

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**  
**Mission Statement, Program Outcomes, and Assessment**  
**For Associate Degree in Paralegal Studies**

**Mission Statement:**

To provide education for citizens of Orangeburg and Calhoun Counties and surrounding areas who enter our program so that upon graduation they will possess the skills, knowledge, and characteristics necessary to become a part of an effective work team as a paraprofessional who assists lawyers in performing a variety of tasks in the legal profession by serving clients and the community as a whole in the best possible manner and helping to generate profits.

**Program Outcomes:**

Paralegal/Legal Assistant

Graduates with a degree in Paralegal Studies should be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills in the following areas:

A. Investigation	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 132, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242
B. Document Production	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 122, LEG 132, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 212, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 230, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242, OST 105, CPT 170, OST 250
C. Document Handling	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 122, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 212, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242
D. Legal Research and Terminology	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 122, LEG 132, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 212, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 230, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242
E. Trial Preparation	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 212, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 230, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242

F. Administrative	LEG 232, LEG 242
G. Communications	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 122, LEG132, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 212, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 230, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242, ENG 101, ENG 102, SPC 205, OST 105, CPT 170, OST 250
H. Organizational Skills	LEG 132, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 230, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242
I. Ethics	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 122, LEG132, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 212, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 230, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242
J. Computer Skills	LEG 132, LEG 230, LEG 232, LEG 242, OST 105, CPT 170, OST 250
K. Professional Skills	LEG 120, LEG 121, LEG 122, LEG132, LEG 135, LEG 201, LEG 212, LEG 213, LEG 214, LEG 230, LEG 231, LEG 232, LEG 233, LEG 242, ENG 101, ENG 102, SPC 205

## Assessment Methods:

### Direct Student Learning Outcomes

This program does not have a capstone course; however, LEG 232 (Law Office Management) is being revised to serve as the capstone course for this program. It includes direct assessment of student performance, including a series of advanced legal research projects, a portfolio project, a shadowing project and mock interviews that will assess the student's overall understanding and abilities to perform all of the competencies in the program. Students graduating in Paralegal Studies will validate their academic knowledge and skills by completing the course with a grade of "C" or better.

### Indirect Student Learning Outcomes

The Program faculty review the following indirect measures of student and program success yearly, or as needed, to ensure program viability: grade distribution and failure rates; student evaluations; job placement results; employer satisfaction survey; enrollment statistics; retention rates, and graduation rates.

### **Retention**

OCtech Benchmark #1 – The program will have retained in the following Fall semester not less than 60% of the new students who enrolled in the prior Fall semester.

- Over the last three years, program retention has been: 2002 (25%), 2003 (64%), and 2004 (63%).

### **Job Placement**

OCtech benchmark #2 – Using the State Technical College System definitions for employment, not less than 80% of the graduates of the program will have secured employment in the field.

- Over the part three years, job placement has been: 2001 (63%), 2002 (63.63%), and 2003 (71.42%)

### **Graduation Rates**

OCtech benchmark #3 – The number of graduates will average 25% of the average annual fall enrollment for the program. Over the past three years, graduation rates have been: 2001-2002 (23.91%), 2002-2003 (16.28%), and 2003-2004 (14.55%).

### **Internal Measures of Success**

Direct measures of soft skills and academic/program foundation skills:

- 80% of Capstone course students will demonstrate acceptable ratings on the portfolio project which will include extensive information not limited to the student's professional profile, writing samples and legal forms that reflect acquired knowledge in specific legal specialty subjects.
- 90% of Capstone course students will achieve a "hiring" status on the independent mock interviews.
- 90% of Capstone course students will achieve a grade of C or better.

Indirect measures of program success

- Maintain or exceed an 80% or better level of job placement.
- Reinstigate an Employer Satisfaction Survey to be implemented at the end of the Spring semester 2005.
- Maintain or improve retention over the FY03-04 Benchmark.
- Incorporate 100% of validated DACUM competencies into Paralegal Studies course outlines with demonstrated student performances.

### **Review Process and Use of Results:**

Paralegal Studies is a competency-driven curriculum. Its competencies are determined through qualified DACUM panels and are validated by industry professionals and the curriculum's own advisory committee. DACUMS are usually conducted every four years to ensure currency with the last DACUM occurring November 1997. In between each DACUM the program faculty performs the following internal processes yearly as part of the strategic planning and review process.

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- Ensure that program outcomes are appropriate and current.
- Ensure that program outcomes are addressed in the exit competencies of at least one required course.
- Ensure that within those required courses that students demonstrate the desired program outcome either through written or performance-based tests and/or graded assignment.
- Ensure that equipment inventory, facilities, and budget support program outcomes and the strategic plan.
- Ensure that successful completion of prerequisite courses is a satisfactory predictor of student success in subsequent courses.
- Monitor student performances in the capstone course against DACUM competencies.
- Review grade distribution and failure rates; student evaluations; job placement results; employer satisfaction survey; enrollment statistics; retention rates, and graduation rates.
- Ensure that the College Library can assure access to appropriate and current research materials.
- Provide feedback to the general education faculty on observed general education competencies and make recommendations as needed.
- Make a report to the advisory committee on assessment findings and solicit feedback.
- Work with Division Dean and the Curriculum Committee to revise syllabi and/or course/department offerings as needed.
- Conduct program self study as required by accrediting agencies.

The Paralegal Studies Program is approved by the American Bar Association (ABA).

### **What action(s) did the Program take this past academic year that improved and expanded student-learning outcomes?**

Changes have been made within the Paralegal Studies program to improve student success based on recommendations from our advisory committee, instructors, and DACUM panel. The DACUM panel consists of members of local industry who would be in the positions to hire our graduates or hold the same types of jobs as our graduates. The Panel meets separately from the Advisory Committee to discuss the competency requirements of the program and make recommendations for changes.

### **Paralegal Studies Actions**

The Program Coordinator will revise LEG 232 (Law Office Management) into a Capstone course to better assess the academic knowledge and skills of our graduates.

Benchmark #1 and #2 Plan of Action: All instructors in the Paralegal Studies curriculum will continue to emphasize the importance of academic success so as many students as possible will have an opportunity to participate in an internship to gain hands-on experience which will definitely be a plus when they begin looking for employment. The instructors will also advise students accurately about the consequences of withdrawing from and dropping classes and emphasize the importance of taking education seriously to avoid academic probation.

Benchmark #2 and #3 Plan of Action: The Program Coordinator will also communicate with a larger number of law firms and state agencies in our surrounding area (not just locally) to establish rapport so that we can acquire more internships in the profession for students while attending school that may result in employment upon graduation.