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ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT FORM AY2025-2026**Program(s) in the review:** Paralegal Studies AAS/PBCT, Legal Studies BA**Specialized Accrediting Agency (if applicable):** American Bar Association (ABA)**Campuses where the program is delivered:** ☒ Anchorage ☐ KOD ☐ KPC ☐ MSC ☐ PWSC**Year of last review:** AY2019-2020**Final decision from last review:** Continuation**PROGRAM SECTION (Due on March 1)****Program Review Committee:**

Asst. Prof. Kristin Knudsen, JD, MJS, Legal Studies Program Co-Chair; Asst. Prof. Amy Doogan, JD, BSN, Program Co-Chair; Asst. Prof. Emily Waters, MA, JD; Asst. Prof. Elizabeth Perry, JD.

1. Demonstrate that the program has responded to previous recommendations.

Recommendation 1: *The program offers too many core and elective courses each semester. The program must focus on long-term course planning and enrollment management, and it should develop or update a course-sequencing document that serves as a pathway through the degree for students.*

How do you know the recommendation has been successfully achieved? (2500 characters or less)

Since the time of the review, the program has undergone a period of transition and rebuilding and, as a result, documentation of all responsive action and decision making is limited. Despite this limitation, the current three-year course offering plan represents a significant step toward meeting the intent of the recommendation.

The four-year plan reflects increased attention to long-term course planning by mapping anticipated course offerings over multiple academic years. It demonstrates a more intentional rotation of core, selective, and elective courses. For example, only six core classes are offered every semester. The remaining core courses have been placed on an alternating rotation to limit the number offered each semester while maintaining a clear and timely pathway for students to complete all degree requirements. The program has reduced the total number of elective and selective offerings and now schedules remaining electives in a structured rotation designed to fill four elective slots per semester. This approach helps minimize overlapping and competing course offerings.

Actions taken to date (2500 characters or less)

A four-year course rotation and modality plan has been developed which can be adapted, as needed. Consistently under-subscribed courses have been removed from the course rotation schedule. Summer course offerings have been eliminated. Legal Studies is collaborating with the Criminology & Criminal Justice program to expand the number of cross-list courses to enhance programmatic efficiency and to foster inter-professional education efforts. The program has developed sample academic plans for each degree program that serve as model pathways for students to follow in completing degree requirements on time. Increased collaboration and interaction with the College of Health Advising Center.

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Evidence of success to date (2500 characters or less)

Overall, average enrollments in core Legal Studies courses have remained steady during the most recent review period as compared to the 5-year period preceding it, while the average enrollments in elective courses have improved. This is notable given the overall reduction in enrollments at the university during the review period. The program's strategic enrollment efforts (combined with its expansion of course offering modalities) put it in a strong position for enrollment/programmatic growth as the university fully transitions into the post-pandemic period.

Recommendation 2: *Further increases in enrollments and class sizes will be needed to justify additional faculty. In the meantime, course schedules may need to be adjusted to address uneven enrollments across courses.*

How do you know the recommendation has been successfully achieved? (2500 characters or less)

We reduced the number of courses offered to accommodate a minimal staff availability occasioned by the loss of experienced teachers. We have also lost experienced adjunct instructors due to retirement. Class sizes are now at maximum in introductory course (LEGL A101), so we can begin to offer a second section concurrently in an alternate modality. Courses with heavy writing workloads (LEGL 356) may be offered once annually in an alternate modality. The need to replace the part-time term position with a full-time position is clear as the program reaches pre-pandemic enrollment. Another option under consideration is to revive or build low barrier courses at the 200- level with cross-discipline-application to build interest in the program.

Actions taken to date (2500 characters or less)

Immediately following the previous program review, the number of full-time faculty positions in Legal Studies was reduced from 5 to 4, and a variety of strategic enrollment initiatives were implemented (see #1, above). Additionally, the program reduced the frequency of adjunct instructor hires.

Evidence of success to date (2500 characters or less)

Overall, average Legal Studies class sizes remained steady during a period of dramatic enrollment declines at the university, as well as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Legal Studies enrollments declined 3.2% during the review period when compared to the preceding 5-year period, compared to an overall enrollment decline of 33% for UAA. Furthermore, Legal Studies enrollments are rebounding and continuing to improve. Since AY 2021-2022, total Legal Studies enrollments have increased by more than 13%. The total number of low enrollment courses during the review period has been reduced by more than a third when compared to the preceding 5-year period, and the between-section enrollment variability has been reduced as well.

Recommendation 3: *The program may benefit from additional attention on enrollment management. The need for additional faculty should be reevaluated after course enrollments improve.*

How do you know the recommendation has been successfully achieved? (2500 characters or less)

Course enrollments have remained remarkable stable during the review period - which is an achievement in and of itself, given the COVID-19 pandemic and broader enrollment decline at the university. The program is well positioned to grow moving forward - both in terms of its capacity to manage growth, but with new insights and newly formulated strategies for student recruitment and retention.

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Actions taken to date (2500 characters or less)

In addition to the strategic enrollment initiatives described in #1 and #2 above, the Legal Studies program continues to actively review enrollment and major metrics to assess the program's performance, and to identify new opportunities for programmatic growth. As an example, the faculty will be re-designing the program's Legal Studies Internship course offering schedule and placement site outreach and management to ensure that internship enrollments and faculty instructional effort are maximized in the most efficient way possible.

Evidence of success to date (2500 characters or less)

Enrollment is steadily increasing and course progression can be offered without turning to adjuncts.

Recommendation 4: *The need for additional student support resources should be addressed. The program is encouraged to work with the Student Success Center to determine how to best address that need.*

How do you know the recommendation has been successfully achieved? (2500 characters or less)

The program has undertaken a concerted effort to collaborate with its assigned COH Academic Program Advisor to clarify course offerings and course rotation sequences, to resolve student issues/challenges, and to promote graduate opportunities. As a result of this improved interaction and collaboration, the advisor has taken more interest in the legal field and program subject matter. The working relationship has improved, so that we are notified of issues earlier and that referrals to the advisor are made promptly.

Actions taken to date (2500 characters or less)

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Evidence of success to date (2500 characters or less)

Legal Studies student persistence metrics have consistently improved, with more than 80% of students returning both from Spring to Fall, and from Fall to Spring. Course pass rates for Legal Studies courses are once again consistently above 80%, after a decline prior to the previous review.

2. **Demonstrate the centrality of the program to the mission, needs, and purposes of the university and the college/community campus. Include how the program is integrating (or planning to integrate) intentionally designed opportunities for students to develop the four core competencies (Effective Communication; Creative and Critical Thinking; Intercultural Fluency; and Personal, Professional, & Community Responsibility). (3000 characters or less)**

The Legal Studies program has 3 degree options – an AAS in Paralegal Studies (AAS), a BA in Legal Studies (BA), and a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Paralegal Studies (PBC). We also offer a minor in Legal Studies. Our AAS, BA, and PBC are approved by the American Bar Association. These options make our programs accessible to students from varied backgrounds and allow each student to choose the degree or certificate that will best satisfy their learning and professional needs while still being assured they will receive a high-quality, student-centered education. These options also allow us to prepare students to work locally as legal support

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professionals immediately after graduation and provide a crucial, rigorous undergraduate foundation for students who plan to attend law school. Many of our graduates go on to work as legal professionals or lawyers in Alaska, which furthers the university's stated goal of helping meet the need for workforce creation and community development.

Department faculty are dedicated to continuous improvement of teaching practices to meet the university's goal of maximizing student success. We center high-impact teaching practices by providing opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning in most courses and offering capstone courses, LEGL A443 (Civil Liberties) and LEGL A485 (Alaska Native Law & Tribal Courts). We also provide opportunities for community-engaged learning. We have an internship requirement in which students must complete 150 hours of work at a law firm or legal organization; in recent years, we have placed students in private firms and at organizations including the Alaska Innocence Project, the Alaska Legal Services Corporation, and the State of Alaska Office of Administrative Hearings. Last year, course faculty piloted a new community-engaged learning program where students in LEGL A356 (Legal Research, Writing, & Analysis) were paired with a practicing attorney for assistance with their research and writing skills; the program was a success, and faculty are considering the possibility of expanding it to students in other classes in the future.

The department also provides students with learning experiences that center the university's four core competencies. To perform successfully as law students or legal professionals, our students must have effective communication skills, and our faculty have intentionally designed opportunities for students to develop these skills in every course through discussions and writing assignments. We encourage development of critical thinking skills by helping students think through complex legal issues in our direct teaching and by providing students with assignments, discussion, and exam questions that require them to move beyond the memorization of concepts and learn to apply them to novel scenarios. Course offerings include choices that provide intercultural literacy and a required internship ensures professional and community responsibility.

3. Demonstrate program quality and improvement through assessment and other indicators.

i. AAS Paralegal Studies

- *1) Demonstrate understanding of fundamental principles of the legal discovery process; 2) Conduct effective and comprehensive legal research using commonly available legal research databases; 3) Analyze statutes, case law, and secondary sources and synthesize into convincing legal arguments; 4) Draft standard legal documents in accordance with commonly used stylistic conventions in legal practice.*

Describe your key findings for these outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

The Legal Studies Exit Exam is a major assessment tool for the program. All students take the Exit exam on graduation. The exam has remained the same during the past period of this review, with minor wording changes. The exam tests students' command of fundamentals of discovery, legal research, understanding of legal argument and the difference between primary and secondary authorities, ability to determine meaning of statutes, the structure of the US legal system and the ability use common legal conventions in writing and citation, as well as some basic principals of civil and criminal law. Students are informed that it is NOT graded. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the average score was 50.9; in 2020-2021, 56.7; in the 2021-2022 academic year, the average score was 53; in 2022-2023, it was 59; in 2023-2024, it was 59 but in 2024-2025, it was 67.3, an increase of 17 points from the first pandemic era class cohorts, and 13 points over the first class to graduate after the pandemic.

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Describe actions taken to improve student learning for these outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

Following the advice of the Legal Studies Advisory Committee, the exam is being rewritten and modernized this year to incorporate changes to national examinations and to be stored in Blackboard Ultra. This should result in a clearer alignment of the exit exam with the program goals. In addition, the program has taken on more interaction with our partner law schools with a view to ensuring students who plan on graduate school are well-prepared. Finally, the opening of the Havelock Trial Simulation Courtroom to classes inside the courtroom, with students using it for simulation of courtroom activities has resulted in marked increase in enthusiasm for completing the back-ground work of research, analysis, and developing argument.

Describe evidence that these actions are working. (3500 characters or less)

The performance of the legal studies students at the opening of the Trial Simulation courtroom is a demonstration of their capacity. In addition the improvement in scores, notwithstanding misalignment, is an inditia of the improvement in student learning outcomes. Finally, we have demonstrated steady employment of our graduates in our post-grad surveys.

ii. BA Legal Studies

- *1) Demonstrate understanding of fundamental principles of the legal discovery process; 2) Conduct effective and comprehensive legal research using commonly available legal research databases; 3) Analyze statutes, case law, and secondary sources and synthesize into convincing legal arguments; 4) Draft standard legal documents in accordance with commonly used stylistic conventions in legal practice.*

Describe your key findings for these outcomes. Programs may enter "See above" if there is a significant overlap of outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

See above for a discussion of the exit examination. In addition, we provide copies of artifacts to our Legal Studies Program Advisory Committee to evaluate every year and respond to the feedback that we receive. Of the 9 artifacts (Develop and execute legal research plans using law library resources and commonly used legal research databases) presented to the LSPAC in 2024, on a scale of 0-2, the average scores from the community tracked close to the faculty evaluation of student performance. This means that faculty are aligned with the needs and expectations of the legal community. On average, the LSPAC assessed the performance as meeting expectations, with only one of the nine students averaging a score below expectations.

The BA students are able to take advantage of a wider range of courses, including more demanding writing courses. It is notable that some AAS students take advatage of the opportunity to continue and obtain a BA. Our BA graduates report in surveys that about half are employed in public service (Court system, public defender, prosecutor's office, executive branch) and the remainder in private legal positions . Both the 2021 Graduate survey (8 responses) and the 2026 graduate survey (6 responses) reported one graduate employed in a field other than law. We have also noted that AAS students are taking the opportunity presented by the full articulation between the programs to continue their education by getting a BA.

Describe actions taken to improve student learning for these outcomes. Programs may enter "See above" if there is a significant overlap of outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

See above. In addition, the mentorship program established in 2025 by Professor [REDACTED] in Legal Research, Analysis and Writing is being continued by Professor [REDACTED]. This program pairs a student with an

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attorney volunteer who helps coach the student in the use of online legal research and legal writing. This program gives the student "real life" feedback at a point where it is most useful, as this course is foundational, and at the same time advertises our program to potential job placement.

Describe evidence that these actions are working. Programs may enter "See above" if there is a significant overlap of outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

See above.

iii. PBCT Paralegal Studies

- *1) Demonstrate understanding of fundamental principles of the legal discovery process; 2) Conduct effective and comprehensive legal research using commonly available legal research databases; 3) Analyze statutes, case law, and secondary sources and synthesize into convincing legal arguments; 4) Draft standard legal documents in accordance with commonly used stylistic conventions in legal practice.*

Describe your key findings for these outcomes. Programs may enter "See above" if there is a significant overlap of outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

See above.

Describe actions taken to improve student learning for these outcomes. Programs may enter "See above" if there is a significant overlap of outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

see above

Describe evidence that these actions are working. Programs may enter "See above" if there is a significant overlap of outcomes. (3500 characters or less)

see above

- b. **Demonstrate program quality and improvement through other means, for example, maintaining specialized accreditation, using guidance from advisory boards/councils, responding to community partners and local needs, maintaining currency of the curriculum, implementing innovative program design, intentionally integrating high-impact teaching and learning practices into the program, and meeting indications of quality in distance education, such as the C-RAC Standards. (3500 characters or less)**

Following a successful site visit, the Legal Studies program was notified of continued approval by the American Bar Association (our accrediting body) on Feb. 7, 2025. In addition to regular review by the ABA's Standing Committee on Paralegals, the program submits artifacts for annual review by the Legal Studies Program Advisory Committee (LSPAC), as required by the American Bar Association. The LSPAC includes members of the local legal community, both lawyers and non-lawyer professionals. Data for 2020 through 2022 LSPAC reviews are not available, owing to staff turnover, but the 2023 and 2024 LSPAC reviews of artifacts showed students continued to meet expectations. The 2025 LSPAC review examined our Exit Exam, and determined it should be updated. This process is underway to more closely align with current national paralegal certification exams and our core curriculum. The 2025 LSPAC review also identified student weakness in legal vocabulary acquisition. Faculty agreed that students need additional reading skills and vocabulary acquisition in our field. As a result, faculty developed 3 low-barrier 1-credit online courses (Legal Terminology, a "how to" on legal research at the UAA library, and a "how to" on reading legal opinions) designed to appeal to students in other law-related fields as well as our program. At this point, the plan is to offer these initially as experimental courses.

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The complete turnover in faculty since the last review has resulted in a re-examination of the curriculum, both in terms of cost, delivery, and integration of more current content in a rapidly changing legal environment. For example, the decision was made to reduce reliance on Core Grammar for Lawyers, a fee-based course, and to substitute a Khan Academy free grammar course, in Legal Research, Analysis & Writing, a core course. The Health Law course was redesigned by Prof. [REDACTED] to more closely align with clinical workers' experience and shifted to an asynchronous online modality to fit their schedules. In its first offering this semester, the course filled. For the first time, LEGL 487 Trial will be taught in the John Havelock Trial Simulation Courtroom, which lends itself to much more realistic simulations. Our new faculty have especially benefited from regular meetings with our college instructional designer, especially in the online courses, which has improved adoption of the new CMS. In addition, the faculty have re-examined the course sequencing to reduce barriers to completion within time, while at the same time maintaining the standard required for ABA approval. A new 4-year course schedule is being developed, following the contraction resulting from loss of permanent faculty. Finally, with infusion of new faculty, the process of refreshing standard core courses and, considering faculty expertise, developing new elective courses to substitute for stale electives, is underway.

- c. **Demonstrate program quality and improvement through other means, for example, maintaining specialized accreditation, using guidance from advisory boards/councils, responding to community partners and local needs, maintaining currency of the curriculum, implementing innovative program design, intentionally integrating high-impact teaching and learning practices into the program, and meeting indications of quality in distance education, such as the C-RAC Standards. (3500 characters or less)**

The 2025 graduate survey results demonstrate that our students are finding work in the law-related fields or going on to graduate school - only one respondent reported being unemployed and looking for work. Our 2026 Employer survey has not yet been deployed.

4. Demonstrate student success and the closing of achievement gaps.

- a. **Analyze and respond to the disaggregated data in the data sheet for your program. Provide clarifications or explanations for any positive or negative trends indicated by the data, and discuss what you are doing to close any achievement gaps. The Student Success program review metrics are Junior Graduation Rate, Associate Graduation Rate, Semesters to Degree – Graduate Programs, and Course Pass Rates by Course Level. (3500 characters or less)**

JUNIOR GRADUATION RATE: The data clearly show the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is no coincidence that the data show a Junior Graduation rate decline trajectory beginning in 2023, after years of 100% Junior Graduation rates. While it is difficult to identify, specifically, how the pandemic impacted student matriculation through the program, faculty have (in concert with the COH Advising Center) endeavored to proactively engage students and find creative solutions for degree/certificate completion. More broadly, faculty have continued to ensure that the program provides asynchronous online and hybrid courses course modalities to accommodate student schedules and to assist students who've moved out of Alaska.

ASSOCIATE GRADUATION RATE (4-yr): Data are calculated on very small sample sizes, which results in estimate instability and wide variability. No discernable trends are detectable.

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ASSOCIATE GRADUATION RATE (6-yr): No data available.

ASSOCIATE GRADUATION RATE (8-yr): No data available.

COURSE PASS RATES:

In the immediate post-pandemic period, there was a decline in the Undergraduate LD pass rate in Legal Studies courses beginning in 2023. More detailed analyses of these data reveals that this decline was attributable to one LD Legal Studies course - LEGL A101 - for AY 2023, 2024, and 2025. While only time will tell, since neither the primary instructor nor the modality (asynch online) for LEGL A101 changed during the review period, our working hypothesis is that the observed declines represent a post-pandemic cohort effect for those students whose high school careers were significantly interrupted by the pandemic.

The overall stability of the Undergraduate UD pass rate in Legal Studies courses (above 80%, on average) bolsters the pandemic cohort effect hypothesis.

- b. Numerous US universities, and a number of programs across UAA, have holistically evaluated their programs and courses to look for unintended barriers to student success. For example, the Purdue IMPACT (Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation) effort between 2011 and 2018 resulted in 325 courses being redesigned to incorporate research-based strategies known to increase student outcomes, while maintaining academic quality and rigor. Other efforts have involved course sequencing and scheduling, resulting in improved success even for [graduate students](#). Please consider your program's graduation rate, course pass rates, and similar data sources to reflect on any barriers to students moving through the curriculum, and describe what steps you have taken (or are planning to take) for possible redesign of gateway courses, course sequence changes, course scheduling, or similar efforts. (3500 characters or less)**

Legal Studies faculty have developed a four-year course rotation and modality plan to assist students in planning their academic planning. Additionally, the faculty worked to identify the appropriateness and alternatives for legal writing pre-requisites and offerings to streamline progress for Legal Studies majors and eliminate unnecessary or redundant courses.

Finally, working with the Dean's Office, we identified a Legal Studies requirement of B grades in writing courses as an overly-demanding requirement, and reduced that requirement to C grades in writing courses. The C grade is consistent with the accreditation requirements for our paralegal studies program and will allow additional students to progress towards graduation without unnecessarily repeating courses, or erecting an insurmountable barrier towards a degree for other students.

- c. Provide evidence of the overall success of students in the program. For example, you might talk about the percent of students in post-graduation employment in the field or a related field, the percent of students who go on to graduate school or other post-graduation training, and/or the percent of students**

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who pass licensure examinations. You might also give examples of students who have been selected for major scholarships or other competitive opportunities. [Please do not use personally identifiable information.] (3500 characters or less)

As noted in the answer to question 3, our 2025 graduate survey shows that all but one respondent is employed in the legal field, showing that our graduates are very successful at finding work in our field after they graduate. In addition, we have former students who are currently attending law school at University of Washington and other institutions. We have also this year significantly increased the number of our students who are participating in the UAA Honors College program, indicating that our students have a commitment to academic achievement and public and community service.

5. Demonstrate demand for the program.

- a. Analyze and respond to the data in the data sheet for your program. Provide clarifications or explanations for any positive or negative trends indicated by the data, and discuss what you are doing to improve. The Demand program review metrics are Ratio of Out-of-Discipline Credit Hours to Total Credit Hours, Number of Program Graduates Who Continue Education, and Number of Program Graduates Who Return to UAA to Pursue an Additional Program. (3500 characters or less)**

RATIO OF OUT-OF-DISCIPLINE CR HRS: The ratio declined in AY 2025, after years of stability hovering around 70%. This is likely an artifact of a program change in Criminology & Criminal Justice that limits majors ability to count upper-division LEGL courses as JUST program electives. Legal Studies offers LEGL A101 as a Social Science GER, and that course continues to enroll strongly (38 students per section), so it is unlikely that changes in GER course student composition explains that decline.

Even with the observed decline, that approximately half of Legal Studies credit hours are accounted for by other disciplines is strong evidence of interest in LEGL courses across the university.

Given the relatively small size of the Legal Studies program, it is impressive that, on average, 8 students each year continued their education - most of whom we know went on to professional/graduate school - is quite impressive. It is also encouraging to see that a smattering of students also continue on to additional degrees here at UAA.

6. Demonstrate program productivity and efficiency.

Analyze and respond to the data in the data sheet for your program. Provide clarifications or explanations for any positive or negative trends indicated by the data, and discuss what you are doing to improve. The Productivity and Efficiency program review metrics are Five Year Degree and/or Certificate Awards Trend, Student Credit Hours per Full-Time Equivalent Faculty, and Full-Time Equivalent Student per Full-Time Equivalent Faculty. (3500 characters or less)

It's important to note that the Legal Studies is a YOUNG program, having been initiated just 12 years ago in 2014. All three degrees/certificates began that year. In that short amount of time, the Legal Studies program has graduated 181 students (107 BA's; 46 AAS's; 28 PBCT's). After seeing a "surge" in BA graduations after the program was first launched (due to changes of major, from JUST to LEGL), that degree program has stabilized, consistently graduating 8-10 students each AY. Similarly, the AAS program (which "took the place of" the Paralegal U) graduates about 5 students per AY. Finally, there are one or two students who already have baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines who complete the PBCT each AY. Altogether, as the data show, the Legal Studies program consistently graduates 15 students each year. And, importantly, this consistency has been achieved during an incredibly challenging - and dynamic - time at UAA and in the program.

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SCH/FTEF: The data show that while Legal Studies experienced a 4-year decline in SCH/FTEF, it has turned the corner in 2025 - nearly returning to 2022 levels. Based on enrollment data for this AY, we anticipate this measure returning to 2021 levels and improving even more.

While there is not "standard" benchmark for this measure beyond "higher values are better", and knowing that it is relative to both university context and discipline - it can be viewed in combination with FTES/FTEF. The overall pattern for FTES/FTEF for the Legal Studies program is identical to that for the SCH/FTEF metric: recovery after a period of decline. Ideally, the Legal Studies program would like to achieve an FTES/FTEF ratio ranging between 15 and 17 to maintain programmatic efficiency. Importantly, however, even during its period of decline the Legal Studies FTES/FTEF ratio did not go below 11.0 (with 10.0 often used in the industry to indicate a low ratio).

Given the extensive strategic enrollment steps the program has taken, in combination with the addition of the Trial Simulation Courtroom, and what looks to be a modest resurgence in university enrollments, we are optimistic that the program will be able to achieve it's target of 15.

Optional: Discuss the extent to which, if any, extramural funding supports students, equipment, and faculty in the program. (3000 characters or less)

In Spring 2025 the Justice Center brought the John E. Havelock Trial Simulation Courtroom online, with classes being scheduled in the courtroom beginning in Spring 2026. The development of the courtroom - a project SIX YEARS in the making - is anticipated to be transformational for the Legal Studies program in many ways - from student recruitment and retention, to in-class learning opportunities via simulation, to enhanced community partner collaborations via real-world practitioner trainings, to inter-professional education (e.g., forensic social work, forensic nursing, etc.) and much, much more.

7. Assess program distinctiveness, as well as any duplication resulting from the existence of a similar program or programs elsewhere in the University of Alaska System. Is duplication justified, and, if so, why? How are you coordinating with UAA's community campuses and the other universities in the system? (2500 characters or less)

UAA is the only campus in the UA system to offer a BA in Legal Studies or a Post-Baccalaureate certificate in Paralegal Studies. UAF offers an AAS in Paralegal Studies, but their program is exclusively focused on providing the practical courses necessary for students to obtain direct workforce entry as paralegals; while our program provides similar practical courses, it also provides the broader historical and theoretical courses that are appropriate to a bachelor's degree. Our broader course base allows students who initially come to UAA to obtain an AAS in Paralegal Studies to transition easily into a Legal Studies BA, and many students have chosen to take this path in recent years. It also ensures that students who graduate with a BA in Legal Studies will have the qualifications they need for direct workforce entry as paralegals and the rigorous academic preparation they need to continue to law school.

In addition, many of the courses in our program are taken by students in programs other than Legal Studies. LEGL A343 (Constitutional Law) is cross-listed with Political Science, and program faculty are currently working on having two other Legal Studies classes cross-listed with the Political Science program. LEGL A347 (Courts) is cross-listed with the Criminology & Criminal Justice program, and additional Legal Studies courses are required for Criminology & Criminal Justice majors. In some cases, these cross-listed classes have led students from other disciplines to take advantage of our Legal Studies minor, affording them additional preparation for their future educational endeavors.

While our ABA approval requires us to offer a certain number of courses face-to-face each semester, our program has worked to offer an online pathway to all of our degrees. We are committed to offering all our

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required courses and most of our electives in an online asynchronous or a synchronous Zoom format at least once every four semesters. This allows students from other UA campuses to complete their program requirements from their home communities. In recent years, we have had students from campuses in Kodiak and the Kenai Peninsula graduate from our programs. We also have had students who have started their educations here and moved out of state be able to continue in and graduate from our programs due to the remote learning possibilities our program offers.

8. Assess the strengths of your program and propose one or two action steps to address areas that need improvement. (4000 characters or less)

Demand for our program remains strong. Due to a reduction in faculty and the lingering effects of the pandemic, our enrollments in AY 2021-2022 and AY 2022-2023 decreased somewhat from AY 2020-2021, but by AY 2024-2025 those enrollments had started to rebound. Our most recent data show that enrollment for Spring 2026 classes is robust, exceeding our three-year average by 16 percent and our five-year average by 13 percent.

Our program does a good job of retaining its students. The students in our programs tend to be non-traditional students when compared to the student body at large. Most of them work, many full-time, while attending school, and many have family responsibilities. Due to the competing demands on their time, it is not unusual for our students to start their coursework and then take breaks of a year or more before resuming it, making it take longer for them to complete their degrees. Despite these issues, our recent graduation rates are strong when compared to those of the university as a whole. The 4-year graduation rate for our AAS program was 100% in 2024 and 50% in 2025, which were more than double the university average (24% in 2024 and 22% in 2025) for their respective years. The junior graduation rates for our BA program also exceeded the university average in four out of the five reported years (100% v. 67% in 2021, 100% v. 67% in 2022, 83% v. 62% in 2023, and 67% v. 66% in 2024).

Our course passage rates have remained consistent and solid over the reported period. Our program only offers three lower-division courses – LEGL A101 (Introduction to Law), LEGL A215 (Legal Ethics & the Role of the Legal Professional), and LEGL A235 (Wrongful Convictions), and our overall passage rates for those courses during the reporting period ranges between 69% and 81%. This is slightly lower than the average passage rates for the university as a whole, but this is likely attributable to the fact that almost 70% of our lower-division enrollment is in LEGL A101, which has no prerequisites or registration limitations and attracts students with little or no background in Legal Studies, as opposed to a 200-level course in which students would already have some background in the subject area. Our passage rates for our upper-division courses range from 79% to 89% during the reporting period, which is again slightly lower than the university as a whole, perhaps due to the nature of the material and the near-complete turnover of program faculty and reliance on adjuncts that took place during the reporting period.

A highlight from the reporting period is that the American Bar Association renewed their official approval of our programs in early 2025. Getting approval renewed was a long and complex process that culminated in a site visit where ABA staff met with professors and students to discuss the program and sat in on a course meeting. Because we have the only Legal Studies bachelor's degree in Alaska that is approved by the ABA, retaining that approval was of key importance for our program.

In addition to our approval by the ABA, our program maintains strong support from the local legal community. Our program is guided by the Legal Services Program Advisory Council, which is made up of lawyers, judges, and paralegals from the Anchorage area. The LSPAC is involved in evaluating our programs and assisting us in determining program direction and goals, as well as keeping our program integrated into the local legal community.

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Other than the effects of the pandemic, the main challenge facing our program moving forward is the fact that we have a small, young faculty. In the years between 2019 and 2025, we had a complete turnover of legal studies faculty. Three of our professors retired, two left for other legal jobs, and one moved out of state. As of now, the senior full-time professor in our department started teaching in Fall 2022, and the other two full-time faculty were hired in Fall 2025.

9. **Over the past two years programs and colleges conducted a comprehensive review of all fees. Moving forward, per the [UAA Course Fee Policy](#), programs conduct a comprehensive review and re-approval of all course fees as part of the cyclical Academic Program Review process. The college's strategic budget officer will conduct a review, and the dean will review the results and work with the program on any changes. The authorized lead, per the Course Fee Policy, will submit forms for each fee, whether to delete, retain, or change the fee. Forms are due to OAA by the regular February 15 deadline.**

What was the general outcome of the comprehensive fee review? (2500 characters or less)

Again, since the last program review, the Legal Studies program has experienced a period of transition in faculty, which has limited the availability of documentation detailing all responsive actions and decision-making processes. A review of current course-related fees shows that they remain minimal and are directly tied to instructional and accreditation-related needs. Specifically, LEGL 356 and LEGL 489 include a \$137 fee to support student access to Westlaw Precision database, a necessary tool for effective legal research.

Committee chair first name last name: Amy Doogan & Kristin Knudsen

Date: 5/5/2026

END OF PROGRAM SECTION

DEAN SECTION (Due on April 1)

1. Evaluation of Progress on Previous Recommendations

For each recommendation from the last program review, indicate if the recommendation has been met or has not been met and provide commendations and guidance as appropriate. (2500 characters or less for each recommendation)

Recommendation 1: The program offers too many core and elective courses each semester. The program must focus on long-term course planning and enrollment management, and it should develop or update a course-sequencing document that serves as a pathway through the degree for students. Recommendation has been met.

The program updated its course offering plan and is keeping that plan updated. Following the Provost's guidance, this course offering plan includes multiple academic years and specifies the number of sections to be taught based on student needs. It also specifies modalities for each course. In addition, the program created sample plans for the AAS in Paralegal Studies and the BA in Legal Studies. This work with course rotation and sample plans has enhanced the program's efficiency and improved the student experience.

Several noteworthy changes were recently implemented. LEGL A377 (Evidence, Investigation, and Discovery) and LEGL A487 (Trial and Advanced Litigation Processes) are now offered only once per academic year. On average, 15.8 students were enrolled each year in LEGL A377, and 12.0 were enrolled each year in LEGL A487. Multiple sections were not needed. The program is now investigating the option of offering LEGL A495 (Legal

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Studies Internship) only once per year. The program currently offers two sections per year, with an average of 8.8 students in each section. Current student demand justifies reducing the number of sections from two to one per year. In addition, the program should continue to monitor enrollments in LEGL A367 (Civil Procedure and Pretrial Practice). The program currently offers this course each semester, with an average of 11.4 students per section.

The program should continue to monitor enrollment trends and update its course offering plan. In addition, the program should specify a course rotation plan for program electives. Recent data show that enrollments increase significantly when new electives are offered.

Recommendation 2: Further increases in enrollments and class sizes will be needed to justify additional faculty. In the meantime, course schedules may need to be adjusted to address uneven enrollments across courses. Recommendation has been met.

As summarized above, the program successfully adjusted course schedules to address uneven enrollments across courses. The program is encouraged to continue that work, with a special focus on the internship and elective courses.

There are currently 3.53 full-time equivalent faculty in the program, and that number is expected to increase to 4.0 full-time equivalent faculty at the beginning of next academic year. This should allow the faculty to offer approximately 30 courses per year, which is sufficient to meet student needs and demands. Total course enrollments declined from 2021 to 2023 and then increased from 2023 to 2025 (overall, the average change in annual enrollments during the period of review was zero). At this point, it does not appear that additional faculty are needed.

Recommendation 3: The program may benefit from additional attention on enrollment management. The need for additional faculty should be reevaluated after course enrollments improve. Recommendation has been met.

Student credit hour production has varied during the period of review (dropping from 2021 to 2023 and then increasing from 2023 to 2025). Metrics of program productivity and efficiency show similar trends. Despite annual variability in these metrics, the data show that program demand has remained stable during the period of review. Given that this was a period of transition (for both students and the program [which experienced 100% turnover in faculty]), it is notable that program demand was not negatively impacted and has remained stable.

Given that program demand has remained relatively stable, there is currently no need for additional faculty. Four full-time equivalent faculty positions are approved for next academic year, and this will be sufficient to meet student needs and demands.

Recommendation 4: The need for additional student support resources should be addressed. The program is encouraged to work with the Student Success Center to determine how to best address that need. Recommendation has been met.

The program forged a stronger connection to academic advising and is now partnering with academic advising on a more regular and frequent basis. This has been helpful to clarify course offerings and rotation sequences and to address barriers to student success. The program is encouraged to form similar connections and partnerships with college and university recruitment staff. This should help the program enroll a greater number of students.

Provide your analysis of #2-8 below, based on the data provided and the program's responses above.

2. Centrality of the Program (2000 characters or less)

The program demonstrates centrality to the mission, needs, and purposes of the university and college. In particular, the program makes a strong contribution to the dual mission of the university, combining traditional degree programs with career and technical education programs. The program's degree options include an associate degree, a baccalaureate degree, and a post-baccalaureate certificate (all graduation requirements for the associate degree count towards the baccalaureate degree). The program also offers a minor. As stated by the program, these options in legal studies "prepare students to work locally as legal support professionals immediately after graduation and provide a crucial, rigorous undergraduate foundation for students who plan to attend law school."

Faculty are clearly committed to student success and continuous improvement. High impact teaching strategies are regularly tested and implemented to improve student learning outcomes. The opening of the John E. Havelock Trial Simulation Courtroom will significantly enrich student learning. Additionally, the program intentionally integrates opportunities for students to develop core competencies in effective communication; creative and critical thinking; intercultural fluency; and personal, professional, and community responsibility. As explained below, the faculty should continue to explore how they will integrate these opportunities without implementing minimum grade requirements (students must already earn a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 (C) in all major requirements). Instead, the faculty should consider where in the program these competencies will be developed.

3. Program Quality and Improvement (2000 characters or less)

The program regularly collects a significant amount of assessment data from students and alumni, advisory board members, internship supervisors, and employers. However, not all of these data are used to identify strategies to improve the program's quality. As recommended in the AY24 assessment report, the program should more thoroughly analyze the detailed data that are collected for assessment. While the program regularly implements strategies to improve quality, these strategies are not always informed by the rich assessment data that are collected each year (see AY22 assessment report). The program is encouraged to not collect data simply for reporting requirements to the American Bar Association (ABA), but for identifying promising strategies for improving program quality. In addition, the faculty should consider whether the ABA approval is necessary for the success and reputation of the program and its students. In 2002, the program voluntarily withdrew the ABA approval of the Minor in Legal Studies, after determining that students were more interested in gaining broad exposure to the American legal system than in acquiring technical legal skills appropriate for employment as a paralegal. As student and market demands continue to evolve, it is important to periodically reassess the mission and purpose of all program options and to review the advantages and disadvantages of the ABA approval for each option. The ABA approval may be more relevant for preparing students to work as legal support professionals than to prepare students for law school.

Overall, the program is clearly committed to quality improvement (and remained committed to quality improvement even when experiencing 100% turnover in faculty positions). Faculty efforts are successful, and student learning has improved. Moving forward, faculty are encouraged to make greater use of assessment data to support their continuous improvement efforts.

4. Student Success and the Closing of Achievement Gaps (2000 characters or less)

The program's junior graduation rate dropped during the review period, but the average rate for the program remained 15 percentage points higher than the average rate for all UAA programs (80% versus 65%, respectively). The program should ensure that its junior graduation rate will rebound from its low point in 2025.

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Course pass rates remained relatively stable for upper division courses (up an average of 0.5 percentage points each year) but declined for lower division courses (down an average of 2.6 percentage points each year). The faculty identified that the cause of this decline is primarily due to higher failure rates in the introduction course (LEGL A101, Introduction to Law). This was the only lower division course with an average pass rate below 75% during the review period (pass rate = 72%). Faculty should also pay attention to course pass rates in LEGL A215, Legal Ethics and the Role of the Legal Professional (only 76% of students passed this course during the review period). These two courses (LEGL A101 and LEGL A215) are the first courses students take for both the associate and baccalaureate degrees. It will be important for faculty to identify how to increase student support in these courses. This should then increase student success in the major.

As noted in May 2025 during the most recent revision of the baccalaureate degree, faculty should also revisit the requirement of a C in all Legal Studies courses, a C in Oral Communication Skills and a B in the Writing and English courses. If certain levels of achievement are required for specialized accreditation, the faculty will want to consider where in the program these are achieved.

5. Demand (2000 characters or less)

As noted by the program, the number of out-of-discipline credit hours declined substantially in 2025 (down from 70% in 2024 to 44% in 2025). This likely happened because the BA in Criminology and Criminal Justice no longer accepts legal studies courses as electives. Despite this change, student seat count in legal studies courses increased by 4.5% from 2024 to 2025 (the student seat per course count also increased). Students at UAA are still interested in the Introduction to Law (LEGL A101) course as a general education requirement. During the review period, an average of 2.2 sections were offered each year, with an average enrollment of 45.2 students per section. As mentioned above, the faculty should investigate how to support students in this lower division general education and major requirement course. The program also has several courses that are cross-listed with other departments (Political Science, Journalism and Public Communications, Justice).

To further increase demand, the faculty are encouraged to partner with university and college efforts to recruit students. The large number of students taking the Introduction to Law course likely provides important opportunities to ensure that students are aware of program options in legal studies. Faculty should continue efforts to enhance recruitment activities and increase the number of students enrolling in legal studies courses and programs.

6. Productivity and Efficiency (2000 characters or less)

The program's degree trend shows volatility in the first half of the last 10 years, but has stabilized to an average of 14.25 per year from 2022 to 2025. The program options in legal studies demonstrate similar levels of efficiency as other programs at UAA.

The program is hoping to increase productivity and efficiency. Faculty are encouraged to identify specific strategies to achieve these goals. As noted by the program, the John E. Havelock Trial Simulation Courtroom provides new opportunities to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation. It also provides opportunities to increase program demand and improve the ratio of out-of-discipline credit hours to total credit hours (see section #5). As noted by the program, this courtroom will provide important opportunities for interprofessional education (a high impact teaching practice that could be used to improve student success; see section #4).

The program may also want to consider expanding recruitment activities outside of Anchorage, within the southcentral region. Recent population growth in neighboring boroughs may provide opportunities to expand legal education outside of Anchorage.

7. Duplication and Distinctiveness (2000 characters or less)

The University of Alaska Fairbanks offers an Associate of Applied Science in Paralegal Studies (and a Minor in Paralegal Studies). During this period of review, an average of 5.6 students graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in Paralegal Studies from UAF. The UAA and UAF programs both meet local market demands. This duplication is justified to fill local workforce needs. There are no other undergraduate (or graduate) degrees in legal studies within the University of Alaska system. Importantly, though there are many pathways to law school, UAA offers the only undergraduate degree that specifically lays the academic foundation for students who later wish to advance to graduate programs in law. One distinctive aspect of the AAS in Paralegal Studies and the BA in Legal Studies is the requirement of a Legal Studies Internship (LEGL A495). Students are required to complete a specially arranged practicum experience that emphasizes professional skills development and expands knowledge and skills through supervised placement in law-related work settings.

Overall, the legal studies programs at UAA are distinctive and avoid duplication.

8. Strengths and Ideas for Moving Forward (2000 characters or less)

During this period of review, the program demonstrated great resilience and stability amid significant transitions. The program's enrollment patterns were generally stable and consistent with university averages. Moving forward, the program should continue to monitor the junior graduation rate. While still above the university's rate, the program's rate has declined in recent years. The program should also monitor pass rates in lower division courses. The faculty may need to implement new strategies to support student success in these courses (for example, implementing peer mentoring and additional high impact teaching practices).

The program has always maintained a strong focus on assessment. The associate, baccalaureate, and post-baccalaureate degrees are all approved by the American Bar Association. Moving forward, the program should ensure that all its assessment data are used for program improvement. In addition, the program should re-evaluate the mission and purpose of each program option and should review the advantages and disadvantages of voluntarily maintaining approval by the American Bar Association for each program option. The program should also complete a thorough review of catalogs, major requirements, courses, and sample plans. Most importantly, it should reconsider minimum grade requirements.

The program successfully increased its operational efficiency. New sample plans and course offering plans were developed and are regularly updated to account for changes in enrollment patterns. These efforts optimized course scheduling to meet student demands and reduced the number of under-enrolled courses. The program should now strengthen its efforts to recruit students and increase the number of students enrolling in legal studies courses and programs. Increasing the number of students enrolling in legal studies courses and programs will be important to further improve productivity and efficiency.

9. Comprehensive Fee Review (2000 characters or less)

There are three courses with fees (LEGL A356, A398, and A489). Each fee is \$137 and provides students with enhanced access to Westlaw, a comprehensive legal research platform. The college's strategic budget officer completed a review of these course fees and determined that no changes were needed. Consequently, the authorized lead submitted updated forms to request that these fees be retained.

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Dean's Final Evaluation

I commend the program for: (number and list the specific commendations in the narrative box, 2000-character limit)

- 1) Addressing previous recommendations and developing course rotation schedules that improve efficiency and the student experience;
- 2) Maintaining stable enrollments and sustaining efforts to support students during a period of transition for both students and the program;
- 3) Making a strong contribution to the university's dual mission, combining traditional degree programs with career and technical education programs; and
- 4) Remaining committed to quality improvement, even when experiencing complete turnover in faculty positions.

I recommend that the program: (number and list the specific recommendations in the narrative box, 2000-character limit)

- 1) Continue efforts to enhance recruitment activities and increase the number of students enrolling in legal studies courses and programs;
- 2) Update catalog, major requirements, courses, and sample plans to ensure consistency in program descriptions and requirements, remove hidden prerequisites, remove options requiring coordinator approval, keep general education requirements as graduation requirements instead of major requirements, avoid additional requirements in general education, identify specific elective courses, ensure courses are appropriately numbered, and remove minimum grade requirements (i.e., revisit the requirement of a C in all Legal Studies courses, a C in Oral Communication Skills and a B in the Writing and English courses);
- 3) Complete assessment reports that make greater use of the detailed assessment data that are collected each year;
- 4) Reassess the mission and purpose of each program option to ensure continued alignment with student and market demands, and review the advantages and disadvantages of each program option remaining voluntarily approved by the American Bar Association;
- 5) Examine the pass rates in lower division courses (particularly LEGL A101 and A215) and identify ways to increase student support; and
- 6) Identify specific strategies to further increase productivity and efficiency.

Dean's overall recommendation to the provost: Continuation -- Program is successfully serving its students and meeting its mission and goals. No immediate changes necessary, other than regular, ongoing program improvements.

If an Interim Progress Report is proposed, recommended year: Select N/A or Academic Year.

If a Follow-up Program Review is proposed, recommended year: Select N/A or Academic Year.

Proposed next regular Program Review: AY2033

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Dean first name last name: Jay C. Butler, MD**Date:** 4/1/2026END OF DEAN SECTION

PROGRAM OPTIONAL RESPONSE SECTION (Due within one week of receiving dean's review)

Are you submitting an optional response? If yes, add your response below, enter your name and date, and follow the guidance below for submission. If no, enter your name and date, and follow the guidance below for submission.

No

Optional Response: (10,000 characters or less)

After discussion, the Legal Studies Program Faculty has no response except to thank the Dean for the thorough and positive review.

Committee chair first name last name: Amy Doogan & Kristin Knudsen **Date:** 4/8/2026END OF PROGRAM OPTIONAL RESPONSE SECTION

PROVOST SECTION (Due on August 1)**Provost's commendations, additional or adjusted recommendations, if any, and other general comments (3500 characters or less):**

I agree with the dean's commendations, and particularly wish to call out the programs' intentional contributions to the university's dual mission.

While I also generally agree with the dean's recommendations, I am adjusting them to the following.

- 1) Continue efforts to enhance recruitment activities and increase the number of students enrolling in legal studies courses and programs;
- 2) Reassess the mission and purpose of each program option to ensure continued alignment with student and market demands, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each program remaining voluntarily approved by the American Bar Association. As part of that reassessment, update catalog, major requirements, courses, and sample plans to ensure consistency in program descriptions and requirements, remove hidden prerequisites, remove options requiring coordinator approval, keep general education requirements as graduation requirements instead of major requirements, avoid additional requirements in general education, identify specific elective courses, ensure courses are appropriately numbered, and remove minimum grade requirements (i.e., revisit the requirement of a C in all Legal Studies courses, a C in Oral Communication Skills and a B in the Writing and English courses);
- 3) Examine the pass rates in lower division courses (particularly LEGL A101 and A215) and identify ways to increase student support; and

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I would like the program to particularly focus on #3, exploring ways to improve pass rates in LEGL A101 and LEGL A215 without reducing rigor, as well as the revised #2. The program and college should meet with the senior vice provost to discuss the plan for curriculum and program updates and possible revisions.

While I agree with the dean's overall recommendation of continuation, the program will want to come forward in AY2026-2027 with a comprehensive clean-up for the AY2028-2029 catalog, per the dean's recommendations, BOR and UAA policies, and best practices.

Finally, I want to thank the program for the comprehensive review of course fees as part of this Program Review process. The program retained all 3 course fees at the same fee level. Controlling costs to students is a significant part of UAA's affordability initiative, and I wish to thank the program for its efforts in this area.

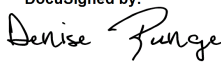
Provost's decision: Continuation -- Program is successfully serving its students and meeting its mission and goals. No immediate changes necessary, other than regular, ongoing program improvements.

Interim Progress Report: Select N/A or Academic Year.

Follow-up Program Review: Select N/A or Academic Year.

Next regular Program Review: AY2032

Provost's signature:

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Date: June 26, 2026