



SANTA ANA COLLEGE

Legal Studies

1530 W. 17th Street A107-13
Santa Ana, CA 92706-3398

Kristen Robinson, Esq. Co-Chair

Legal Studies/Paralegal Advisory Committee Meeting February, 16, 2024, 11:30 AM by Zoom

1. Attending:

- a. Internal: Kristen Robinson, Program Director & Legal Studies Co-Chair, Kim Smith Legal Studies Co-Chair, David Sauber Legal Studies Full-Time Faculty
- b. External: Justice Delaney (appellate court Justice); Chris Esparza (private paralegal), Thu Ha (private paralegal AJ SoCal), Luigi Guereca (private paralegal, OCPA social media outreach), Jon Hersey (Private Attorney, Partner), Elia Naqvi (Private Attorney, Crim defense, Unity Bar Representative)

2. Kristen: review of department programs and focus

3. Staff News (Kristen)

- a. Full time Hire Underway
- b. Adjunct numbers
 - i. 11 total
 - ii. 5 have OTC and 4 are enrolled this Spring
 - iii. 7 attorneys, 3 paralegals, 1 para/lit support manager (very large trials)
 - iv. Reps from PLC, CLA, World Relief, CAIR, County, corps, big law, tech, family law, workers comp, immigration...
 - v. Looking for more as we build for the BA degree
- c. Kim noted that each faculty member is a great focus area for the college. Kim noted that we are looking for new faculty for the BA degrees. Kristen noted that we are having more in person events
- d. Kim stated these events help create community and broaden reach. Kim said the BA degree will utilize OER/ZTC as much as possible.

4. ABA update - Kristen

- a. Interim Report: Kristen said it is due Oct 2024, we are working on it. Kim noted that David is jumping in as well to work on the report. Kristen noted employment grad data is very high.

5. Program Updates

- a. **Paralegal:** The 2023-24 school year will see approximately 79 graduates. Last year we had 45. Anecdotally, we may be surging in anticipation of the BA degree.
 - i. Kim noted we are provisionally approved to offer a BA in paralegal studies. We will be the first public institution in CA to offer this degree. Kristen noted that we are seeing a rise in the number of

- grads. Students are already interested in the degree. Next 18 months – we will be working on the curriculum. Kim and Kristen noted that symposium
- b. **Pathway to Law** : program updates Kristen Robinson. David asked to explain basics of the program. Kristen noted we have our first grad (David Pham) to complete and pass the bar, and he is now at Army Jag.
 - c. **BA Degree Update** (Kim): Fall 2025 kick off. Lots to do until then. Kristen noted ACCJC, ABA, OCREgional consortium.
6. **Apprenticeship planning grant**: Kim is working with Legal Aid on legal intake for apprenticeships and legal interpreting. Application for planning grant is in. Legal aid received a grant to do intake for a larger group of non-profits in the county: PLC, Legal aid, elder law center. SAC is partnering with Legal Aid on this. Apprenticeships is giving them funding for a living wage.
7. **Legal Clinics**: Kim updated on clinics.
- a. Kim has students that work at naturalization, expungement clinics. There will also be an expungement clinic training on the documents that students can attend. Kim also previewed the SAC Means Business event. Kim is promoting to continuing ed students as well for this event. Kim noted this is a great way to market.
 - b. Kristen commented that there is not a great budget for marketing our programs, so these events are really important to show the community what we can offer. Kim is excited for this event. CLIRRC: is the name of our program. David noted the students appreciate these opportunities.
8. **OTC/ZTC Grant (Kim/Kristen)**:
- a. Kristen explained this is a grant/initiative from the state to adopt free or low cost materials for our courses.
 - b. Kim noted that our department received a grant to work on this project. Waiting for more information from college DE department.
 - c. We were first school to get free CEB for our students – Kim secured this. We also offer Lexis for all of our students.
9. **Dual Enrollment (Kristen)**:
- a. Kristen updated on work with Valley, SAHS, Godinez an Segerstrom. We also work with Nova, SamUelli, and Middle College HS. HS law day coming up and summer law day. Very close work with the HS.
 - b. We have onboarded an adjunct from Valley who is an attorney to teach classes as part of his high school load.
 - c. Kristen explained that the program is mindful of ABA requirements for dual enrollment, so no legal specialty courses are offered. She is very strategic in the connections with the high schools.

Solicit Committee Input

1. **Curriculum Development** :
 - a. Thu asked if alumni come back and take courses, or enroll in the BA degree. Kristen replied that yes, alumni will be eligible for the Pathway to Law School and the BA degree program. The BA will require an associate degree from an ABA-approved program, so our alumni will be ready to enter.
 - b. Thu discussed whether or not paralegals take the bar exam, she noted that there some states where they can take the bar.

- c. Elia Naqvi stated paralegals can't do the bar at this time; she also noted that more than half of the paralegals you talk to discuss the desire to be lawyers in the future. Some students couldn't do pre-law at the time, and still want to attend law school.
- d. Kim said we will keep an eye on this and see how the law schools handle our BA degree. Kristen also said students could go to any graduate degree program with this degree.
- e. Kristen also stated that it is important to note that in accordance with the ABA guidelines, our program is not designed to prepare students to practice law.

2. BA Degree Curriculum

- a. Elia: 25 to 30% could be more of a legal aspect for the curriculum.
- b. Kristen noted that the state and ACCJC guidelines require 9 units or 3 upper level GE;s and there must be at least one class in oral and written communication.
- c. Kim asked Judge Delaney if he sees any specific skills that are needed.
- d. Justice Delaney: Paralegals are utilized very well by the court system and in collaborative spaces. This could be a great way to market the program.
- e. Jon Hersey: Firm: paralegals need sense of process or procedure of either litigation or transactions. This will allow paralegals to take on more roles that are higher level. Paralegals could help evaluate depositions using AI to find other depositions where the witness says things that are the same or different. Understanding the procedure is critical so they know what to do, and understand the technology for litigation is very important.
- f. Kristen said that tech is a focus of the BA degree.
- g. Jon Hersey said he had a great tech presentation on AI and jury selection. Incredible technology. He is happy to share with the program faculty.
- h. David asked what AI language is being used.
- i. Jon said that they are just starting to develop the firm policy for AI and how it can be used. As they analyze the ethics issues, they will adopt the technology. Companies are working on providing tech to the law firms. Most law firms have not taken on the specific software yet either.
- j. David said even colleges haven't decided how to move forward with this yet. David said that once the firms know what they are using, then we will know what programs to teach.
- k. Justice Delaney: paralegals need to understand the process. Courtroom practice, law and motion, pre-trial procedure very important to understand. Paralegals can add value in having seen a trial or being there to know what the attorney will need for the trial. Judge Delaney has found externships for students in Pathway to Law school. Paralegals can also benefit from this internship program. Can even be helpful for transactions
- l. Kristen said that our program will offer academic credit for internship credit.
- m. Justice Delaney said that we could do a court tour program at the courthouse and then offer a lunchtime program. Kim said this is a great addition
- n. Luigi said the program prepared him and CLIRRC really helped him be comfortable communicating with his attorneys. He is currently in the billing department of his firm. While at OCPA he has met other students, and they find our program to be more in-depth. He has found the NSLT program to be very

helpful for being ready for the office. The program has helped him professionally.

3. Action Items

- a. Motion that advisory committee supports and approves the following programs as they support and reflect industry needs:
 - i. Paralegal Associate Degree
 - ii. Paralegal Certificate Program
 - iii. **Paralegal Studies Bachelor's Degree**
- b. Luigi made the motion, Jon Hersey seconded it. **Unanimous support of the motion.**