

Administrative Response to Program Review
Paralegal Program
February 2020

On March 20, 2020, the Paralegal program was scheduled to present its Program Review findings to an audience of PCC administrators and others with an interest in the discipline. The presentation was cancelled due to the impending campus closure due to coronavirus. Therefore, this Program Review consists of just the written Program Review document and the Administrative Response. There was no face-to-face or remote presentation and discussion.

This Administrative Response will: A) note particular highlights of the Paralegal Program and Program Review; B) provide observations and recommendations; and C) provide the administrative response to the SAC recommendations.

Noteworthy Efforts or Achievements

- The Program Review document and supporting materials were well written and clear.
- Good use of a variety of means to assess efficacy of the program. with focus on program competencies reported via the LAC.
- The Academic Affairs Council applauds the use of external and objective assessments related to Microsoft competency and typing speed. Incentivizing students to complete assessment is indeed critical, and we appreciate your active consideration of changes to instruction to increase student achievement of the benchmarks.
- The Academic Affairs Council appreciates your mindful attention to the college Core Outcomes, and in particular, encourages your participation in college conversation around cultural literacy, since it is a priority for the program. We applaud the addition of a new course, Cultural Competence in the Legal Field, and the outcomes that align with the redeveloping core outcome. We encourage you to make time to engage in the conversations about how Cultural Literacy will be expressed at the college, since you clearly have a stake in the outcome. It would be useful for your SAC to be at the table when this outcome is discussed.
- The Academic Affairs Council appreciates the thoughtful framing on whether students can master the concepts, rather than focusing on easier but less meaningful benchmarks. This is the art of assessment – figuring out what you really care about, and then thinking about how you can really know when students get there.
- The Academic Affairs Council appreciates the examples of changes made to instruction based on assessment at the course level. Most were good, but a couple of them suggest an interpretation of assessment that was not really focused on student learning. Certainly there are many avenues of feedback that lead to

improvements in teaching and learning, but assessment refers specifically to determining what students have learned, and then, adjusting instruction to support better learning. (For example, students wanting to go to the next level assignments in order to prepare for an external exam seems like a logistical or and/or practical choice rather than a change based on assessment of student learning). That is a particular expectation for college accreditation.

- We commend your recognition that the success rate for PL 101 reflects its function (intentional or not) as a high-stakes gatekeeper course, and your efforts to make changes in the curriculum to ameliorate this, both by the scaffolding of learning within the course itself, and its framing within the context of program requirements.
- Kudos for the legal clinics courses – nice combination of practical skills with community support.
- Kudos for used of Community Based Learning, which is especially helpful to students, because the placements are so relevant to their work
- Kudos for offering PL 101 at Jefferson for Middle College. Could this opportunity be expanded to serve students at other high schools in our service area?.

Observations and Recommendations

Observations:

The Academic Affairs Council has concerns that assessment of the summative portfolio has been reduced to a resume, cover letter and one well-polished legal writing sample. Although this may well reflect what employers want to see, and are willing to review, do you think this accurately represents what students should know and be able to do? It also seems focused on getting a job rather than assessing what students have learned.

The Academic Affairs Council has concerns about this statement: “the ability to meaningfully assess program outcomes while at the same time measuring individual student attainment of every degree and certificate outcome has been problematic.” This statement was not adequately explained in the program review. The solution offered was to have fewer focal areas and fewer artifacts collected, but it is not clear how that will address the problems. Do these artifacts adequately represent student learning across the program? Moreover, the “high nineties success rate” on projects is not clearly meaningful. It’s quite possible to achieve “high nineties” attainment if the benchmark is set low. In fact, the setting of useful benchmarks of achievement is a key part of assessment that is not addressed in either this PR or in annual assessment reports. Also, the “high nineties” comment suggests that assessment is focused on accountability, rather than the role that assessment can and should play in improving teaching and learning.

It seems to the Academic Affairs Council that Paralegal courses would translate well to online instruction, but exploration of this has been somewhat limited. More online offerings, within the limits to comply with ABA accreditation, might be a healthy addition to the program.

Regarding students who experience disabilities: the comment that accommodations made by the college may exceed accommodation that would be made in the workplace is difficult to assess; however, as an educational institution, PCC's legal obligation is to provide reasonable accommodations in the learning environment and support students in reaching their educational and professional goals. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes a reasonable accommodation in your program, or are interested in developing more proactive collaborations, please consult Disabilities Services.

Administrative Response to Paralegal Recommendations

What is the SAC planning to do to improve teaching and learning, student success, and degree or certificate completion, for on-campus and online students as appropriate?

Support for team retreat. The Academic Affairs Council is not clear why funds are needed for a team retreat. Given that the argument is that SAC day does not work because SAC members are working, what exactly is envisioned? Could SAC Day be held at an alternative time using resources available to support SAC Day?

Support for short term certificates, including the Legal Assistant certificate. The Academic Affairs Council supports the development of short term certificates; however, Paralegal needs to find alternatives to the CAS courses for the Legal Assistant certificate.

Support the E-Discovery certificate and a stackable Career Pathways certificate. The Academic Affairs Council supports the development of these certificates and the training for instructors to offer them online.

What support do you need from administration in order to carry out your planned improvements?

- **The office for the full-time faculty is in need of furniture to make the space more appropriate for student and other program meetings. This upgrade will allow the program to better serve our students.** Cascade leadership is aware of these requests and will allocate resources for office improvements when the resources are available and the timing is right.
- **Paralegal would like to receive funds to purchase Word Rake, a program add-on to Microsoft Word that will help students edit their writing for clarity, brevity, and**

proper grammar. Word Rake is editing software for professionals, with thousands of algorithmic rules to give accurate context-specific feedback and offer solutions to writing issues. Please make this request, including cost estimate, to your Division Dean.

- **Due to consistent feedback from the PAC, other industry professionals, and program alumni, the Paralegal Program would like to request Oregon ECourts access so that our students can learn how to e-file legal documents with Oregon state courts.** Please make this request, including cost estimate, to your Division Dean.

- **The Paralegal Program would like to be provided financial resources for placement testing for computer skills for students entering the program.** What would the costs for this be? How would the results be used? What resources or requirements for remediation would be in place? How could this be integrated with the work of the Digital Literacy Work Group?

- **In furtherance of enhancing students' computer skills, the Paralegal Program would also like to provide access to the DocuSign program.** Please make this request, including cost estimate, to your Division Dean.

- **The program would like approximately \$5,000, to provide our instructors with additional professional development opportunities, as well as funds to pay for a team retreat for our SAC, to engage in team-building. SAC day does not work well for most of our faculty members, who work full-time in the legal community.** Please work with your Division Dean, POD, and the TLC to maximize use of existing resources for faculty training and development.

- **Paralegal requests resources to hire part-time casual employees for a total of 750 hours per academic year, to assist the program with various tasks. This request would come to approximately \$12,000.** Please work with your Division Dean to maximize use of existing administrative support resources.

- **Regardless of whether Paralegal receives our requested Social Equity grant, we would like the college to provide supplies to our legal clinic events.** Please work with your Division Dean.

Closing

In closing, we want to again thank the Paralegal Program for sharing the results of your program review with us. We enjoyed learning more about the discipline, your successes and plans for the future. We look forward to supporting your ongoing work on continuous program improvement.

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Kendra Cawley, Dean of Academic Affairs

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