

2022 ANNUAL ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM
(Due October 15 to the dean)**PROGRAM SECTION (Due to the dean on October 15)****Submission date:** 10/13/2022**Submitted by:** Ryan Fortson, Assistant Professor, Legal Studies Program Coordinator,
hfortson@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. The minor is no longer approved.**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 is phasing in the integration of the core competencies into ongoing processes, including program student learning outcomes assessment. Personal, Professional, and Community Responsibility (PPCR) was integrated into the AY21 Annual Academic Assessment Report. The AY22 Annual Academic Assessment Report now also integrates Effective Communication.

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

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

- **If last year you provided your program's current or planned example of an intentionally designed course, assignment, or activity that develops and showcases the student learning in this core competency, please discuss that implementation and any observations you have regarding how well it is working. (500 characters or less)**

We identified several assignments across the curriculum geared toward advancing this core competency, with a particular focus on simulation activities aimed at promoting professional excellence. These assignments included drafting legal pleadings, trial simulations, and oral argument. We conduct student and alumni surveys, and these simulation activities score highly in both surveys as providing essential job skills.

- **If last year you *did not* identify a current or planned example of an intentionally designed course, assignment, or activity that provides students the opportunity to develop and showcase this core competency, please identify one now. (500 characters or less)**

B. *Effective Communication: The knowledge and skills necessary to engage in effective communication in diverse contexts and formats.*

- **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)**

Legal studies and law as a discipline are highly focused on preparing potentially to present arguments to judges and juries. We would hope our students exit our program more confident in their writing and public speaking abilities, with a particular emphasis on communicating to a legal audience. We want our students to begin to "think like a lawyer" and be comfortable with legal terminology and styles of argument, skills we promote in a variety of courses.

- **Provide your program's current or planned example(s) of an intentionally designed course, assignment, or activity that showcases the student learning in this core competency. (500 characters or less)**

For our ABA approval, students are required to take 18 credits of "Legal Specialty" courses that "emphasize practical paralegal skills." We have a required sequence of Legal Specialty courses that incorporate assignments such as: contract drafting; drafting a complaint; drafting discovery requests; writing case briefs and internal memos; writing client advice letters; conducting mock interviews; briefing legal issues and defending them at oral argument; and participating in a simulated trial.

PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

2. Please list the Program Student Learning Outcomes your program assessed in AY22. 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.

H. Assess and critique theories of law and the impact of American law, both historically and currently, on social and economic relationships, access to public resources, and individual liberties. -- Exceeded faculty expectations

I. Construct from disparate fields of substantive law a unified theory of law as a mechanism for ordering social and economic relationships. -- Met faculty expectations

3. Describe your assessment process in AY22 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)

PSLOs are evaluated in Spring using student work that incorporates the PSLOs 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)

The PSLOs evaluated last year applied only to BA (not AAS or PBCT) students. Scores between faculty and LSPAC are comparable for both outcomes. Outcome H received a faculty score of 1.33 and an LSPAC score of 1.27. Outcome I received a faculty score of 1.21 and an LSPAC score of 1.17. 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. The program consistently hovers around or above a 1.0 for all PSLO measures over the past several years.

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 as a result of these scores. These PSLOs had not previously been measured, and students in the BA program seem to be meeting and to some extent exceeding faculty and practitioner expectations regarding the relationship of law to its broader social and historical context.

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 AY22.

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)

More courses were offered using a blended methodology (both in-person and synchronously online); given the choice, a significant majority of students chose to attend class remotely. This has been taken into account in decisions about future course offerings, with an intent to balance enrollment, student preference, and pedagogical concerns. The most significant degree change was to decouple the Legal Studies minor from ABA approval, which results in more flexibility of course selection and hopefully better enrollment. It is too early to determine if this will be effective in increasing enrollments in Legal Studies electives, which is our hope.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND THE CLOSING OF EQUITY GAPS

Student success depends on many aspects of a student's experience. On the academic program level, it can relate to correct placement, course sequencing, standardized pre-requisites across sets of courses, the intentional use of high-impact practices, proactive advising, course scheduling practices, etc.

UAA has selected the below metrics as student success metrics for accreditation.

In response to faculty questions and concerns about reporting on these data without more discussion and training, we will spend AY23 exploring together what equity data are and are not, how they can be used responsibly, and what programs can do to close equity gaps in student achievement on the below metrics, as well as to improve overall student achievement on them. UAA has a team participating in the NWCCU Data Equity Fellowship, and that team will help to guide these conversations.

8. PROGRAMS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO RESPOND TO QUESTION #8 FOR THEIR REPORT DUE ON OCTOBER 15, 2022. IT IS HERE JUST FOR THEIR REFERENCE.

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)

Alumni surveys (conducted at 6 month and 2 year marks) of data compiled over the last couple of years show that over 80% of Legal Studies graduates are employed in the legal field. Most of the students not employed in the legal field are not seeking employment there. Multiple graduates work in the Alaska Court System. Others work for ANCSA corporations. Many students go on to law school, with data from the same alumni surveys showing that 10 students were enrolled in or planned on applying to law school. One student got into Georgetown Law School after a Zoom visit to UAA by the Dean of Admissions, who later sent a thank you email about that student.

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? (750 characters or less)

I commend the program for implementing a comprehensive assessment of student learning outcomes. The program relies on both faculty and external practitioners to evaluate student work. Results continue to show that students are meeting or exceeding expectations. I also commend the program for its commitment to continuous improvement. I recommend that the program establish a stronger link between assessment results and program improvement efforts so that it is clear how (a) program improvement efforts are the results of previous assessment cycles and (b) how program improvement efforts will improve student achievement of the program student learning outcomes.

2. What is the program doing particularly well in terms of its processes for the assessment and improvement of student learning, for example, the achievement of the Program Student Learning Outcomes, the closing of equity gaps, or addressing the core competencies? *(750 characters or less)*

I thank the program for implementing a comprehensive assessment of program student learning outcomes and for its commitment to continuous improvement.

Moving forward, the program will want to assess student success and identify what it can do to close equity gaps in student achievement.

Dean's signature:



Date: 1/12/2023