

Program Review Year 2009 – 2010



Paralegal Program Associate Degree: Career Option and Transfer Option Certificate

Program Review Team Members:

Name

Title

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DATE: February 5, 2010

SECTION SIX: SUMMARY

I. CONCLUSIONS: PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

A. List and describe the program's major strengths, based on information obtained in the Program Review. Cite evidence for each identified strength.

AREA OF STRENGTH	EVIDENCE
Approval by the American Bar Association	Only 4 colleges in Massachusetts and no programs in New Hampshire currently have this distinction. Prospective students often comment that the reason they chose NECC's program is because it is ABA approved.
"Program coordinator provides strong and capable leadership and fosters an open and nurturing environment for the students to learn and give feedback."	Area of strength identified by ABA at their last cite visit. Supported by student surveys and the site visit team's meeting with students.
Dedicated, caring, committed faculty	Area of strength identified by ABA at their last cite visit. Supported by student surveys and the site visit team's meeting with students.
"The curriculum is sound."	Area of strength identified by ABA at their last cite visit. Number of students who transfer to 4 year institutions. Massachusetts Transfer Compact. The emphasis on practical skills.
"The graduates are well prepared for their careers."	Area of strength identified by ABA at their last cite visit. Supported by graduate surveys as well as the site visit teams' meeting with graduates.
Active Legal Advisory Board	See minutes in Appendix 2.
Excellent employment prospects.	See Occupational Outlook Handbook http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm

Highly professional faculty with both academic credentials and practical experience with paralegals who are committed to the success of their students.	See Chart 6s in Appendix 1. Also supported by students and graduate surveys.
Membership in the American Association for Paralegal Education and Massachusetts Paralegal Association.	See Section Four, part ID and Section Four, part VIC for explanation of the benefits.
Effective, intensive academic advising.	See Section One, part IVC for an explanation of the benefits.
Collaborative relationships within the college and with community agencies.	See Section One, part IID Section Four, part VI and Section Six
Curriculum strongly supports student learning outcomes.	Section Three Appendix 3
Paralegal Program Orientation Guide	See Section One, part IVB
Student and graduate feedback is solicited and changes are made to the program accordingly.	The Program surveys graduates and students on a yearly basis and regularly makes changes to the program based upon this feedback.
Retention rate that is higher than that of the college	Section Two, part ID
Paralegal Club	The activities of the Paralegal Club provide the paralegal students with access to guest speakers, tutoring seminars, and a connection to other students as well as the club advisor.
The Program supports professional development activities of program coordinator and faculty.	Funding is available through Perkins Grant.

B. List and describe the program's weaknesses or areas in which improvement is desirable, based on information obtained in the Program Review. Cite evidence for each identified weakness or area for improvement.

WEAKNESS OR AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT	EVIDENCE
<p>Insufficient accessibility of paralegal program courses, especially in the evening. This includes number of courses, when the courses are offered, and mode of instruction.</p>	<p>Paralegal courses are not always available to students when they need them. Paralegal courses have been cancelled due to low enrollment.</p> <p>Other evidence comes from feedback during information sessions and advising, as well as student and graduate surveys.</p> <p>Students must be exposed to other teaching styles and modes of instruction. See Section One, part IB</p>
<p>Legal Collection is becoming inadequate and out of date.</p> <p>Fenton Judicial Center, the state law library in Lawrence, is no longer open in the evening.</p>	<p>The library has had to cut subscriptions to some of the legal resources. This may have a negative impact on our next ABA site visit unless we can add these resources back to the collection in the near future. Area of improvement recommended by the ABA. See Section One, part IB</p> <p>Due to state budget cuts, the Fenton Judicial Center is no longer open in the evening, impacting the ability of evening students to do their library assignments.</p>
<p>Lack of computers and technology for student use, specifically with law specific software.</p>	<p>Area of improvement recommended by the ABA. See Section One, part IB</p> <p>Other evidence comes from faculty requests and student and graduate surveys.</p>

<p>Advising and admissions activities, especially during the summer and January break.</p>	<p>See Section Four, part IA The Program Coordinator has been advising approximately 70 students per semester, which is an enormous task on top of teaching, interviewing all new applicants, recruiting, and other coordinator responsibilities. A lot of the advising and admissions work of necessity is done in the summer and over January break with no corresponding stipend for the amount of work that is actually done. The current stipend provided by the Academic Advising area covers 30 hours for summer and January break combined. The actual amount of time spent is actually triple that.</p>
<p>Low minority enrollment.</p>	<p>Chart 3. Area of improvement recommended by the ABA. See Section One, part IB</p>

II. ACTION PLAN

For each identified weakness or area in which improvement is desirable, submit an Action Plan. *(When designing the Action Plan, a suggested plan would include the elements of Process Management using a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle.) (Note: Add as many of the following tables as necessary.)*

Problem	Improvement Activity	Person Responsible	Date of Activity	Findings
<p>Insufficient accessibility of paralegal program courses, especially in the evening. This includes number of courses, when the courses are offered and mode of instruction.</p>	<p>Develop plan integrating hybrid, online, and Saturday classes into the schedule.</p>	<p>Program Coordinator and Division Dean</p>	<p>2010</p>	
<p>Analysis:</p>				

Problem	Improvement Activity	Person Responsible	Date of Activity	Findings
<p>Legal Collection is becoming inadequate and out of date.</p> <p>Fenton Judicial Center is no longer open in the evening.</p>	<p>Work with Dean and Director of Library Services to find additional funding sources to purchase books and to pay to open Fenton at least one evening per week.</p>	<p>Program Coordinator and Dean</p>	<p>2010-11</p>	
<p>Analysis:</p>				

Problem	Improvement Activity	Person Responsible	Date of Activity	Findings
<p>Lack of computers and technology for student use, specifically with law specific software.</p>	<p>Investigate computer and software needs. Make written recommendation.</p> <p>Work with Dean to budget for recommended items.</p>	<p>Melissa Wholley</p> <p>Program Coordinator and Dean</p>	<p>Spring 2010</p> <p>AY2010-2011</p>	
<p>Analysis:</p>				

Problem	Improvement Activity	Person Responsible	Date of Activity	Findings
Advising and other admissions activities during summer and January break	Work with Dean of division to find funding for staff associate and program coordinator for summer and January break work.	Program Coordinator	2010-11	
Analysis:				

Problem	Improvement Activity	Person Responsible	Date of Activity	Findings
Low minority enrollment.	Collaborate with the Director of Enrollment Services and continue outreach efforts.	Program Coordinator	Underway	
Analysis:				

III. RESOURCES REQUESTED

Complete the following chart, including quotes from vendors, diagrams for requested space, and draft postings as appropriate. (Note: Add rows, increase row height, etc., as needed.)

1. EQUIPMENT				
Item	Justification	Vendor (include contact information)	Cost	Date Needed
Computers	ABA requirement Section One, part IB			
Law specific software	ABA requirement Section One, part IB			
2. PERSONNEL				
Position (identify as faculty, staff, etc.)	Justification	Credentials/area of content expertise related to curriculum	Salary	Date Needed
Staff Associate for Summer	The funding for the current staff associate ends in June. Since the budget is not approved for staff associates until sometime in the fall there is no money available during August which is the busiest month in terms of admissions and registration activities.			
Stipends for January and Summer work (Coordinator)	Current coordinator gets some funding for summer work through Academic Advising, but it does not cover the number of hours actually worked. No funding is received for work done over January break.			
3. SPACE				
Type of space requested	Justification	Description (include square feet, construction requirements, e.g., plumbing, electricity, data ports)	Cost	Date Needed
Reconfiguration of Paralegal Office area	With some reconfiguration of the current space, space could be made for computer terminals for student and faculty use.			

