct Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Paralegal Surveys of Recent Graduates | Yearly | Program Chair | -Full-time Faculty  -Adjunct Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Paralegal Surveys of All Graduates | Every 3 years | Program Chair & College Research Dept. | -Full-time Faculty  -Adjunct Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Internship Supervisor Evaluations | Every academic term | Internship Coordinator | -Program Chair  -Full-time Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Advisory Committee Input | At least twice a year | Program Chair | -Full-time Faculty  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Participation in Local Legal Community Activities | Ongoing | Program Chair & Faculty | -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports | X | X | X | X |
| Student Course/Faculty Surveys | Every academic term | Program Chair | -Division Dean (aggregate data) | X | X | X | X |
| Collegewide Student Satisfaction Survey | Yearly | Program Chair & College Research Dept. | -Full-time Faculty  -Adjunct Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports |  |  |  |  |
| Internship Exit Interviews | Yearly | Internship Coordinator | -Full-time Faculty  -Adjunct Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -ABA Approval Reports |  |  |  |  |
| Department Self Study | Every 5 years (2006/2011) | Program Chair & Faculty | -Full-time Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -College Provost | X | X | X | X |
| College Department Reviews | Every 5 years (2006/2011) | Program Chair & Faculty | -Full-time Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -College Provost | X | X | X | X |
| College Continuous Improvement Annual Program Update | Yearly | Program Chair & Faculty | -Full-time Faculty  -Advisory Committee  -Division Dean  -College Provost | X | X | X | X |
| Student Portfolios | Yearly | Internship Coordinator | -Program Chair | X | X | X | X |
| Graded Assignments Using Rubrics | Ongoing | Program Chair & Faculty | -Program Chair | X | X | X | X |

**Assessment Data Analysis**

Survey results that are compiled by the College Department of Research, Analytics & Reporting (RAR) are also analyzed by RAR. All surveys and evaluations are then analyzed by the program and by the Advisory Committee. RAR will make presentations to the Advisory Committee to discuss its findings. Current and future trends are considered in the analysis. When appropriate, modifications are made in the program’s policies and curriculum, based upon input from the Advisory Board

Assessment data are also analyzed by the department chair, department faculty, and division dean’s office.

The Paralegal Program full-time faculty hold a retreat at the end of each academic year. The agenda includes assessment issues that would affect the curriculum and scheduling of courses.

**Assessment Findings Dissemination**

All program findings from assessment activities are disseminated as appropriate to all full-time faculty, all adjunct faculty, the program advisory committee, and the division dean’s office.

**Program Changes Resulting from Assessment Activities**

The College and the Paralegal Program are committed to a regimen of continuous improvement. Course activities and assessments are modified by faculty as the need becomes apparent. The faculty and advisory committee modify policies, procedures, and curriculum as the need demands. The College requires an annual program update that details assessment activities and changes made as a result. Also, every college department undertakes a self-study and undergoes a thorough department review every five years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessment Method** | **Schedule of Assessment**  **Most Recent Assessment**  **Summary and Analysis** |
| Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) accreditation | Reaffirmation Report due every ten years  Last Completed: 2007-2008 ACBSP Reaffirmation Report  Quality Assurance Report due every two years  Last Completed: 2010 ACBSP Quality Assurance Report   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Performance Measure (Competency)PARALEGAL** | **Description of Measurement Instrument to include** | **Areas of Success** | **Analysis and Action Taken** | | Competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law to prepare and interpret documents. | Students are expected to perform at 70% mastery of this learning outcome, based upon responses from supervising attorneys of paralegal students during internships. This is measured on the summative rubric developed internally. | 0% of the supervising attorneys reported poor skills and a very small portion reported fair skills.  Supervising attorneys rated students at 4.38/5.00 for “Understanding legal concepts.” Attorneys rated students at 4.46/5.00 for “Ability to apply legal concepts.” | Significant improvements were not required. | | Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team. | Students are expected to perform at 70% mastery of the learning outcome as rated on departmental summative rubrics and internship supervision assessments, developed internally. | Although student success rates were above 70%, faculty noticed that students’ knowledge of and adherence to deadlines was lacking. Additionally, students were not always aware of the guidelines surrounding the unauthorized practice of law and confidentiality guidelines. | Instructions were revised in the Legal Ethics course to be clearer and include clear guidance on team deadlines.  The grade book in the Angel Course Management System was used to make comments to students on meeting deadlines and being professional.  Assignment was added to include professional writing and behavior expectations in a law office.  Case studies were added to make students aware of the unauthorized practice of law and confidentiality guidelines. | |
| Paralegal Employer Surveys | Planned Frequency: Every other year, in even-numbered years  Last completed: 2006  Employers of graduates are surveyed by the College Research, Analytics & Reporting (RAR) department to determine satisfaction with our paralegal graduates. The Paralegal Program has collaborated with RAR to develop a survey that will assist the program in meeting specific program assessment needs, including information on employment placement, utilization, salary and benefits, areas of practice, and areas needing improvement.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | *Employer Evaluation of Key Educational Dimensions 2006* | | | | | | | | | | *Educational Dimension* | *Very*  *Good*  *(5)* | *Good*  *(4)* | *Avg*  *(3)* | *Poor*  *(2)* | *Very*  *Poor*  *(1)* | ***N*** | ***PAR***  ***Mean*** | *College Mean* | | Job-related conceptual knowledge | 63.6% | 27.3% | 0.0% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 11 | 4.45 | 4.31 | | Job-related technical knowledge | 63.6% | 27.3% | 0.0% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 11 | 4.45 | 4.29 | | Work attitude (Professionalism) | 81.8% | 18.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 11 | 4.82 | 4.47 | | Quality of work | 72.7% | 18.2% | 0.0% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 11 | 4.55 | 4.39 | | Critical thinking/  Problem-solving abilities | 81.8% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 11 | 4.64 | 4.19 | | Communication/  Interpersonal Skills | 72.7% | 18.2% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 11 | 4.64 | 4.25 | | Overall job preparation | 72.7% | 18.2% | 0.0% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 11 | 4.55 | 4.30 |   First, the employers were asked to rate the graduate’s technical education in several key dimensions. As the above table shows, ratings of PAR graduates by their employers were extremely high, with almost all employers giving ratings of “good” or “very good” on each item. PAR mean ratings were higher than mean ratings for graduates from the college overall on each item. It would appear that these employers were extremely satisfied with the performance of Sinclair PAR graduates in these areas.  Analysis of these results provides an incentive to maintain high program quality. |
| Paralegal Surveys of Recent Graduates | Planned Frequency: Annually  Last Completed: 2008  The Paralegal Program sends a survey that asks paralegal graduates specific questions relating to their preparation for employment and their educational experience. Information is sought, not just on employment placement, utilization, salary and benefits, and areas of practice, but also about adequate education in appropriate areas of the law. The Paralegal Program survey is sent electronically to paralegal graduates and the results are analyzed by the College Research, Analytics & Reporting department, RAR. The Paralegal Program, in collaboration with the Advisory Board, reviews the results, and recommendations for program modifications are made when necessary.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **SURVEY OF RECENT GRADUATES: FY 2008**  **BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICES**  **PAR Respondents (N =16)**  ***General Evaluations***  ***Please indicate your perception of the quality of your educational experience at Sinclair:***  ***Response Percentages***  (5) High Quality 56.2%  (4) 37.5%  (3) 6.3%  (2) 0.0%  (1) Low Quality 0.0%  ***Did your course work at Sinclair adequately prepare you for…:***  ***Response Percentages***  YES NO N/A  Job duties related to your field of study? 93.8% 6.2% 0.0%  Licensure and/or professional exams? 43.8% 0.0% 56.2%  Additional study beyond Associate’s degree? 81.2% 0.0% 18.8%  ***Is your position at your current job related to your program of study at Sinclair?***  ***Response Percentages***  Yes, directly related 80.0%  Somewhat related 13.3%  Not related 6.7%  Not employed 0.0%  ***If your current position is directly related or somewhat related to your program of study at Sinclair, was the job field/career path you studied accurately portrayed to you (i.e., are your job duties and responsibilities what you expected)?***  ***Response Percentages***  Yes 92.9%  No 7.1%  ***If you could start your post-secondary education over, would you still choose to attend Sinclair?***  ***Response Percentages***  Yes 93.3%  No 6.7%  *Gap Analysis/ Program Outcome Evaluations*  ***Indicate for each item below how important this function is to your current employment and how satisfied you are with the preparation you received at Sinclair for each function.***   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | ***Ability to….*** | **Mean**  **Importance** | **Mean**  **Satisfaction** | **\*Gap**  **Score** | | Competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law to prepare and interpret documents. | 6.50 | 6.40 | -0.10 | | Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team. | 6.79 | 6.60 | -0.19 | | Competently conduct factual and legal research and communicate the results clearly and concisely. | 6.71 | 6.27 | -0.44 | | Demonstrate fluency in information technology. | 6.64 | 6.33 | -0.31 |   *Note: Importance scale: 1 = not at all important; 7 = very important*  *Satisfaction scale: 1 = not at all satisfied; 7 = very satisfied; 8 = Not Applicable. Satisfaction means do not include N/A responses*  \*The gap score is calculated by subtracting the mean importance scores from the mean satisfaction scores for each item.  Analysis of these results provides incentive for continued pursuit of quality performance from paralegal students in their studies, to maintain high satisfaction with their preparation for professional duties in the workplace. |
| Paralegal Surveys of All Graduates | Planned Frequency: Every 3 years  Last Completed: 2006  All Sinclair Community College graduates are sent surveys, annually, approximately six months after June graduation, by the College Research, Analytics & Reporting (RAR) department. The survey includes questions on employment preparation and educational satisfaction. Paralegal graduates are surveyed to determine success and satisfaction in the legal profession. The surveys are used to review the curriculum to determine if changes are warranted.  Excerpts of report, analysis and outcomes:  **Findings: Job Satisfaction**   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Graduates were next asked to rate their satisfaction with their current position. Responses are displayed in Table 11. Almost all respondents (96.8%) employed in the legal field who responded to the item indicated that they were either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their current position. There was no notable difference in satisfaction ratings based on when the respondent had graduated.  **Table 11: Satisfaction Ratings for Graduates Employed in the Field** | | | | | Percent | | Percent of those Employed in Field | | | Not at all satisfied | 2.7% | | 3.2% | | Somewhat satisfied | 25.5% | | 27.8% | | Very satisfied | 56.4% | | 62.9% | | Not currently employed in the paralegal field | 15.5% | | N/A |   Those graduates who indicated that they were employed in the paralegal field were asked what factors contribute most to their job satisfaction. Many graduates cited things like variety in their work, its self-directed nature, good coworkers, being treated professionally, and making a contribution as factors that provided them with satisfaction. A few also cited things that decreased their satisfaction such as feeling underpaid, too much administrative work, and their skills not being fully utilized. The full set of responses can be found in Appendix G.  **Findings: Job Skills**  Graduates were provided a list of skill outcomes, and were asked to rate each in terms of its importance on a scale of 1 (not important), 2 (somewhat important) and 3 (very important). Table 12 lists the percent of the PAR graduates working in the field giving each rating. Over 90% of the respondents felt that the ability to communicate clearly and concisely, and the ability to exemplify a high standard of ethics and professionalism were “very important”. In addition, nearly 90% of the respondents felt that the abilities to apply critical thinking skills and to utilize technological skills were “very important”.   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Table 12: Importance of Various Skills in Current Position** | | | | | N = 91 | Not important (1) | Somewhat important (2) | Very important (3) | | Prepare and analyze legal documents (i.e. family law, real estate, probate, business organization) | 8.8% | 19.8% | 71.4% | | Conduct legal research | 17.6% | 37.4% | 45.1% | | Apply critical thinking skills | 2.2% | 8.8% | 89.0% | | Communicate clearly and concisely | 1.1% | 5.5% | 93.4% | | Utilize technological skills | 1.1% | 9.9% | 89.0% | | Exemplify a high standard of ethics and professionalism | 1.1% | 4.4% | 94.5% |   **Findings: Paralegal Program Preparation for Job**  The remaining items on the PAR Graduate Survey for most respondents were open-ended items where graduates were encouraged to discuss how the PAR program helped them and how improvements in the program could be made. Appendix H shows the responses to the question “What are some specific ways that the PAR program helped in the above areas?” (referring to the areas mentioned in Table 12). Some of the respondents mentioned what they learned in specific courses that they had at Sinclair, while others cited the role that the development of critical thinking and the stress on ethics played in preparing them for their current jobs. A number of graduates also mentioned how important the high standards they were held to were in preparing them for working in the legal field.  Appendix I displays the responses to the item “What are some specific things that the PAR program can do to improve in the above areas?” (referring to the areas mentioned in Table 12). Several of the respondents felt that the PAR program is doing a great job and had no suggestions for improvement. Specific suggestions for improvement included more emphasis on computers and technology and more exposure to what it’s really like as a paralegal. A number of graduates suggested that communication and critical thinking skills should continue to be stressed and/or be stressed more.  The next question asked “Are there any additional courses or topics that would have benefited you in your current position?” These responses are listed in Appendix J.  6  Many students said that the program was fine as is and no improvements were necessary. The growing importance/reliance on technology in the field and the need to keep up with technology was mentioned several times. A number of students noted that more typing and computer courses would have been helpful. The topics of employment law, estates and probate, bankruptcy, and family law were also common. Several graduates took this opportunity to say that there were courses offered that they wanted to take but due to conflicts in course scheduling they were not able to. |
| Internship Supervisor Evaluations | Quarterly  Last Completed: 2008 - 2011  Student interns are evaluated each quarter at the end of each internship experience. The internship director meets one-on-one with the internship supervisors to obtain feedback on the interns’ performance and also to determine what additional skills, if any, should be included in the curriculum. Internship supervisors evaluate interns in a variety of areas. Supervisor evaluations are compiled each quarter and assessed to identify areas that need improvement.  As to PAR Program Outcome #1, *competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law to prepare and interpret documents:* when asked to evaluate the quality of student performance, the supervising attorneys in 2009 rated the students at 4.38/5.00 for “Understanding legal concepts.” The attorneys rated the students at 4.46/5.00 for “Ability to apply legal concepts.” The ratings and the supervisor comments concerning quality of work in a legal setting indicate the paralegal students were able to competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law.  As to PAR Program Outcome #2, *exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team:* When asked to evaluate the quality of student personal characteristics in the areas of personal appearance, punctuality, professional demeanor, and dependability, the supervising attorneys in 2009 rated the students overall at 4.66/5.00. The ratings and the supervisor comments indicate the paralegal students exemplified ethical and professional behavior in a legal setting.  The internship supervisor survey results as to Quality of Work are summarized as follows:   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SINCLAIR PARALEGAL INTERNS**  **Internship Supervisor Evaluations, Paralegal Program,**  **Winter 2008 to Winter 2010** | | | | | | | | | | |  | | | | | | | | | | | **QUALITY OF WORK**  **Written Communication Skills, Oral Communications Skills, Accuracy and Thoroughness of Work, Understands Legal Concepts, Ability to Apply Legal Concepts, Technology Skills, Initiative** | | | | | | | | | | | **n/a**  **2.6%** | | |  | | **Poor to Fair**  **>1.0%** | | **Satisfactory**  **6.9%** | **Good to Excellent**  **89.4%** | | | |  | | | | | | | | | | | **PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**  **Ability to Follow Instructions, Relationship with Staff, Diligence, Initiative, Willingness to Accept Delegation of Tasks, Team Player, Understands Legal Concepts** | | | | | | | | | | | **n/a**  **1.6%** | | |  | | **Poor to Fair**  **>1%** | | **Satisfactory**  **5.3%** | **Good to Excellent**  **92.4%** | | |  | | | | | | | | | | | **SPECIFIC TASKS**  **Legal Research, Client/Witness Interviews, Record Documents, Correspondence, Keep Accurate Time Records, Preparation of Legal Forms & Documents, Factual Research, Trial Notebook Preparation, Summarize Depositions, Organize Files, Maintain Calendar, Draft Documents** | | | | | | | | | | | **n/a**  **46.9%** | **As to reported tasks>>** | | | | **Poor to Fair**  **1.4%** | | **Satisfactory**  **43.1%** | **Good to Excellent**  **94.3%** | | |  | | | | | | | | | | | **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**  **Professional Appearance, Punctuality, Professional Demeanor, Dependability** | | | | | | | | | | | **n/a**  **1.6%** | |  | | **Poor to Fair**  **>1%** | | **Satisfactory**  **5.6%** | | | **Good to Excellent**  **91.7%** | |  | | | | | | | | | |   An analysis of these results indicates the consistent exceptional quality of responses from supervisors of paralegal interns concerning work performance of students justifies continued insistence on excellent performance on authentic legal tasks in all legal specialty courses. |
| Advisory Committee Input | Planned Frequency: Semi-annually  Last Completed: 2008-2011  The Program relies closely on the Paralegal Program Advisory Committee to gauge current practices in the legal community. As a program assessment tool, the Paralegal Advisory Committee contributes to changes in program policies, procedures, and curriculum. Some examples of those contributions during the reporting period:   1. *New Course Ideas, 5/16/11* – Mike Brigner asked the Advisory Commitee members for suggestions on curriculum that will better prepare students for the work they will be doing upon graduation. Some of the suggestions: 2. *Health Care Law* 3. *Elder Law* 4. *Immigration Law* 5. *Foreclosures* 6. *Sex Offender Representation* 7. *Life Essentials for Elders (including Elder Abuse)* 8. *Paralegal Employment, 5/16/11 –* Mike Brigner also asked for ideas to help paralegal graduates find employment. Some of the suggestions offered: 9. *Firms can hire paralegals for less money than hiring attorneys*. 10. *Attorneys in Kettering refer others to Sinclair Paralegal Program and seem to be willing to hire in the near future.* 11. *Students need to understand the importance of networking, wherever they go. Positions are gone by the time they are advertised.* 12. *Students should ensure the Paralegal Program has their current contact information, since job opportunities are routed through the department.* 13. *Internships are critical to students finding employment after graduation.* 14. *After semesters start, networking can be included in the internship curriculum.* 15. *Students should research the company, prior to the interview and must know how to do that.* 16. *Site visits by the PAR Internship Coordinator are good PR, as are mock interviews that bring lawyers to campus to allow students to practice interviewing skills.* 17. *Volunteering is a way for students to get a foot in the door at a company.* 18. *Resumes should be written to the job description. People fail to read the job description when going for an interview.*   C. *LAW Library Resources, 5/16/11* – The Dayton Law Library is now known as the Montgomery County Law Library, and is less well funded under the new statutory plan. Also, the Sinclair Library is cutting costs by not renewing some of the subscriptions to legal material. The library works closely with the PAR Program because some of the subscriptions are important to the education of the Paralegal students*. DISCUSSION: Committee members reported that law firms now conduct about 99% of all legal research online*. *Paralegal research classes should place more emphasis on online legal research.*  *D. Paralegal Program Outcomes, 10/22/10* – The semester conversion process is the opportunity for each department to update program outcomes. The PAR Program Outcomes were reviewed and revised by the advisory board at the last meeting. The revised version was reviewed by Sinclair administrators, who suggested certain limited changes. *After extensive discussion, the advisory committee approved the suggested changes and requested that the reservations discussed at the meeting be relayed to the college.*  *E. Rule Adoption: Student Repeats, 4/23/10* – Paralegal students at Sinclair may repeat (once) a course in which they did not attain at least a “C”. In order to improve GPA, students who earned a “B” or “C” have sometimes repeated the course. It was discussed and *decided that this opportunity will be allowed only on a space available basis, in order that other students in the program are not interrupted in their program progress.* |
| Participation in Local Legal Community Activities | Planned Frequency: Ongoing  Each of the full-time paralegal faculty, as well as many of the adjunct faculty, participate in local and state bar association activities that help keep the Paralegal Program connected to current legal events. For example, faculty serve as a trustee of the local law library, on the advisory committee for the local volunteer lawyer project, and as a commissioner for the state real estate commission. Additionally, the faculty make periodic presentations at local law schools, participate in moot court and mock trial programs in the community on the high school, college, and law school levels, and contribute legal volunteer work with the Legal Aid of Western Ohio. Those connections have enabled the Program to solicit student internship placements, recruit new adjunct faculty, obtain full-time graduate employment opportunities, solicit financial assistance with scholarships and Program activities for student benefit, recruit Advisory Committee members, draft participation of speakers in the classroom and at student events, and find volunteers for student interview practice. Each of these bar connections also provides the opportunity for assessing the Program’s capacity to competently prepare paralegal students for service in the legal community. |
| Legal Community Surveys | Planned Frequency: Every 3 years  Last Completed: 2006  The legal community is surveyed every three years to ensure the program is meeting the needs of the legal community. Results are assessed to determine if curriculum modifications needs should be addressed.  An excerpt of the survey results, analysis, and outcomes statement:  10. Based on your own experience or what you have heard, how qualified do you feel that Sinclair paralegal graduates are? (please select one)  **86.2%** Very qualified  **13.8%** Somewhat qualified  **0.0%** Poorly qualified  **0.0 %** Not qualified  11. Of the areas listed below please indicate which skills your paralegals perform for you. Check as many as apply.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **87.5%** Handle correspondence | **12.5%** Draft appellate briefs | | **75.0%** Interview Client/witness | **18.8%** Prepare settlement brochures | | **62.5%** Locate witnesses, assets | **50.0%** Perform e-filing | | **31.3%** Manage office | **78.1%** Conduct research on-line | | **71.9%** Prepare exhibits for trial | **50.0%** Shepardize cases | | **93.8%** Research public records | **56.3%** Index documents | | **43.8%** Summarize medical records | **15.6%** Prepare jury instructions | | **18.8%** Attend depositions | **78.1%** Draft legal documents | | **65.6%** Document Management | **71.9%** Courthouse contact | | **46.9%** Organize medical records | **34.4%** Conduct legal research using books | | **81.3%** Organize files | **9.4%** Handle employee benefits | | **31.3%** Summarize depositions | **25.0%** Draft wills, trusts | | **56.3%** Draft discovery | **87.5%** Draft correspondence | | **53.1%** Prepare trial notebook | **43.8%** Billing |   **Analysis:**  Even though the number of responses was lower than hoped, 23%, valuable information was obtained:  We are frequently asked by students, graduates and attorneys about the salary range in the Miami Valley. We are able to report that our data showed that about half of the paralegals earn in the high $20,000 range and half in the $30,000 ranges, depending on experience.  We also gathered a great deal of information about the use of technology in the region.  It was interesting to see that over 12% of the firms are now using our web page to announce job openings. This feature has just been available for about a year and is expanding.  **Outcomes:**  The results were analyzed and discussed by the Advisory Board. An ad hoc technology committee was formed to research what additional technology skills are sought by law firms. The committee will report back to the Advisory Board in spring, 2008.  The web page will be updated to make access easier for job postings. |
| Student Course/Faculty Surveys | Planned Frequency: Annually  Last Completed: 2008-2010  The Paralegal Program faculty uses assessment tools, at least once a year, in each class as a means of assessing individual courses. Students are given an opportunity to identify strengths, and why they are strengths, areas that need improvement, insights about the curriculum and about the instructor. These assessments provide valuable feedback and faculty have modified assignments and lessons based on the assessments when appropriate. |
| Collegewide Student Satisfaction Surveys | Planned Frequency:  Current Student Surveys: Every other year  Point-of-Graduation Surveys: Annually  Last Completed: 2007/2008  The College Research, Analytics & Reporting (RAR) department administers collegewide student surveys (current student and point-of-graduation surveys) to determine student satisfaction issues relating to service and facilities, as well as instruction and curriculum. This survey is used by the Paralegal Program to ensure the program is aware of all major student concerns.  Excerpt from May 2011 AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Process) Systems Portfolio concerning student satisfaction surveys (http://www.sinclair.edu/about/aqip/pub/2011%20Sinclair%20AQIP.pdf):  Quality of Education Leading to Jobs or Transfer: Sinclair collects perceptual measures of the quality of the education at the College, including how well respondents believe their education has facilitated their ability to find employment or to facilitate their ability to succeed in a four-year institutional setting. A sample of satisfaction responses the institution monitors on quality can be found in Figure 3.5.  *Figure 3.5: Quality Satisfaction Measures*   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Mean Scores (lower scores translate to higher ratings)** | | | | | | | | | | | **Measure of** | **Ratings on** | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | | Quality | Quality of Instruction | 1.63 | 1.69 | 1.62 | 1.62 | 1.68 | 1.57 | 1.54 | 1.63 | | Quality | Class Size | 1.44 | 1.52 | 1.47 | 1.54 | 1.54 | 1.48 | 1.37 | 1.50 | | Quality | Course Content | 1.71 | 1.79 | 1.70 | 1.73 | 1.77 | 1.66 | 1.62 | 1.67 | | Quality | Testing/Grading | 1.75 | 1.85 | 1.86 | 1.80 | 1.86 | N/A | N/A | N/A | | Quality | Instructional Material | 1.75 | 1.84 | 1.76 | 1.82 | 1.85 | 1.74 | 1.71 | 1.77 | | Scale: 1 = Excellent, 5 = Poor  Source: Point of Graduation Survey | | | | | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Percent who provided ratings of strongly agree or agree** | | | | | | | | | **Measure of** | **Ratings on** | **1998** | **2000** | **2002** | **2004** | **2006** | **2008** | | Quality | Sinclair provides a quality educational experience | 89% | 89% | 87% | 89% | 89% | 88% | | Quality | Instructors at Sinclair are very knowledgeable | 88% | 88% | 84% | 88% | 90% | 88% | | Quality | Coursework at Sinclair is challenging | 85% | 82% | 78% | 81% | 80% | 81% | | Scale: 5-point rating: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree  Source: Current Student Survey | | | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Percentage strongly agree/agree that their educational experiences at Sinclair contributed to their ability to:** | | | | | | | | | | **Measure of** | **Ratings on** | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | | Quality | Increase my value in the job market | 92.10 | 92.70 | 92.00 | 93.10 | 93.20 | 92.30 | 91.70 | | Quality | Find employment in my chosen field | 82.80 | 81.90 | 77.70 | 75.10 | 84.10 | 79.30 | 77.30 | | Source: Recent Graduate Survey | | | | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Percentage in agreement that their coursework at Sinclair prepared them for:** | | | | | | | | | | **Measure of:** | **Ratings On:** | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | | Quality | Job duties related to their field of study | 93.50 | 92.60 | 93.10 | 93.50 | 93.70 | 93.90 | 92.00 | | Quality | Additional study beyond the Associate’s degree | 92.10 | 88.80 | 89.80 | 89.90 | 92.40 | 90.50 | 89.80 | | Source: Recent Graduate Survey | | | | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Percentage in agreement that their coursework at Sinclair prepared them for:** | | | | | | | | | | **Measure of** | **Ratings on** | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | | Quality | Quality of Educational Experience | 91.30 | 91.80 | 92.30 | 90.90 | 89.70 | 90.90 | 90.10 | | Source: Recent Graduate Survey | | | | | | | | | |
| Internship Supervisor Exit Interviews | Planned Frequency: Quarterly  Last Completed: 2008-2011  The internship director meets one-on-one with every internship supervisor every quarter, to obtain feedback on the interns’ performance and also to determine what additional skills, if any, should be included in the curriculum. The supervisor comments are summarized in categories and analyzed by the faculty to advise changes in policies, procedures or curriculum. As an example, the most recent report offered both suggestions and confirmation of the success of past adjustments:  **Internship Supervisor Site Visits Feedback – Spring 2011**  **Business Organizations** – Suggestion was to have a Secretary of State records search for a business owner “dba.” The intern knew about finding business entities, but was unfamiliar with the “individual, doing business as” concept when searching.  **Research and Writing** – Some students really like to conduct research and are often disappointed when they find out that most firms do not use paralegals to do research. I think it is important to explain to students they **need** to do research and writing, so they understand legal concepts and they need to improve writing skills. But, with rare exceptions, most paralegals will not be doing a lot of research. Students need to know that up front.  **Paralegal Principles/Interns** - One attorney said the only improvement he had was to be sure students understood the differences among the courts: municipal, common pleas, federal and even the outlying courts like Kettering and Miamisburg. The student (a good one) said it had been about four years since she took Paralegal Principles, and she needed a refresher. That might be a good thing for the internship supervisor to briefly mention in one of the early internship classes (semester outline has several class meetings).  **Ethics/Professionalism** – An administrator praised the program for its commitment to teaching students about being a professional - attire, interview skills, ethical knowledge, and expectations (do whatever is needed to get the job done). She said it was clear the PAR Program stressed how to act and be part of an office environment. She also stressed how important the internships were for students to experience, firsthand, the office environment and said we did a good job preparing them. She said she’d hire someone who had done an internship over other applicants who had not.  **Letter Writing** – Interns do *a lot* of letter writing. The Program’s efforts to increase letter writing seem to be paying off.  **Family Law** – Several supervisors mentioned the need for more discovery skills. Family law is intense litigation, now, with requests for banking, job, pension, and asset information. Request for Production of documents and interrogatories were mentioned often. This type of discovery is not quite the same as in a personal injury case. Advanced litigation (in semesters) will be a help for family law students.  Overall, there was a lot of praise for Sinclair’s paralegal students and the skills they bring to the internship. |
| Department Self Study | Planned Frequency: Every 5 Years  Last Completed: 2006; due in 2011, but postponed by college due to conversion of entire college curriculum from quarters to semesters |
| College Department Reviews | Planned Frequency: Every 5 Years  Last Completed: 2006; due in 2011, but postponed by college due to conversion of entire college curriculum from quarters to semesters |
| College Continuous Improvement Annual Program Update | Planned Frequency: Annually  Last Completed: 2010-2011  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Sinclair Community College - Continuous Improvement Annual Update 2010-11**  **Program:** Paralegal  **Section I: Trend Data**   1. **Program Trend Data**   SUCCESS RATES  Study of the PAR.AAS program success rates shows that they exceed Sinclair averages. Except for introductory-level courses that serve to persuade a few students each term that their interests are better suited to career paths outside the law, PAR courses display a student success rate of 85-90%. These figures have been consistent for Academic Year 05-06 through AY 09-10. In the paralegal internship courses, where students near graduation can demonstrate their employment skills to the legal community, the success rate rises to 95-100%. The business division overall success rate is 72%, and the college overall success rate is 71%.  ENROLLMENT RATES  PAR enrollment has grown by about 17% in recent years, from a full-time enrollment (FTE) of 190 in Fiscal Year 2007-08 to 222 in FY 2009-10. This growth is probably attributable to the growth in FTE at Sinclair College, which tracked at 27% during the same period. Paralegal courses operate at or near the seat capacity in each scheduled classroom.  GRADUATION RATES  PAR.AAS program graduation numbers have remained steady for AY 05-06 through AY 09-10, with 36 paralegal students completing their degrees in AY 09-10.   1. **Interpretation and Analysis of Trend Data** *Suggestions of questions that might be addressed in this section: What trends do you see in the above data? Are there internal or external factors that account for these trends? What are the implications for the program or department? What actions have the department taken that have influenced these trends? What strategies will the department implement as a result of this data?*   ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION  Enrollment in the PAR Program is about optimal, given the following constraints: (1) The department is small, with only four full-time faculty. (2) One of those four faculty members is also responsible for chair duties for three departments, PAR, LAW, and RES. (3) Some PAR classes are limited in capacity to 16, because they require extensive writing assistance for students, and are heavy in grading demands. (4) Almost all PAR courses require computer-equipped classrooms, which maxes classroom size at 24 for most classes. (5) All PAR students are required to complete two internships prior to graduation. (6) The Dayton area legal market has not shown the ability to absorb more high-quality Sinclair paralegal interns and graduates than are currently entering the job market annually; additionally, the legal marketplace has contracted recently with the rest of the economy.  The PAR Program has added course sections at times to meet enrollment demands, and has accepted additional students over course capacity at other times. The latter strategy is especially unsatisfactory, as it results in some students working in the classroom without computer access and increases the grading load of the instructor.  Historically, when applications to the PAR Program have increased significantly, additional introductory courses have been scheduled to accommodate the demand. However, this strategy eventually has negative consequences, as sufficient upper-level courses cannot be scheduled with existing faculty, and as graduating students ultimately find insufficient internships and job placements to meet their numbers.  ENROLLMENT GROWTH  Given the highly structured nature of the PAR Program, with prerequisite courses cascading forward in a logical fashion, and students advancing in cohort groups, and considering the other constraints above, incremental increases in enrollment cannot be successful. The pipeline is full and the output is capped by local employment demand. The only logical blueprint for growing the Paralegal Program would require three phases: (1) a concentrated effort to educate the local business and legal communities about the value-added results of hiring professional paralegals; (2) doubling the size of the PAR department – every individual aspect of the PAR program is interdependent and operating at capacity, so every aspect would have to be duplicated to produce the same successful results; (3) a commitment to a student recruitment program that would compete with commercial paralegal schools for the students who are not choosing Sinclair for their paralegal studies. The second two phases would be costly undertakings. So at this time the PAR department has no plans for significant enrollment growth.  CLASSROOM CAPACITY EXPANSION  During the summer 2010, one of the computer classrooms used by the Paralegal Program, Room 5134, was equipped with additional computers to accommodate 40 students in a classroom instead of 22. While this helped with the space limitations, it brought with it other downsides, starting with the issue of doubling the work for faculty at the same payload.  Technology presents other challenges in Room 5134. The overhead projector is readable to only students who sit in the first two rows of the classroom. This makes it difficult for students in the rest of the classroom to follow along during guided demonstration. The computer monitors sit on the desks and block the student’s view of instructor and projector and block the instructor’s view of the students (they are hidden behind the monitors). The use of the Synchroneyes automated system on the instructor station allows the instructor to project the main screen images onto individual computer screens, which works well except when students are expected to mimic the instructor’s actions by performing work on their own computers.  To be heard in the Room 5134 classroom now requires instructor and students to speak in a very loud voice and this makes sharing and communicating very difficult. During Fall of 2010 and Winter of 2011, Debbie Badonsky worked extensively with Facilities Management and IT Services to reduce the noise of the HVAC system and to add speakers to the back of this room to make the instructor’s voice clear to all students in the room.  PARALEGAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS  To address the trend of consistently high student success rates, the PAR Program needs to continue high student performance requirements, and perhaps strengthening those requirements. Currently, students are required to have a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) when they enroll in PAR, and to maintain at least a 2.0 GPA. The students who are not successful in completing the program, either dropping out or failing, appear to be those who enter with a low GPA, and/or maintain that average with the help of their General Education courses. Currently under study by the department are proposals to raise the minimum GPA level for PAR degree seekers to 2.5, and a requirement that students maintain their PAR Program GPA, not just their overall GPA, at the 2.5 level.  INCREASING PAR ENROLLMENT  There are no current plans to increase student enrollment, considering the constraints mentioned above. However, the PAR Program will work with the Sinclair Career Services Office to better educate the local legal community and business community about the advantages of using professionally-trained paralegals to deliver legal services at lower cost. If the local demand for paralegals can be increased, the needs of the marketplace could justify addressing the other constraints discussed above, primarily the number of full-time faculty in the department.  **Section II: Progress Since the Most Recent Review**   1. What was the fiscal year of the most recent Program Review for this program?   2005-06 2. Briefly summarize the goals that were listed in Section IV part E of the most recent Program Review Self-Study (this section of the Self-Study asks “What are the department’s/program’s goals and rationale for expanding and improving student learning, including new courses, programs, delivery formats and locations”)?   Expanding short-term (1.5 quarter-hour) PAR electives, when appropriate   1. Have these goals changed since your last Program Review Self-Study? If so, please describe the changes.   No, the PAR Program remains committed to adding electives that will serve current market demands. In addition, it is recognized that some electives may need to be eliminated or combined with others, when it appears that the legal community’s needs have changed. The consolidation process began during the curriculum review undertaken during the semester conversion process. For example, courses in Social Security and Workers Compensation were eliminated, due to lack of specialized jobs in these fields. With the guidance of the PAR Advisory Committee, certain other elective courses may be added for subjects where market demands appear to be developing, such as elder law and health care law.   1. What progress has been made toward meeting any of the goals listed above in the past year?   In response to the rapid recent adoption of electronic filing procedures for documents in local courts to replace paper filings, the PAR Program developed a new 1.5 quarter-hour Electronic Court Filing course, taught by the program’s technology instructor.   1. What Recommendations for Action were made by the review team to the most recent Program Review? What progress has been made towards meeting these recommendations in the past year?   After the 6/2/06 review, the review team made the following Recommendations for Action. Progress is noted after each numbered recommendation:   1. *Incorporate quantitative data, as well as qualitative, to supply evidence of student attainment at course and program outcomes level* See Section III below*.* 2. *Provide evidence of how the department applies information from student learning outcomes to improve the courses and program* Student learning outcomes are reviewed at quarterly department meetings, semi-annual adjunct faculty meetings, and the annual department retreat held for a full day each summer. The learning outcomes were reviewed and revised in 2010 by the PAR Advisory Committee, and the revised outcomes were incorporated into the Quarter-to-Semester conversion process during the past year. 3. *Identify and implement revisions to the research and report writing course relevant to the departmentally identified concern about written communication skills* Additional writing assignments were added to the following required paralegal courses: Criminal Law, Real Estate Transactions I, Business Organizations I, Legal Research & Writing I, Legal Research & Writing II, Litigation I, and Litigation II. Students were *referred* to the Writing Center or Tutoring Services when their performance required. Beginning in the AY 2010-11, every student in the introductory Legal Research & Writing course was *required* to take major writing assignments to the Writing Center for review and advice; this process was coordinated with the Writing Center staff. 4. *Identify and develop, based on a prioritized needs analysis, continuing education courses for returning students and/or graduates* Despite faculty interest in this objective, the paralegal program has lacked the faculty resources to expand into the continuing education business. Additionally, the pool of practicing paralegals in the region is small, presenting a limited target audience. PAR graduates are already entitled to audit any PAR course. Realistically, this means graduates might take PAR elective courses that they did not take as part of their degree program. Few do. Offering additional continuing education opportunities would require curriculum development, a time-consuming assignment, for a limited audience. The combination of high time investment, limited faculty resources, and small prospects for return has kept this a low departmental priority. 5. *Revise mission statement to be more specific to the PAR program* The Paralegal Program Advisory Committee reviewed the prior statement and on February 16, 2007 adopted a new mission statement: *The Paralegal Program provides a practical and interactive learning environment that prepares ethical, competent paralegals with analytical, communication, and technical skills necessary to excel in a diverse legal community.* 6. *Continue to pursue additional transfer opportunities and/or agreements for PAR students*  This recommendation has not been pursued due to the time devoted to the department’s chair turnover, twice, and the demands of the semester conversion process. Negotiations were initiated with Edison State College and Clark Technical College, but not concluded. New articulation agreements can be negotiated after all schools have announced their semester programs. 7. *Engage IPR [now Research, Analytics & Reporting] to assist with additional research on curricular experiences of students in the “preprogram” to analyze areas of improvement before students begin the PAR program* Students who wish to enter the Paralegal Program must successful complete (with a grade of “C” or better) two courses, Paralegal Principles (PAR 105) and Paralegal Principles: Technology (PAR 106). Students are not classified as paralegal majors until that is accomplished. These courses constitute the “preprogram.” No research has been done on their “curricular experiences.” 8. *Cross train technical support workers across the division to reduce reliance on a single provider and pursue a sustainable solution to tech support challenges* Most of the technical support needs of the PAR Program are met by specific service contracts with Marina Dodaro, a PAR graduate who also serves as an adjunct instructor for paralegal courses in legal technology. Ms. Dodaro maintains certification in two of the specialized legal programs taught to the paralegal students. Other departments in the division do not need the specialized legal technology programs used in the Paralegal Program, and it is unlikely that other technical support workers in the division could acquire the expertise and certification needed to maintain those specialized legal technology programs; nor would they have the paralegal degree or other legal education required to teach the application of those specialized programs in the legal environment.     **Section III: Assessment of Outcomes**  The Program Outcomes for this program are listed below. **At least one-third of your program outcomes must be assessed as part of this Annual Update, and across the next three years all of these program outcomes must be assessed at least once**.   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Paralegal** Program Outcomes | In which courses are these program outcomes addressed? | Which of these program outcomes were assessed during the last fiscal year? | Assessment Methods  Used | | **1)** Competently prepare and interpret legal documents.\* (See note below.) | PAR 121  PAR 122  PAR 131  PAR 201  PAR 211  PAR 215 |  | Simulations  Performance appraisals | | **2)** Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team. | PAR 220  PAR 291  PAR 292 |  | Simulations  Performance appraisals | | **3)** Competently conduct factual and legal research and communicate the results clearly and concisely. | PAR 111  PAR 112  PAR 115  PAR 205 |  | Simulations  Performance appraisals | | **4)** Demonstrate competency in current technology.\* (See note below.) | PAR 106  PAR 211  PAR 215 |  | Simulations  Performance appraisals |   \* Note: The language of these two program outcomes was revised to this current version in Fall, 2010, after consultation with the PAR Advisory Committee. The purpose was to make the language easier to understand, and to make the outcomes more measurable.  a) For the assessment methods listed in the table above, what were the results? What changes are planned as a result of the data? How will you determine whether those changes had an impact?  **PAR Program Outcome #1.** Competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law to prepare and interpret documents. Data collected in PAR 291-292 in 2006-07. Analysis done in 2007-08.  **Improvements made in 2008-09:** The following was reported in the PAR 2008-09 Annual Update: *Given the successful response from supervising attorneys of paralegal students (0% reported poor skills and a very small portion reported fair skills), significant improvements were not required. However, written communication problems continue to be addressed and activities have been added to strengthen students’ skills.*  **Assessment of Improvements in 2009-10:** PAR students are required to complete two internships during the final quarters of their paralegal program degree work. Internships are performed in a legal setting in local law firms, courts, public agencies, and businesses. All internships are performed under the supervision of an attorney. Upon completion of each internship, the supervisors of those interns are required to evaluate the performance of the students’ skills and behaviors. When asked to evaluate the quality of student performance, the supervising attorneys in 2009 rated the students at 4.38/5.00 for “Understanding legal concepts.” The attorneys rated the students at 4.46/5.00 for “Ability to apply legal concepts.” The ratings and the supervisor comments concerning quality of work in a legal setting indicate the paralegal students were able to competently analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the law.  Although changes are constantly made to improve teaching strategies and learning outcomes, no changes are planned as a result of the data.  **PAR Program Outcome #2.** *(Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team.)* Data collected in PAR 220 in 2007-08. Analysis done in 2008-09.  **Improvements made in 2009-10:** The following was reported in the PAR 2009-10 Annual Update: *As a result of the assessments* (conducted at the end of the Fall, 2008 Lethal Ethics course)*, instructions were revised including more clear guidance on team deadlines. Gradebook* (in the Angel Course Management System) *was used to make comments to students on meeting deadlines and being professional, where it was lacking. Students complete a letter writing, interview paper and professional behavior in law office assignment. The assignments were separated to make it clearer and directions were revised . . . . An additional assignment was added using case scenarios from the new text to quiz students on the unauthorized practice of law and confidentiality. Paralegal graduates did visit the class and discussed working in a law office, ethical issues and professionalism. The interview assignment will be revised to include a question on what kind of teamwork skills a paralegal has to use in a law office to show students the importance of teamwork.*  **Assessment of Improvements in 2010-11:** PAR students are required to complete two internships during the final quarters of their paralegal program degree work. Internships are performed in a legal setting in local law firms, courts, public agencies, and businesses. All internships are performed under the supervision of an attorney. Upon completion of each internship, the supervisors of those interns are required to evaluate the performance of the students’ skills and behaviors. When asked to evaluate the quality of student personal characteristics in the areas of personal appearance, punctuality, professional demeanor, and dependability, the supervising attorneys in 2009 rated the students overall at 4.66/5.00. The ratings and the supervisor comments indicates the paralegal students exemplified ethical and professional behavior in a legal setting.  Although changes are constantly made to improve teaching strategies and learning outcomes, no changes are planned as a result of the data.  b) What other changes have been made in past years as a result of assessment of program outcomes? What evidence is there that these changes have had an impact?  **PAR Program Outcome #1.** (*Competently prepare and interpret legal documents*.) During the semester conversion process, the PAR Program is considering an increase in the number of required English courses from two to three, to better prepare paralegal students for the demands of the legal profession for quality communication skills. Some students were referred to Tutoring Services to address English language deficiencies during AY 10-11.  As discussed in Section II, additional writing assignments were added to the following required paralegal courses: Criminal Law, Real Estate Transactions I, Business Organizations I, Legal Research & Writing I, Legal Research & Writing II, Litigation I, and Litigation II. Students were *referred* to the Writing Center or Tutoring Services when their performance required. Beginning in the AY 2010-11, every student in the introductory Legal Research & Writing course was *required* to take major writing assignments to the Writing Center for review and advice; this process was coordinated with the Writing Center staff.  Further changes are not indicated by the outcome analysis.  **PAR Program Outcome #2.** *(Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior as a member of a legal team.)* Further changes are not indicated by the outcome analysis.  c) Describe general education changes/improvements in your program/department during this past academic year (09-10).  All PAR courses have one or more general education outcomes incorporated into their course descriptions. All of those outcomes are under review during the semester conversion process. Therefore, no changes were being made during the past academic year.  **Section IV: Improvement Efforts for the Fiscal Year**   1. **FY 09-10:** What other improvement efforts did the department make in FY 09-10? How successful were these efforts? What further efforts need to be made? If your department didn’t make improvement efforts during the fiscal year, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the department over the last year and how the department plans to address them in the coming year.   SEMESTER CONVERSION  The PAR Department in FY 09-10 initiated a thorough review of the program structure and the curriculum of all required/elective paralegal courses, pursuant to the Quarter-to-Semester conversion process. This process resulted in the combination or elimination of some low-enrollment courses, and others that concern substantive topics with low placement rates in the local job market.  PERSONNEL  As the result of the promotion of the department chair to a position outside the department at the beginning of 2010, a new chair was selected and mentored, and a new full time tenure track faculty member was selected and mentored. In a department of four faculty members, this represented a turnover of 50% of the department. Those developments triggered the need to hire, train, and mentor several new adjunct faculty members.  PLACEMENT  Assistance is always provided to link PAR graduates with interested employers and job openings, and the department maintains a paralegal job posting web page year-round for PAR students and alumni. For the first time in recent memory, not all PAR graduates in 2010 were immediately absorbed into the local economy. To address this in the nine months following the 2010 graduation, these efforts were intensified due to the number of graduates still seeking employment. Those efforts included resume review, letters of reference, personal faculty contact with employers, researching of job leads, cross-posting job notices, and maintaining an active presence on *Facebook*. *Facebook* is by far the richest communication mechanism with graduates, who change names, addresses, phone numbers, and email accounts, but who are almost unanimously available on *Facebook*. The *Facebook* presence is used to post general paralegal job news, announce specific job leads, and drive traffic to the Paralegal Program website’s page for job posting. It appears these efforts have had a positive impact on employment for paralegal graduates. Generally, it is impossible to “take credit” for a job placement, since these efforts cannot always be directly linked to job-seeking success, but in a few instances the PAR connection did appear to make a positive difference for graduate employment.  LEXISNEXIS  A new contractual arrangement was negotiated with LexisNexis to establish departmental control over the assignment of Lexis account IDs to paralegal students in the program for purposes of education in online legal research. This has required additional administrative work for the department, but allows rapid assignment, reassignment, and cancellation of Lexis IDs as required.  SCHOLARSHIPS  The department invested considerable effort in adopting the Sinclair Foundation’s online system for awarding the department’s annual paralegal scholarships, and in promoting the application process to paralegal students. The positive result was that students could simultaneously select and apply for other Foundation scholarships without additional applications.  TECHNOLOGY-RELATED COURSE ELECTIVES  In partnership with the department’s technology instructor, new elective course offerings were developed in new skill areas of value to modern paralegals, electronic court filing, and electronic discovery in litigation cases.  ANGEL STUDENT COMMUNITY GROUP  Also in partnership with the department’s technology instructor, a community group was developed in Angel that allows communication with all Paralegal Program students simultaneously. Operating this service requires constant technical work for roster maintenance, and persistent editorial attention by faculty. This tool was used during the year to communicate scholarship opportunities, weather-related school closing news, registration reminders, new job postings, internship opportunities, graduation requirements, Paralegal Day activities, Paralegal Student Association activities, student orientation requirements, and other important departmental and school wide announcements.   1. **FY 10-11:** What improvement efforts does the department have planned for FY 10-11? How will you know whether you have been successful?   SEMESTER CONVERSION  The most significant improvement in FY 10-11 will be continuing the Quarter-to-Semester conversion process by creating a new curriculum plan for every paralegal course, including the revision of the teaching syllabus for each course, review and selection of new textbooks as required, creation of new learning modules, revision of assignments, revision of classroom activities, revision of classroom presentations, and the revision of quizzes and exams.  The Quarter-to-Semester conversion process will also demand in FY 10-11 the hiring, training and mentoring of new adjunct faculty for semester courses.  The Quarter-to-Semester conversion process will also demand in FY 10-11 the advising of all PAR students for the planning of program completion in the quarter system, or for the planning the successful transition into a semester system.  The Quarter-to-Semester conversion process will also demand in FY 10-11 the creation of a new semester schedule of sequenced courses that provides students with the opportunity to complete prerequisites and required courses in a successful manner.  PERSONNEL  The retirement of one of the four full-time PAR faculty will necessitate a search and hiring process in FY 10-11, and the training and mentoring of a new faculty member.  AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION APPROVAL REPORT  In FY 10-11, the Paralegal Program’s approval status with the American Bar Association requires the submission of an extensive interim report.  REGISTRATION PRIORITY  The PAR Department in FY 10-11 will work with the Registration Office to address the problem of required PAR courses being filled by first-year students who happen to be the first to connect to the registration system when it opens, with the result that second-year PAR students are shut out of courses they require to graduate.  PARALEGAL ALUMNI CHAPTER  It is also a goal of the PAR Department in FY 10-11 to revitalize the Paralegal Chapter of the Sinclair Alumni Association. The most active leaders of that organization have become inactive for reasons apparently related to the demands of the economy. It is the objective to increase the alumni role in mentoring the Paralegal Student Association, presenting the annual Paralegal Day celebration, and educating the local legal and business community about the value of paralegals in the workplace.  SCHOLARSHIPS  In FY 10-11 the PAR Department will work with the Sinclair Foundation and the trustees of the designated paralegal scholarships awarded annually, to resolve scheduling, application, and scholarship awarding issues that were evident in the prior year. |
| Student Portfolios | Planned Frequency: Annually  Last Completed: 2008-2010  All Sinclair Paralegal Program students must prepare a professional grade portfolio containing corrected copies of all significant paralegal course work, as designated by the course instructors and internship supervisor. This portfolio is used to assess the student learning outcomes developed by the program, and demonstrate entry-level paralegal job skills. Additionally, the portfolio includes student assessments of their internship experiences and their own personal growth throughout their paralegal student career. Finally, each portfolio includes a career plan of short and long-term professional goals. In addition to assessing student accomplishment and career readiness, the portfolio serves as evidence for potential employers of individual paralegal career skills. |
| Graded Assignments Using Rubrics | Planned Frequency: Ongoing  Last Completed: 2008-2010  The Program has added rubrics to some course assignments to assist in consistent grading and to improve student feedback. When rubric grading data is collected and analyzed, the results can be used to improve curriculum decisions. An example was a study of legal memoranda graded in legal research classes in 2008-09 concerning one of the program outcomes. This data was reported in the Program Annual Update for the College in 2009-10:  **Program Outcome #3: Competently conduct factual and legal research and communicate the results clearly and concisely.**  The PAR 111 and 112 (Legal Research & Writing I & II) students are required to complete legal memoranda based on complex legal issues that require significant legal research. The students’ work was analyzed using a common rubric to determine if students were able to identify legal issues, recognize relevant facts, conduct accurate and complete legal research, and communicate the results of their research clearly and concisely. The results in PAR 111 are as follows:  Final Draft: Class Average Possible Points   1. Length 2 2 2. Organization: Memo Format 1.9 2 3. Logical case order 1.8 2 4. Citations 4.4 6 5. Sentences: structure, clarity 3.4 4 6. Good use of paragraphs with 3.6 4   Unity & cohesion   1. Proper grammar & spelling: 3.5 4   Past tense, third person,  Formal style   1. Transitions between cases 1.7 2 2. Quote/paraphrase from cases 1.7 2 3. Quality Standards 3.9 4 4. Analysis 5. Issues Section 5.6 6 6. Brief Answers Section 5.2 6 7. Facts Section 5.6 6 8. Analysis Section (IRAC) 9. Issue 3.6 4 10. Rule: statutes, cases, regs 6.6 8 11. Analysis: Application of 7.6 10   Facts to law   1. Conclusion: Conclusion 1.7 2   Reached on issue   1. Conclusion Section 5.3 6 2. SUBTOTAL 73.7 80   In PAR 111 analysis was the common weakness. It was determined that students have a hard time bridging the gap from researching the law to analyzing the law and applying the facts to the law. Therefore, additional activities will be incorporated to help bridge that gap for students. PAR 111 was recently revised in the Extreme Course Makeover session with these areas of improvement in mind.  It should be noted that the analysis scores do seem to improve in PAR 112.  **Analysis**  Issues Section 1.95 2  Facts 4.0 4  Court Decisions 3.8 4  Court Reasoning 9.6 10  Analysis 9.2 10  The course assessment resulted in similar data. PAR 111 students stated that “there is a ‘missing piece’ between research and writing portions of the class. It would be helpful to have examples of how to IRAC an issue before we have to write the short memo.”  Data was gathered from PAR 292 internship supervisor surveys showing that 86% of supervisors thought the paralegal interns had good or excellent written communication skills, a good or excellent ability to apply legal concepts, and excellent legal research skills.  **Areas of improvement:**  Add an IRAC activity between the research and memo writing portion of the class to improve students’ abilities in analyzing the law and applying facts to the law. |