

**2021 ANNUAL ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM**  
**(Due October 15 to the dean)****PROGRAM SECTION (Due to the dean on October 15)****Submission date:** 10/15/2021**Submitted by:** Ryan Fortson, Associate Professor and Program Coordinator, hrfortson@alaska.edu**Program(s) covered in this report:** Legal Studies BA and Paralegal Studies AAS/PBCT  
*(Programs with suspended admissions and new programs in the first year of implementation are not required to complete this form.)*

If you selected "Other" above, please identify. (100 characters or less)

**College:** College of Health**Campuses where the program(s) is delivered:** ☒ Anchorage ☐ KOD ☐ KPC ☐ MSC ☐ PWSC**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** American Bar Association**If explanation is necessary, such as only some of the certificates and degrees are covered by the specialized accreditation, briefly describe:** All degree programs are approved for paralegal education by the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Paralegals.**INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT LEARNING CORE COMPETENCIES**

In 2020, UAA launched a consensus-based, deliberative process to identify the key skillsets that help students achieve academic and post-graduation success. After a year-long process that included students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and employers, the UAA community identified four "core competencies" at the heart of a quality UAA education. Students develop mastery of these competencies through curricular (e.g., courses), co-curricular (e.g., internships, conferences), and extra-curricular (e.g., student clubs) learning experiences.

After the stakeholder-based process in AY20, UAA conducted a pilot project focusing on the core competency of Personal, Professional, and Community Responsibility (PPCR). This decision was based on input from the 2020 Annual Academic Assessment Retreat.

Question #1 below is designed to engage program faculty in thinking about how they can or already do promote student learning in this core competency.

**1. Personal, Professional, and Community Responsibility: The knowledge and skills necessary to promote personal flourishing, professional excellence, and community engagement.**

- **What would you hope a student would say if asked where in your program or support service they had the opportunity to develop proficiency in this Core Competency? (500 characters or less)**

That s/he graduates from the program with confidence both in directly marketable skills such as legal research and the accepted conventions of legal writing, and in indirect skills such as public speaking. Students should further have a sense of the role of law in managing public interactions and opportunities for the law to improve lives.

- **Do you have an example that could be a model for the university of an intentionally designed course, assignment, or activity that showcases the student learning in this core competency? ☒ Yes ☐ No**

**If yes, please briefly describe. (500 characters or less)**

There are several activities spread across multiple courses that advance this core competency. Students learn how to draft multiple different types of legal documents, including formatting and proper legal citation requirements. Students learn to assert themselves in a simulated trial and in oral arguments before a judge on a written legal motion. Students learn about the history of law and its impact on society. And students are required to take an internship to engage with the legal community.

- **Do you have any ideas about where your program or the university might develop other intentionally designed opportunities for students to develop proficiency in this core competency? ☒ Yes ☐ No**

**If yes, please briefly describe. (500 characters or less)**

We are in the process of constructing a simulated courtroom that will not only provide a more accurate environment for our students to practice legal skills but will also draw in local legal practitioners and encourage interaction between UAA Legal Studies students and the legal community. This is a joint project with the State of Alaska Department of Law.

## **PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**2. Please list the Program Student Learning Outcomes your program assessed in AY21. For each outcome, indicate one of the following: Exceeded faculty expectations, Met faculty expectations, or Did not meet faculty expectations.**

***Example: Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and formats – Exceeded faculty expectations.***

C.1 Interpret and accurately apply legal terminology and foundational principles of substantive and procedural law in the analysis of legal issues -- Interpretation of Legal Terms and Principles: Met Faculty Expectations

C.2 Interpret and accurately apply legal terminology and foundational principles of substantive and procedural law in the analysis of legal issues -- Application of Legal Terms and Principles: Met Faculty Expectations

**3. Describe your assessment process in AY21 for these program student learning outcomes, including the collection of data, analysis of data, and faculty (and other, e.g., advisory board) conversations around the findings. (750 characters or less)**

SLOs are evaluated in April using student work that incorporates the SLOs selected by the faculty in the Fall for evaluation. Legal Studies has 9 SLOs (with 26 measures). All student work is taken from the same course, with the names removed for evaluation purposes. Typically, work from later in the standard course sequence is chosen. The samples are then evaluated on the same scale (0-2) by both faculty and members of the Legal Studies Program Advisory Committee. Each sample is scored by each of the four Legal Studies faculty and by four LSPAC members. This provides comparisons between faculty standards and those of the local legal community. Results are shared and discussed with both the faculty and the LSPAC the following Fall.

**4. What are the findings and what do they tell the faculty about student learning in your program? (750 characters or less)**

Scores between faculty and LSPAC are highly comparable for both outcomes. Outcome C.1 received a faculty score of 1.19 and an LSPAC score of 1.17. Outcome C.2 received a faculty score of 1.08 and an LSPAC score of 1.04. A score of 1.0 = Meets Expectations. This demonstrates consistent standards of evaluation between faculty and the local legal community. It also shows that our students as a whole are slightly above expectations for an entry-level paralegal. These results are similar to the results from 2020 for two different SLOs (Produce superior quality written work, and Identify and apply rules of ethics). The program consistently hovers around 1.0 for all SLOs and measures.

**5. Based on the findings, did the faculty make any recommendations for changes to improve student achievement of the program student learning outcomes? Please describe the recommended action, what improvement in student learning the program hopes to see with this change, the proposed timeline, and how the program will know if the change has worked. If no recommendations for changes were made, please explain that decision. (750 Characters or less)**

No specific recommendations for change were made other than continued emphasis on teaching students to write using accepted legal conventions. While the program always strives to exceed expectations, the program consistently meets industry expectations as measured by an external review body. Most work evaluated consists of legal documents meant to simulate those drafted in legal employment. Legal writing is highly stylized and often very different from academic writing to which students are accustomed. The results suggest sustained success in educating a diverse student body to write using these specialized legal conventions.

## PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS AND ASSESSING IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

- 6. In the past academic year, how did your program use the results of previous assessment cycles to make changes intended to improve student achievement of the program student learning outcomes? Please check all that apply.**

- ☒ Course curriculum changes
- ☐ Course prerequisite changes
- ☒ Changes in teaching methods
- ☐ Changes in advising
- ☒ Degree requirement changes
- ☐ Degree course sequencing
- ☒ Course enrollment changes (e.g., course capacity, grading structure [pass/fail, A-F])
- ☐ Changes in program policies/procedures
- ☐ Changes to Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs)
- ☐ College-wide initiatives (e.g., High Impact Practices)
- ☐ Faculty, staff, student development
- ☐ Other
- ☐ No changes were implemented in AY21.

**If you checked "Other" above, please describe. (100 characters or less)**

- 7. Do you have any information about how well these or other past improvements are working? Are they achieving their intended goals? Please include any data or assessment results that help you demonstrate this. (750 characters or less)**

Changes have been made in various courses to improve success in achieving SLOs in required courses based on past instructional experience. In LEGL 215, there is a reduced emphasis on traditional exams and more use of interactive quizzes with immediate feedback on individual course units. In LEGL 315, increased use of primary sources and multimedia content illustrates the impact of external forces on legal change. The briefing assignment in LEGL 487 was simplified to provide students a firmer legal foundation on the topic prior to drafting. And the ethics assignment in LEGL 489 was altered to more accurately reflect a realistic legal malpractice scenario. All adjustments are improving intended SLO outcomes as reflected in student work.

- 8. Programs are not required to respond to question #8 below for their report due on October 15, 2021. Question #8 will be required for the next round and moving forward.**

9. Do you have any examples of post-graduate success you want to highlight? For example, major scholarships, the percent of students who pass licensure examinations, the percent of students accepted to graduate programs, the percent in post-graduation employment in the field or a related field. (750 characters or less)

Several of our students have found permanent employment through internship placements arranged by the department, including at the Federal Public Defender Office, the Judge Advocate General, and P.F. Chang Corporate. We continue to send students onto law school, one of whom received multiple scholarship offers of over \$100,000 each. And within the last year, two of our recent Legal Studies graduates finished law school, passed the Alaska Bar exam, and are now practicing attorneys in the state.

**DEAN SECTION (Due to the program on January 15)**

1. Based on the program's responses above, what guidance and support do you have for the program moving forward? Is there a particular area the program should focus on? (750 characters or less)

The Legal Studies BA and Paralegal Studies AAS/PBCT engage students in opportunities to demonstrate personal, professional, and community responsibility (most notably in the internship). The simulated courtroom will also offer important opportunities for students to develop proficiency in UAA's core competencies. Two program student learning outcomes were assessed, and faculty expectations were met for both. The program continues to meet industry and student expectations. Courses and assignments are continuously improved to facilitate the achievement of program student learning outcomes. In preparation for next year's assessment report, I encourage the program to examine equity gaps in student success and address those gaps.

2. Is there something the program is doing particularly well in terms of its processes for the assessment and improvement of student learning, including the closing of equity gaps, that might serve as a model for other programs? If yes, please explain. You may skip this question. (750 characters or less)

Dean's signature:

André B. Rosay

Date: 1/6/2022