Associate Degree in Paralegal Studies Narrative

**Item 1.**

**Program Goals and Objectives**

The paralegal Studies Associate of Arts degree program at Victor Valley College is designed for students to work in the legal industry by introducing students to legal theory which leads to employment in administrative agencies, governmental agencies, corporations, insurance companies, human resources departments, private and public law offices and other legal environments. Paralegals duties include performing factual and legal research and investigation, drafting legal documents and correspondence, interviewing clients and witnesses, trial preparation and organizing and maintaining court files. Training students in the practical application and the development of current paralegal related job skills is emphasized. Paralegals students will learn to adopt and use computer technology skills in the law setting, using electronic databases and research tools.

**PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Students completing the program will be able to demonstrate:

* Describe the role and function of a paralegal.
* Perform basic Legal Research tasks.
* Develop paralegal skills in case investigation, statutory and case law analysis, in written communication, by drafting basic legal documents.

Paralegals will possess competency in the supportive role Paralegals serve the legal industry in compliance with California Business and Professions Codes 6400 et. Seq. or 6450 et. Seq.

**Item 2.**

**Catalog Description**

The legal profession has evolved to include more paraprofessional assistance in the delivery of legal services to the consumer. Current economic trends and technologies find paralegals filling a space in the consumer market that was once filled only by attorneys. Law firms and corporate legal departments rely on paralegals as cost saving measures forwarded to the client. The Paralegal occupation is expected to grow at a faster than average rate through 2018 according to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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There are two types of legal industry paraprofessionals. California Business and Professions Codes 6400 (c) and California Business and Professions Code 6450 (a) define the duties, responsibilities and obligations that the industry and state regulate.

The primary goal of the paralegal program is to educate and prepare students for employment as paralegals where they can demonstrate competency and ethical standards demanded by and of the profession.

Students must, before entering the program, complete English 101/101H or assess at an English 101 level. The sequencing of courses has been designed to enhance student success in the field. PAL 100, 102, and 103 are the foundational classes that are prerequisite to the higher level legal specialty classes. These three classes should optimally be taken concurrently to provide that firm foundation for success. PAL 104 may be taken concurrent with PAL 100, 102 and 103, but may be taken at any time. A firm foundation in writing and grammar skills and completion of POLS 102 are recommended.

The Paralegal Studies Associate of Arts degree program prepares students to work in the legal industry and other related fields requiring the paraprofessional skills learned through the designed required and elective curriculum. Paralegal duties can include, but not limited to, working under the supervision of an attorney in a law office performing factual and legal research, drafting legal documents and correspondence, interviewing clients and witnesses, case management, computer skills, and calendaring case dockets. **A student must complete a minimum of 18 semester units of American Bar Association approved general education courses in the areas of language and composition, mathematics, social science and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, humanities and the arts.**

*This is not a four year transfer program, is not a substitute for law school, nor is it intended to be used for advanced standing in law school applications. It is not a pre-law program. It is not intended to serve as a preparation for bar examination.*

**Item 3.**

**Required Courses- PARALEGAL STUDIES DEGREE -** Students must complete a minimum of 57-64 units, with a minimum grade of “C” in all paralegal classes. Sequencing Required.

**Units Required: 57-64.0**

**Group I** — All of the following must be completed:

Course # Name Units

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PAL 100-or | Introduction to Paralegal Studies | 3 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| LAW 100 | Introduction to Law and Paralegal Studies | 3 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PAL 101 | Law Office Technology | 3 |
| PAL 102 | Beginning Legal Research | 3 |
| PAL 103 | Beginning Legal Writing | 3 |
| PAL 104 | Ethics for the Paralegal | 3 |
| PAL 200 | LAW Office Management | 2 |
| PAL 201 | Civil Litigation for the Paralegal | 3 |
| PAL 202 | Family Law | 3 |
| PAL 203 | Tort Law for Paralegals | 3 |
| BADM 117 or | Legal Environment of Business | 3 |
| BADM 118 | Business Law | 3 |

**Group II- Electives-** At least 13 Units of the following must be completed:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| CJ 103 | Criminal Law | 3 |
| CJ 104 | Legal Aspects of Evidence | 3 |
| PAL 204 | Wills and Trusts for Paralegals | 3 |
| PAL 205 | Bankruptcy for Paralegals | 3 |
| PAL 206 | California Employment and Labor Law | 3 |
| PAL 207 | Conflict Resolution and Negotiations | 3 |
| PAL 208 | Immigration Law for Paralegals | 3 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| LAW 205 | Mock Trial Advocacy | 3 |
| BET 112 | Spreadsheet: Excel for Windows A/B/C | 3 |
| PAL 138 | Cooperative Education | 1-8 |

Select 18 units from general education credits in accordance with Victor Valley College Associate Degree policy. Coursework must have substantive content and require students to engage in work that develops their communication, quantitative, and analytical skills. General education courses include Social and Behavioral Sciences, English Composition and Literature, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Humanities, Natural Science and Fine Arts. Not included in this section are Business Administration courses, Management and Accounting courses, Performance classes, Technology and Office Skills courses Nursing and Allied Health courses, Criminal Justice and related Police science courses, Real Estate courses, Occupational and Vocational courses, Counseling and Guidance courses, English courses designed for those whose primary language is not English, Physical Education courses, unless enumerated in the required or elective course section.

TOTAL UNITS: MINIMUM UNITS REQUIRED 57/MAXIMUM 64

**Item 4.**

**Master Planning-** The mission of a community college includes preparing students for transfer to a four year institution to continue their education and to train an educated workforce with vocational skills. Legal skills, much like healthcare skills, are necessary to our society and economic stability. High school students desire a designed and aligned opportunity to succeed at increasing levels of preparedness to that end. The legal industry must educate its workforce and the community college needs be a destination for many students and their intended pathways. The legal industry has grown in numbers and skills emerging from technological demands so that employers look for continual training as new advances emerge in the marketplace.

**Item 5.**

**Enrollment/Completer projections annually**- PAL COURSES

Course Program enrollment Retention Success

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PAL 100 | 20 | 19 | 19 |
| PAL 102 | 20 | 18 | 16 |
| PAL 103 | 20 | 18 | 16 |
| PAL 104 | 20 | 19 | 19 |
| PAL 201 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| PAL 202 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| PAL 203 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| PAL 200 | 17 | 17 | 17 |

From the Fall of 2014 to Spring 2015 (the first two semester of records for PAL courses) Paralegal Studies (PAL) courses went from a 77% success rate to **90% success rate** , and improved its retention rate from **91% to 95%.** 2016-17 retention and success rates remain the same. These improved rates remain stable. Both rates are higher than the institutional rates. Since sequencing and pre-requisites have been implemented enrollments have grown to 20 students per the introductory course with an approximate 17-18 students retained and success through the program.

**Item 6.**

**Place of Program in Curriculum Inventory**-

The AA Degree shares courses from Administration of Justice, Business Administration, Business Real Estate, and Political Science. The Paralegal Program is under the Political Science Department, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences.

**Item 7.**

**Similar programs at other Colleges in Service Area**

Most community colleges have a Paralegal Studies Discipline, including Riverside, Chaffey, Mt. San Antonio College.