

<b>PROGRAM NAME:</b> Paralegal/Legal Assistant	<b>AUTHORING TEAM CONTACT:</b> Gage Waggoner, Discipline Lead
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## GUIDELINES

### Time Frames

1. **Scope:**

The time frame of program review is five years, including the year of the review.  
Data being reviewed for any item should go back the previous four years, unless not available.

2. **Deadline Dates:**

January 15th – Program Review Document due to Department Dean for review (Deans may require submissions at their own, earlier due date)  
February 1st – Program Review Document due to Program Review Steering Committee

3. **Years:**

Years 1 & 3 – Implement Action Plan of (CIP) and collect data  
Years 2 & 4 – Analyze data and findings, Update Action Plan  
Year 5 – Write Program Review of past 5 years; Write Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and create new Action Plan

**LENGTH OF RESPONSES:** Information provided to each question may vary but should be generally kept in the range of 1-2 pages or 500-1,000 words.

**EVIDENCE GUIDELINES:** In the following sections, you will be asked to provide evidence for assertions made.

- a. Sources: This evidence may come from various sources including professional accreditation reviews, THECB, Texas Workforce Commission’s CREWS, Institutional Research Office (IRO), National Student Clearinghouse, IPEDS, JobsEQ, EMSI Career Coach, and may be quantitative and/or qualitative. If you are unfamiliar with any of these information sources, contact the Institutional Research Office at: [effectiveness@collin.edu](mailto:effectiveness@collin.edu). Use of additional reliable and valid data sources of which you are aware is encouraged.
- b. Examples of Evidence Statements:
  1. Poor example: Core values are integrated into coursework. (Not verifiable)
  2. Good example: Core values are integrated into coursework through written reflections. (Verifiable, but general)
  3. Better example: Core values are integrating into coursework through written reflections asking the student to describe how s/he will demonstrate each of the core values in his or her professional life and demonstrated through service learning opportunities. (Replicable, Verifiable)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** The Program Review Portal can be found at [http://inside.collin.edu/institutionaleffect/Program\\_Review\\_Process.html](http://inside.collin.edu/institutionaleffect/Program_Review_Process.html). Any further questions regarding Program Review should be addressed to the Institutional Research Office ([effectiveness@collin.edu](mailto:effectiveness@collin.edu), 972.599.3102).

## **Introduction/Preface**

### **□ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Briefly summarize the topics that are addressed in this self-study, including areas of strengths and areas of concern. (Information to address this Executive Summary may come from later sections of this document; therefore, this summary may be written after these sections have been completed.)** Please do not include information in this section that is not already provided elsewhere in this submission. Using the questions in the template as headings in the Executive Summary can provide structure to the overview document.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

##### **What does our program do?**

The Paralegal Studies Program (the “Program”) is a Workforce program that trains competent, effective, and ethical paralegals to work in the community, which includes Collin County, Dallas County, and surrounding counties.

According to the State Bar of Texas, a paralegal is “a person, qualified through various combinations of education, training, or work experience, who is employed or engaged by a lawyer, law office, governmental agency, or other entity in a capacity of function which involves the performance, under the ultimate direction and supervision of a licensed attorney, of specifically delegated substantive legal work, which work, for the most part, requires a sufficient knowledge of legal principles and procedures that, absent such a person, an attorney would be required to perform the task.”

The Program offers two credentials: (1) the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies, which requires both general education courses and paralegal courses and is appropriate for students who do not already have an associate’s or bachelor’s degree; and (2) the Level 2 Paralegal Certificate, which requires only paralegal courses and is appropriate for students who already have an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. As the standard educational credential expected by most employers for entry-level paralegals, the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies and the Level 2 Paralegal Certificate are equal.

The Program broadly and deeply teaches the knowledge and skills that paralegals must possess through a rigorous curriculum consisting of four categories of courses: (1) an introductory survey course; (2) courses devoted to specific areas of substantive law; (3) courses devoted to specific areas of procedural law; and (4) courses devoted to developing specific paralegal skills. Throughout the curriculum, the Program emphasizes the Paralegal’s ethical obligations, legal writing skills, and community service.

The program, which is approved by the American Bar Association (ABA), operates under the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Programs*.

The Program's students pursue many career paths. Many work as paralegals in private law firms, legal aid offices, governmental agencies, or corporations. Others may elect to work as human resource managers, procurement or contract managers, auditors, lobbyists, compliance managers, and parole officers. Still others elect to go to law school and become attorneys. In addition, the Program sometimes has students who have an intellectual or personal interest in a particular legal topic but who do not plan to pursue a career in that field.

**Why do we do the things we do: Program relationship to the College Mission & Strategic Plan.**

The Program shares and furthers Collin's mission "to be a student and community-centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character, and challenging the intellect." Specifically, the Program furthers this mission by both supporting students and adding value to the community in the following ways:

1. The Program develops the skills vital for success in the paralegal profession. Among these skills are the Program's eight stated Marketable Skills: (1) drafting legal documents, such as affidavits, pleadings, discovery, memoranda, and letters; (2) investigating facts and interviewing witnesses; (3) communicating effectively with court personnel, legal professionals, and current and potential clients; (4) researching and analyzing case law, statutes, and regulations; (5) calculating and calendaring legal deadlines; (6) organizing legal file and billing information; (7) assisting attorneys at trials, hearings, and depositions; and (8) complying with the ethical duties regarding confidentiality, competence, and conflicts of interest.
2. The Program strengthens character in that it prepares students to enter an ethical profession. Paralegals, unlike attorneys, are not subject to direct state regulation. Nevertheless, paralegals must still follow the same ethical rules that their supervising attorneys must follow. In addition, paralegals who join, or become certified by, voluntary professional paralegal organizations are bound by the ethical rules or standards promulgated by those organizations. For example, the Code of Ethics of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) provides that "[a] paralegal shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety and shall not engage in any conduct that would adversely affect the paralegal's fitness to practice. Such conduct may include, but is not limited to violence, dishonesty, unethical conduct, discriminatory practices, interference with the administration of justice, and/or abuse of a professional position or public office."
3. The program challenges students' intellect through the rigor of the Program's courses. "A" and "B" students typically spend two or three hours of study outside class for every hour spent in class; a grade of "A" is by no means automatic in Program courses.

In addition, the Program actively supports Collin's six Strategic Goals in the following ways:

1. The Program's student outcomes exceed local, state, or regional accreditation thresholds and goals regarding the number of Program awards each year, the course completion rates, and the integration of marketable skills into the Program curriculum. Section 2 of this Program Review contains the specific statistics and other data that support this conclusion.

2. The program serves as a national exemplar in program and student outcomes in that the Program has ABA approval and, therefore, meets the rigorous standards prescribed in the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*, the gold standard for paralegal education nationally. With its ABA approval, the Program is in the top echelon of paralegal programs nationwide. Collin is also an institutional member of the highly influential American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE).
3. The Program has created pathways to support student transitions both to the workforce as paralegals and, for those students who do not already have a bachelor's degree and wish to earn one, to four-year institutions through two articulation agreements. Section 2 of this Program Review contains descriptions of these pathways and articulation agreements.
4. The Program is continuing to add to these university partnerships through its current discussions with a third area university regarding a potential new articulation agreement.
5. The Program has developed and implemented a more robust course staffing model by increasing its pool of approved adjunct faculty members to maintain continuity of course offerings when an adjunct faculty member may be unavailable to teach in a particular semester.
6. The Program systematically engages its key external stakeholders, which include paralegal employers, professional paralegal organizations, Program graduates, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT), and the Program's Advisory Committee. Section 2 of this Program Review contains descriptions of the ways in which the Program engages these stakeholders.

**Why we do the things we do? Program relationship to student demand.**

The Program's enrollment patterns indicate that students want the Program's paralegal credentials. First, at the Program level, from Academic Year 2018–2019 to Academic Year 2021–2022, the total unduplicated enrollment of Program students increased from 247 to 389.

Second, the enrollment pattern in required Program courses was consistent and strong. Of the courses 12 required courses, five had average section enrollments exceeding 15 in every term in which they were offered, and another six required courses had an average enrollment below 15 in only one term in which they were offered. Only the Program's capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), had an enrollment below 15 in more than one term, but those terms were early in the five-year period. The Program then adjusted the number of LGLA 2339 offerings, resulting in an enrollment exceeding 15 for the duration of the relevant period.

Further, the Program's demographic statistics indicate that the students who want the Program's credentials are diverse. Although the Program's students are disproportionately female compared to the College-wide student population, the percentage of Program students who are female aligns more closely with the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are female. Racially and ethnically, the percentages of Program students who are from historically underrepresented groups are—with one exception—equal to or greater than the corresponding percentages of the College-wide student population. The one exception is the percentage of Program students who are Asian, but that percentage is nevertheless higher than the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are Asian.

**Why we do the things we do? Program relationship to market demand.**

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), the Paralegal Profession is among 25 “high-demand fields” based on information from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Therefore, the Program’s A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies and Level 2 Paralegal Certificate qualify as “fundable credentials of value for the ‘high-demand’ bonus in the performance tier of community college funding.” (See THECB, FY24 Community College Formula Funding: High-Demand Fields, <https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/supporting-our-institutions/community-college-finance/high-demand-fields/>.)

Projections for growth in paralegal employment between 2020 and 2023 are especially strong at the state and local levels. At the state level, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Texas ranks fourth among the five states with the highest employment level in paralegals and legal assistants as of May 2022. More specifically, the statistics on O\*NET® OnLine reflect a comparably large growth projection—23%—in Texas paralegal and legal assistant employment. This projection greatly exceeds the 4% growth projected for the occupation nationally.

At the local level, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington area ranks eighth nationwide among the metropolitan areas with the highest employment level in paralegals and legal assistants. TWC projects a 25.62% increase—or 2,058 new job openings—in paralegal and legal assistant employment in the three relevant Texas Workforce Development Areas (TWDAs) combined: North Central, Dallas, and Tarrant County. The North Central TWDA includes Collin, Denton, Hunt, and Rockwall Counties.

Determining the career success of Program graduates is extremely difficult because of the widely varying goals with which students enter and complete the Program. Although many graduates do work as paralegals, many others continue on to baccalaureate programs or to law school, and still others work in nonlegal fields.

Based on available graduate information, the percentage of 2019–2020 graduates known to be working as paralegals was 40%, but that figure dropped to 21.9% for 2020–2021 graduates. By contrast, the percentage of 2019–2020 graduates known to be working in nonlegal fields was 13.3%, but that figure rose to 34.4% for 2020–2021 graduates. This inverse relationship may have resulted from layoffs and hiring freezes by legal offices during the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in Spring 2020, although the extent to which graduates may have voluntarily chosen nonlegal jobs over paralegal jobs is unknown. The percentage of 2021-2022 graduates known to be working as paralegals was higher—37.8%—and much closer to the pre-pandemic percentage. Based on this trend, combined with the ongoing population growth in the DFW area, the Program anticipates that the percentage of its graduates who secure employment as paralegals may increase at least to the pre-pandemic percentage of 40%, if not higher.

The Program is well positioned to meet the increasing market demand for paralegals in the DFW area. Among the Program’s strengths are the following:

- The Program’s ABA-approved status, which is a significant draw for prospective students;
- The Program’s relative flexibility regarding its course offerings in terms of timing (daytime or evening), delivery formats (online, hybrid, or face-to-face), and campus location (Frisco Campus, Plano Campus, and beginning in Spring 2024, McKinney Campus);
- The Program’s responsiveness to Advisory Committee recommendations, student demand, and Certified Paralegal (CP) exam topics in determining appropriate course offerings; and
- the Program’s robust marketing and recruiting efforts.

However, the Program is working to improve its outreach to persons who are already working in legal offices in non-paralegal capacities, such as legal secretaries and receptionists, but who may be interested in a paralegal education to qualify for raises or promotions.

### **How effective is our curriculum and how do we know?**

First, the Program’s course enrollments, completion rates, success rates, and frequency indicate no curricular barriers to program completion:

- Regarding course enrollments, when appropriate, the Program has increased the enrollment caps or offered double sections of courses, particularly prerequisites or a corequisite, to accommodate student demand and avoid delaying students’ progression through the curriculum. The five Program courses that are a prerequisite or corequisites Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), Introduction to law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345), Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370), and Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333). The average section enrollments of all Program courses for Academic Years 2018–2019 through 2022–2023 reflect adjustments that the Program made to remove any potential barriers to students’ progression through the curriculum and completion.
- For Academic Years 2018–2019 through 2022–2023, the completion and success rates of the Program’s courses also reveal no curricular barriers to Program completion. The average completion rate of all 19 Program courses combined was 91%, well above Collin’s minimum standard of 78%. The average success rate was 85%, well above Collin’s minimum standard of 75%. Of all the paralegal courses, required and elective, the one course that, on average, fellow below Collin’s 78% completion standard was the elective Intellectual Property, LGLA 2323. This lower completion average resulted from anomalous circumstances that had arisen toward the middle of the review period but that resolved toward the end. Apart from the uniquely challenging subject matter of this highly specialized and technical course, the circumstances that affected completion rates were (1) the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required the course to convert mid-semester from face-to-face format to online format in Spring 2020; and (2) the departure of the adjunct instructor who had been teaching the course up through that semester to pursue a teaching opportunity at another institution, and the hiring of a new adjunct instructor to teach the course. By the end of the review period, the course’s completion rate exceeded Collin’s 78% standard.

Second, the Program has exceeded applicable Collin and THECB standards—specifically:

- The Program had 165 completers over the last five years, far in excess of the THECB’s minimum standard of five completers per year.
- The Program’s 91% average course retention (completion) rate was well above Collin’s 78% minimum standard.

Third, the Program’s curriculum is current, as evidenced by the following circumstances:

- As an ABA-approved program, the Program’s compliance with the current *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*, which the ABA periodically revises to reflect evolution in the field and other new circumstances (for example, the increased use of online course delivery beginning with the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond).
- A comparison of the Program’s curriculum reveals that it is compatible with, and in some respects superior to, the curricula at the two most comparable paralegal programs in the DFW area: Dallas College and Tarrant County College. In two areas, however, differences between the Program’s curriculum and Dallas’s curriculum have prompted the Program to make or consider adjustments. The key distinctions among these three programs are the following:
  - The Program requires more writing-specific courses than either Dallas or Tarrant County, thus reflecting positively on the Program’s greater emphasis on legal writing skills.
  - The Program appropriately aligns with Tarrant County in offering only one introductory survey course, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), as opposed to Dallas, which divides the same subject matter into two separate courses.
  - Dallas requires Law Office Technology (LGLA 1310), whereas Collin’s Program does not offer a freestanding course on legal technology. Nevertheless, the Program has already received feedback from its Advisory Committee supportive of exploring whether a freestanding Law Office Technology elective would be an appropriate addition to the Program’s curriculum, and the Program is conducting that exploration.
  - Dallas requires Real Property (LGLA 2309), whereas at Collin the course is elective, and Tarrant County does not offer the course at all. The Program believes offering LGLA 2309 as an elective better serves the diversity of its students in terms of their career or academic goals.
  - Only Collin offers Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), and at Collin LGLA 2339 is the Program’s capstone course. The Program prefers keeping LGLA 2339 as the capstone because it encourages students to obtain NALA or NFPA certification after graduation, if they wish, and the course also serves as a logical review of topics and skills covered earlier in the course.

- At both Collin and Dallas, the internship course, Cooperative Education (course number LGLA 1380 at Collin) is elective, whereas at Tarrant County the course is required. At Collin, the Program believes that given the diversity of its students in terms of career and academic goals and the large number of nontraditional students who are currently working in nonlegal fields, making LGLA 1380 a required course would be neither appropriate nor feasible.
- Dallas offers three elective courses that Collin does not: Elder Law (LGLA 1300), Immigration Law (LGLA 1359), and Oil and Gas Law (LGLA 2315). At Collin, the Program currently has an application pending before the Curriculum Advisory Board to add Immigration Law as an elective to the curriculum. However, the Program does not detect sufficient student or market demand at this time to add elective courses in Elder Law or Oil and Gas Law.
- Whereas Tarrant County requires certain courses outside its paralegal department to serve as legal courses (such as a business course and a criminal justice course), both Dallas and Collin use only paralegal (LGLA) courses to serve as legal courses. This latter approach is consistent with the ABA Guidelines, which prohibit approved programs from using non-paralegal courses as “legal specialty courses.”

**How effectively do we communicate, and how do we know?**

The Program has a robust communications strategy regarding prospective students, current students, former students, and members of the legal community. These communication tools include the following: the Collin College Paralegal Association group on LinkedIn.com; the Program’s department website; the Program’s information sheet, which the Program distributes at program and career fairs and the assigned Workforce Programs Coaches distribute to prospective students at area high schools; the Program’s description and curricula outlines in the *Collin College Catalog*; materials provided to students as part of the Program Orientation, presented during the Program’s introductory survey course, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307); the Program’s online list of marketable skills; e-mails from the Program’s full-time faculty and Workforce Programs Coaches to prospective students; in-person meetings between the Program’s full-time faculty and prospective students; biannual meetings of the Program’s Advisory Committee; student exit surveys and graduate surveys; Collin’s Co-op website; and the ABA’s online directory of ABA-approved paralegal programs.

The Program’s discipline lead, Gage Waggoner, is responsible for the currency, accuracy, relevancy, and availability of information stated on the Program’s department website, subject to the applicable guidelines or protocols of Collin’s Communications Department, Curriculum Office, or Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB), and subject to the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*.



**How well are we leveraging partnership resources and building relationships, and how do we know?**

The Program enjoys relationships with many external partners that benefit the Program and its students. These partnerships include area universities, with which the Program has articulation agreements; local, state, and national paralegal organizations; national paralegal education organizations; state and local bar associations; state and local attorney networking groups; area law firms that hire Program students or graduates as interns or employees; and the Program’s Advisory Committee.

In addition, the Program also enjoys many relationships internally at Collin that are extremely valuable to the Program—for example, Workforce Programs Coaches, Assistants to the Program’s District Discipline Dean and Associate Dean; Academic Advisors; and Collin’s Libraries, especially the Director of the Plano Campus Library and the Program’s dedicated Reference Librarians at the Plano and Frisco Campuses.

**What Professional Development opportunities add value to the Program?**

The professional developmental opportunities that add value to the Program are primarily (1) continuing legal education (CLE); and (2) teaching-related courses, seminars, and workshops. The Program’s faculty are, with one exception, all licensed attorneys. The one exception is a highly experienced practicing paralegal with an advanced paralegal certification by The National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA), who has taught the Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339). The attorneys must take a minimum of 15 clock hours of continuing legal education (MCLE) courses approved by the State Bar of Texas (for attorneys) each year, and the Registered Paralegal must take a minimum of 12 clock hours of CLE courses approved by the NFPA every two years. These MCLE and CLE courses enable the faculty members to stay current on the topics that they teach, an extremely important task since both the law and the legal professions are constantly changing and evolving.

In addition, the Program’s full-time faculty members engage in extensive professional development relating to pedagogy, classroom technology, learning strategies, and other topics to increase their effectiveness as teachers. Most of the Program’s adjunct faculty participate in similar teaching-specific professional development also.

**How have past Continuous Improvement Plans contributed to success?**

Over the past four years, the Program has used its Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) to make improvements with respect to the following learning outcomes/program competencies: (1) increasing the success rates of students in Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333) (CIP 1), increasing the success rates of students in calculating the deadlines for civil defendants to file original answers in state and federal courts in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307) (CIP 2), and increasing the success rates of students in being able to draft an affidavit in a legally valid and conventional format in Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) (CIP 3).

More broadly, the CIP process is helping to transform the way in which Program faculty approach their course designs. The process of formulating desired student-level and program-level outcomes is becoming less the ending point and more the starting point for structuring the topics and lesson

plans for entire classes. In this way, the Program will be seeking always to make its classes and instruction more coherent, focused, and ultimately beneficial to its students.

**How will we evaluate our success?**

The Program has many strengths, including its ABA approval, increased enrollment, and positive job outlooks. The Program intends to capitalize on these and other strengths in ways that include the following:

- Enhancing Program marketing to legal employers as both sources of internships and employment for Program students and graduates and sources of prospective students;
- Continuing to explore the potential addition of a Law Office Technology elective to the curriculum;
- Recruiting a qualified attorney to teach the anticipated new Immigration Law elective, if the Curriculum Advisory Board approves the addition at its February 9, 2024, meeting;
- Identifying additional ways of connecting with prospective students; and
- Creatively adjusting the delivery formats or locations of Program courses—to the extent permissible by the ABA Guidelines— to maximize the effectiveness and accessibility of Program courses.

Program challenges also exist, however. They include the following:

- Recruiting additional attorneys to teach the more specialized courses and thereby increase the pool of approved adjunct faculty;
- Finding sufficient internship and employment opportunities for those students who seek that assistance;
- Increasing the Program’s marketing to non-paralegals who are currently working in legal offices; and
- Ensuring that all students know of course prerequisites and assisting them with course planning to minimize the need for prerequisite waivers and to maximize students’ chances of completing the program by their target dates;
- Increasing the number of articulation agreements with four-year institutions.

The Program plans to address these challenges, respectively, in the following ways:

- Taking greater advantage of existing attorney bar associations and networks for recruiting adjunct faculty to teach more specialized Program courses and for recruiting potential employers of Program students and graduates as interns or employees;
- Developing marketing materials to area legal employers that target non-paralegals who may want or need a paralegal education to qualify for pay raises or promotions;
- Increasing the emphasis on the need to meet the Program’s formal course prerequisites and corequisite in written Program orientation materials and other Program resources for students; and
- Proceeding with the discussions with Texas Wesleyan University toward a new articulation agreement and seeking out potential additional articulation agreements with additional four-year institutions.

Finally, the Program is proposing three new CIP outcomes for the following reasons:

- The Program is proposing the new CIP 1 outcome, “Students will be able to identify the characteristic, benefits, and response deadlines of written discovery requests in civil litigation,” because of the centrality of discovery to civil litigation, the intricacy of the rules surrounding the permissible discovery tools, and the large number of paralegals who go into the field of civil litigation.
- The Program is proposing the new CIP 2 outcome, “Students will be able to properly format a legal document in Microsoft Word with respect to margins, font, line spacing, footers, and file name,” because in the legal profession, the format of legal documents can be as important as their substance. Most law offices use Microsoft Word for word processing, so the ability of paralegals to be proficient in setting up legal documents in proper format on Microsoft Word is essential. Although most students enter the Program with strong Microsoft Word skills, a small minority of students do not, and the Program desires to improve students’ Microsoft Word proficiency overall at a granular level.
- The Program is proposing the new CIP 3 outcome, “Students will be able to identify passive-voice verbs, recognize them in sentences, and choose effective active-voice equivalents,” because one weakness that students commonly exhibit when writing legal documents is the overuse of verbs in passive voice. Though not grammatically “incorrect,” verbs in passive voice are commonly very poor writing “style” in the legal profession, causing the writing to become wordy and weak. Many students have great difficulty understanding how to recognize verbs in passive voice and how to reword sentences that contain them to eliminate this weakness.

## Section I. *Are We Doing the Right Things?*

### □ 1. WHAT DOES OUR PROGRAM DO?

#### **What is the program and its context?**

This section is used to provide an overview description of the program, its relationship to the college and the community it serves. **Keep in mind the reviewer may not be familiar with your area.** Therefore, provide adequate explanation as needed to ensure understanding.

*Suggested points to consider:*

- *Program's purpose (Include the program's purpose/mission statement if one exists.)*
- *Program learning outcomes or marketable skills*
- *Brief explanation of the industry/industries the program serves*
- *Career paths and/or degree paths it prepares graduates to enter*
- *What regulatory standards must the program meet (THECB, Workforce, external accreditation)*

#### **Introduction: Paralegals, Their Roles, and Their Qualifications**

- **Paralegals**

A paralegal, or legal assistant, is a person in a law office who assists an attorney by performing substantive legal work under the attorney's supervision. More specifically, the State Bar of Texas and its Paralegal Division define the term "paralegal" as follows:

a person, qualified through various combinations of education, training, or work experience, who is employed or engaged by a lawyer, law office, governmental agency, or other entity in a capacity of function which involves the performance, under the ultimate direction and supervision of a licensed attorney, of specifically delegated substantive legal work, which work, for the most part, requires a sufficient knowledge of legal principles and procedures that, absent such a person, an attorney would be required to perform the task.

(State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division, Paralegal Definition, [https://txpd.org/about-pages/texas-paralegal-definition-and-standards/.](https://txpd.org/about-pages/texas-paralegal-definition-and-standards/))

- **Their Roles**

In the hierarchy of a law office, paralegals occupy the middle ground between (1) their supervising attorneys, who alone can legally and ethically give legal advice to clients and represent them in court; and (2) legal secretaries, whose work is primarily clerical or administrative. Although paralegals

cannot legally or ethically give legal advice or represent clients in court, they perform substantive legal work for their supervising attorneys in many important ways—for example:

1. Conducting client interviews;
2. Maintaining general contact with the client;
3. Locating and interviewing witnesses;
4. Conducting investigations and statistical and documentary research;
5. Drafting documents, correspondence, and pleadings;
6. Summarizing depositions, interrogatories, and testimony; and
7. Attending executions of wills, real estate closings, depositions, court or administrative hearings, and trials with an attorney.

(Texas Paralegal Standards, Part B, <https://txpd.org/about-pages/texas-paralegal-definition-and-standards/>)

- **Their Qualifications**

According to the State Bar of Texas and its Paralegal Division, a paralegal is qualified “through various combinations of education, training, or work experience.” Texas, like all other states except California, imposes no licensing or educational requirements on paralegals. Nevertheless, as a practical matter, most legal employers expect applicants for paralegal positions to have a formal paralegal education. In fact, some of the Program’s students who are already working in the legal field in other capacities, such as legal secretaries, come to the Program because their employers require a paralegal education as a condition for promotions or raises.

After completing a paralegal educational program, some persons elect to pursue the optional paralegal credential called “certification.” Certification is a credential conferred not by an educational institution, but typically by one of the national paralegal organizations, such as the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) or The National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA). To become certified, a person must pass a certification exam covering legal knowledge and paralegal skills and meet other requirements. Particularly when seeking to hire a more advanced paralegal, some legal employers require or prefer applicants who are certified, although most paralegals are not certified.

The Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), prepares students to take the NALA or NFPA certification exam. Although the Program requires all students to take this course, the Program strongly urges—but does not require—students to take the certification exam itself. Information about the NALA certification is available on NALA’s website at <https://nala.org/certification/>. Information about the NFPA certification is available on NFPA’s website at <https://www.paralegals.org/page/paralegal-certification>.

### **Program Mission and Goals**

The Program’s mission is to further the paralegal profession by providing specialized training and education in law and legal procedure that will produce graduates who are prepared to enter the legal workforce with sufficient technology skills and a firm understanding of the ethical responsibilities of the attorney and paralegal. The Program does not qualify a graduate to take a state bar exam, represent clients in court, or give

legal advice. Paralegals may not provide legal services directly to the public, except as permitted by law. (*Collin College 2023-2024 Catalog*, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_1Overview.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_1Overview.html).)

The Program's goals are the following:

1. To produce graduates who possess the legal knowledge and technology skills necessary to qualify them for employment in a legal work environment;
2. To produce graduates who demonstrate an understanding of their ethical responsibility in the legal profession;
3. To emphasize written communication skills; and
4. To promote opportunities to service the needs of the local community and encourage *pro bono* and public interest causes.

(*Collin College 2023–2024 Catalog*, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_1Overview.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_1Overview.html).)

### **Program-Level Learning Objectives (PLOs)**

Relating to goals 2, 3, and 4, the Program has established the Program-Level Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Specifically, by the time students complete the Program, they are to be able to do or understand the following:

1. Prepare court documents, such as petitions/complaints and answers for civil litigation;
2. Conduct legal research by locating and analyzing sources of law, such as case law and statutes;
3. Apply standards of legal ethics (such as the duty of confidentiality and the duty to avoid conflicts of interest) and avoid the unauthorized practice of law;
4. Demonstrate effective legal writing skills by preparing legal documents, such as affidavits, legal memoranda, and motions;
5. Understand core principles of Texas negligence law; and
6. Understand core principles of Texas contract law.

(2024 Program Assessment Data Report, Institutional Research Office website, <https://inside.collin.edu/institutionaleffect/Data-Assessment.html>; CougarWeb login is required.)

### **Program Marketable Skills**

Dovetailing with the PLOs are the Program's Marketable Skills:

1. Drafting legal documents, such as affidavits, pleadings, discovery, memoranda, and letters;
2. Investigating facts and interviewing witnesses;
3. Communicating effectively with court personnel, legal professionals, and current and potential clients;
4. Researching and analyzing case law, statutes, and regulations;

5. Calculating and calendaring deadlines;
6. Organizing legal file and billing information;
7. Assisting attorneys at trials, hearings, and depositions; and
8. Complying with the ethical duties regarding confidentiality, competence, and conflicts of interest.

(Collin College 2023–2024 Catalog, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MrktSkills\\_Paralegal.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MrktSkills_Paralegal.html).)

### **Program Curriculum**

The Program offers two paralegal credentials: (1) the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) in Paralegal Studies degree; and (2) the Level 2 Paralegal Certificate. The A.A.S. program is for students who have not already earned an associate’s degree or bachelor’s degree and, therefore, must take general education courses in addition to their paralegal courses. By contrast, the Level 2 Paralegal Certificate is for students who have already earned an associate’s degree or bachelor’s degree and, therefore, need not take general education courses. The A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies degree and the Level 2 Paralegal Certificate are essentially equal in status as an educational credential for an entry-level paralegal.

Regarding both credentials, the Program accomplishes its mission, goals, and objectives and develops students’ marketable skills through four categories of paralegal (LGLA) courses:

1. Introductory survey course: Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307).
2. Courses that focus on specific areas of substantive law:
  - Employment Law (LGLA 1323);
  - Bankruptcy (LGLA 1343);
  - Contracts (LGLA 1351);
  - Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353);
  - Family Law (LGLA 1355);
  - Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303);
  - Real Property (LGLA 2309);
  - Business Organizations (LGLA 2311);
  - Criminal Law and Procedure (LGLA 2313, half of course); and
  - Intellectual Property (LGLA 2323).
3. Courses that focus on procedural law:
  - Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345); and
  - Criminal Law and Procedure (LGLA 2313, half of course).

4. Courses that focus on developing specific paralegal skills:

- Legal Research (LGLA 1303);
- Legal Writing (LGLA 1305);
- Cooperative Education (Co-op) (LGLA 1380);
- Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370);
- Law Office Management (LGLA 2307);
- Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333); and
- Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339) (capstone course).

(Collin College 2023–2024 Catalog, Paralegal Curriculum Outlines, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_AAS.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_AAS.html) [A.A.S.], [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_Cert2.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_Cert2.html) [Certificate].)

### **Industry and Career Paths**

The Program serves the legal community, which in turn serves the larger community. Most of the Program’s graduates work as paralegals in traditional legal offices, such as private law firms, legal aid offices (which provide legal services *pro bono*—“for the good,” or free of charge—in civil matters to income-eligible individuals), public prosecutors’ offices, public defenders’ offices, governmental agencies, or corporate legal departments. Others may elect to work as human resource managers, procurement or contract managers, auditors, lobbyists, compliance managers, and parole officers. Still others elect ultimately to attend law school, earn their Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree, take a state bar exam, and become attorneys. In addition, the Program sometimes has students who have an intellectual or personal interest in a particular legal topic (such as criminal law, intellectual property law, or family law) but who do not plan to pursue a career in that field.

### **Degree Paths**

Students in the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies program sometimes elect to transfer to a baccalaureate program. The baccalaureate program can be paralegal program (such as those at Texas A&M University-Commerce and Texas Wesleyan University), a political science program with a legal studies emphasis (such as that at Texas Woman’s University), or other program. The Program has formal articulation agreements with both Texas A&M University-Commerce and Texas Woman’s University and is currently in discussions with Texas Wesleyan University regarding a potential similar agreement.

Students who earn a bachelor’s degree, either before or after completing the Program, sometimes elect to continue on to law school and pursue their law degree, the Juris Doctor (J.D.). J.D. programs normally last three years. To become licensed to practice law in Texas, and thus become a member of the State Bar of Texas, a person must have a bachelor’s degree, have a law degree from an American Bar Association-accredited law school, pass the Texas Bar Exam, and pass a background check conducted by the Texas Board of Law Examiners.



**Regulatory Standards**

Since 2017, the Program has been approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) and satisfies the rigorous standards set forth in the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*. The *Guidelines* are available on the ABA's website at <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/2023-approval-guidelines.pdf>. ABA-approved paralegal programs must apply for re-approval every seven years, and the Program submitted its re-approval application to the ABA in July 2023. As part of the re-approval process, the ABA will schedule a virtual site visit on a date(s) to be determined.

In addition, the Program's paralegal course descriptions appear in the course inventory of the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM), which provides colleges with a ready-made and customizable resource for Workforce education courses and advises the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Information about WECM is available on the Texas Association of College Technical Educators (TACTE) website at <https://tacte.org/wecm>. WECM's inventory of Workforce courses is accessible on the THECB's website at <http://board.thecb.state.tx.us/apps/WorkforceEd/wecm/>.

**□ 2. WHY DO WE DO THE THINGS WE DO: PROGRAM RELATIONSHIP TO THE COLLEGE MISSION & STRATEGIC PLAN.**

- **Provide program-specific evidence of actions that document how the program supports the College’s mission statement:** “*Collin County Community College District is a student and community-centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character, and challenging the intellect.*”
- **Provide program-specific evidence that documents how the program supports the College’s strategic plan (2020-2025 Strategic Plan):** [https://www.collin.edu/aboutus/strategic\\_goals.html](https://www.collin.edu/aboutus/strategic_goals.html).

*Suggested/possible points to consider:*

- *What evidence is there to support assertions made regarding how the program relates to the mission and strategic plan?*
- *Think broadly-increasing completion, articulation agreements, pathways from high schools, etc.*
- *Analyze the evidence you provide. What does it show about the program?*

**Program’s Relationship to Collin’s Mission Statement**

The Program shares and furthers Collin’s mission “to be a student and community-centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character, and challenging the intellect.” Specifically, the Program furthers this mission by both supporting students and adding value to the community in the following ways:

- **Developing Skills**

The Program develops skills that, because of the demands of the legal profession, are of a high order. The Program’s Marketable Skills, addressed separately below, are excellent examples. (*Collin College 2023–2024 Catalog*, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MrktSkills\\_Paralegal.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MrktSkills_Paralegal.html).)

- 1. Marketable Skill 1: Drafting legal documents, such as affidavits, pleadings, discovery, memoranda, and letters**

Strong writing skills are essential to success in the legal profession. In a legal document, a single error or omission—whether of substance, of grammar or punctuation, or of form—can potentially have significant legal consequences. At best, even purportedly “minor” errors of grammar, punctuation, or substance can portray a law office negatively before judges, clients, and the larger legal community. At worst, such errors can have unintended legal consequences. Therefore, paralegals, who commonly draft legal documents for their supervising attorneys, must be able to write legal documents with a high degree of precision and attention to form and style.

To develop students' skills in using the general conventions of grammar, punctuation, diction, and style expected in the legal profession (which in many respects differs from the conventions in other industries or in the culture at large), the Program developed a local-needs course, Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370). In this required course, students learn and practice these conventions and thereby acquire the preparatory skills for the Program's two other required writing courses: Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), in which students focus primarily on formulating the substance of legal documents, including affidavits, case briefs, and legal memoranda; and (2) Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333), in which students focus primarily on crafting the format of legal documents, such as legal letters, court pleading and motions, and position papers.

Additionally, in the Program courses that focus on specific fields of substantive law, students learn to prepare the types of legal documents that are specific to those fields. These courses include (1) Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345), in which students prepare such documents as pleadings, civil discovery requests and responses, motions, and briefs in opposition to motions; (2) Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353), in which students draft such documents as wills, other estate-planning documents, and probate documents; (3) Family Law (LGLA 1355), in which students draft such documents as divorce petitions; and (4) Business Organizations (LGLA 2311), in which students learn the components of such documents as partnership agreements, operating agreements of limited liability companies, and corporate bylaws.

## **2. Marketable Skill 2: Investigating facts and interviewing witnesses**

Particularly in the field of litigation—both civil and criminal—the skill of conducting effective factual investigations and interviews of witnesses is vital. Paralegals need to be able to obtain as much information as possible that is relevant to the client's case, understand the types of questions that can elicit the most information from witnesses who may be uncooperative or deceptive, and evaluate whether the information obtained would be admissible in evidence at trial. In Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), a required course, the Program devotes an entire unit to conducting factual investigations and interviewing witnesses. As part of this unit, students take representative witness scenarios and evaluate the proper question types and interviewing strategies. Furthermore, in Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), students practice evaluating the admissibility of statements in fictional witness statements that simulate those found in real-world practice.

## **3. Marketable Skill 3: Communicating effectively with court personnel, legal professionals, and current and potential clients**

Litigation paralegals must also be able to communicate professionally, precisely, and effectively with court personnel (such as judges, court clerks, and court administrators) to obtain the information the supervising attorneys need for upcoming hearings, trials, and other court proceedings. In Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370), a required course, the Program directly instructs students on courtroom geography, proper courtroom decorum, and the proper ways to address court personnel. For practice, students view assigned excerpts from a courtroom-drama movie to evaluate whether the characters are properly communicating with court personnel. The Program further develops these communication skills in Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345), and Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333).

All paralegals, regardless of the area of law in which they work, must also be able to communicate ethically and effectively with other legal professionals, such as the paralegals' own supervising attorneys and attorneys and paralegals at other law firms. In Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the Program introduces students to the proper formats of legal letters and legal e-mails. Students then increase that

knowledge and put it into practice by drafting such correspondence in Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) and Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333).

Further, because paralegals cannot ethically or legally give legal advice, and because paralegals have an ethical duty to keep client information confidential, the Program teaches students to recognize the types of statements that constitute impermissible legal advice, the types of client information that the duty of confidentiality protects, and the circumstances under which disclosure of client information to third parties is or is not ethical. The Program then presents students with numerous hypothetical scenarios, simulating real-world circumstances, in which students must evaluate in varying circumstances whether particular statements impart legal advice and whether particular types of client information are ethically disclosable. This training occurs most intensively in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), but virtually every course in the Program touches on these skills at various points.

#### **4. Marketable Skill 4: Researching and analyzing case law, statutes, and regulations**

Paralegals commonly research and analyze the law for their supervising attorneys so that the attorneys can properly evaluate clients' legal issues and advise the clients. Therefore, all Program students must take Legal Research (LGLA 1303), in which the Program trains students to research and analyze case law, statutes, and government regulations, among other legal resources.

First, case law consists of rules and principles of law articulated in the written opinions ("cases") of courts in individual lawsuits. In these opinions, courts identify the legal issues the courts had to answer in deciding the dispute, the relevant facts of the dispute, the rules of law that furnished the legal standards applied by the courts in deciding the dispute, and the courts' reasoning process. These opinions, in turn, can potentially guide future courts in deciding substantially similar legal disputes. In Legal Research, students learn how to locate federal and state court opinions on desired topics in case reporters (print volumes containing court opinions) and online legal research platforms, read and analyze multiple court opinions, and evaluate which court opinions are similar enough to the legal issues of hypothetical clients to govern the answers to those issues. Students also analyze case law in Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) when writing case briefs (formal summaries of court opinions), Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370), and courses focusing on specific areas of law.

Second, statutes are the written laws enacted by Congress, state legislatures, and local elected bodies. In Legal Research (LGLA 1303), students learn about the legislative process, the process of publishing newly enacted laws, the macrostructure of statutory codes, the microstructure of statutory language. Further, students learn and practice how to find statutes on desired topics in print versions of statutory codes and their digital counterparts in online legal research platforms, how to interpret the meaning of statutory language, and how to apply that meaning to circumstances simulating those of actual clients. Students also read and analyze statutes in Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370), and courses in specific areas of law that are primarily statutory, such as Bankruptcy (LGLA 1323); Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353); Family Law (LGLA 1355); Business Organizations (LGLA 2311); Criminal Law and Procedure (LGLA 2313); and Intellectual Property (LGLA 2323).

Third, regulations are the written rules made by government agencies to facilitate the administration and enforcement of laws enacted by legislatures. In Legal Research, students learn how to find and analyze federal and Texas regulations on desired topics in print versions of administrative codes and their digital counterparts in online legal research platforms.

Before the advent of computers, of course, legal professionals performed legal research exclusively in books. In the 1970s, with the development of computers, major legal publishers—particularly West Publishing Company and LexisNexis—began digitizing legal texts and making them commercially available by computer to legal professionals. As a result of the digitization, legal texts became for the first time easily word-searchable, thus enabling lawyers and paralegals to find relevant laws in the fraction of the time that the process had taken in the books. The two commercial online legal research platforms that emerged dominant in the legal market, and that continue to dominate that market, are Westlaw, produced by West Publishing Company (now owned by Thomson Reuters), and Lexis, produced by LexisNexis. These and other publishers continue to publish legal resources in traditional book form, and today print publications and online digital sources of virtually all legal texts coexist. Nevertheless, law offices have increasingly switched to online legal research platforms for most, if not all, of their legal research resources.

The Program teaches students research skills in both formats. The primary location of Collin’s print legal resources is the Plano Campus Library. For training in online legal research, the Program has elected Westlaw. The Program provides every student enrolled in at least one paralegal course access to Westlaw free of charge to the student. Throughout Legal Research (LGLA 1303), students practice finding cases, statutes, regulations, and other legal resources on Westlaw. Students also use Westlaw in other classes in the Program at the discretion of the instructors. This training gives students the skills to succeed in law offices that use Westlaw, and those skills are easily transferable to the other most widely used commercial legal research platform, Lexis.

#### **5. Marketable Skill 5: Calculating and calendaring deadlines**

Many fields of the legal profession are deadline-driven, and paralegals are commonly responsible for calculating applicable court deadlines and other deadlines in clients’ cases and properly recording those deadlines in law office calendaring systems. The Program heavily emphasizes proper calculating and calendaring of deadlines as an ethical duty (missing a deadline can violate a paralegal’s ethical duty of competence), a legal duty (missing a deadline can constitute malpractice, or professional negligence), and an indispensable skill.

For example, in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the program emphasizes both the ethical dimensions of proper calculation and calendaring of deadlines and the practical tasks of calculating deadlines under the procedural rules of federal and Texas courts. These deadlines include the deadlines for defendants in civil lawsuits to file written answers with the court and the deadlines for parties to respond to different types of discovery requests from other parties in the lawsuit. Students learn the proper way to calculate deadlines and practice calculating deadlines using actual monthly calendars and hypothetical scenarios. Calculating deadlines is also an emphasis in such courses as Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345), which covers procedural rules in federal and Texas courts, and Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303), which covers calculating deadlines for plaintiffs to file tort lawsuits under statutes of limitations and statutes of repose. Calendaring deadlines is also an emphasis in the elective Law Office Management (LGLA 2307), which treats computer calendaring systems commonly used in law offices.

**6. Marketable Skill 6: Organizing legal file and billing information**

In law offices, paralegals commonly maintain client files and, in private law firms, commonly administer the client billing systems. Accordingly, in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the Program introduces students to basic filing systems commonly used by legal offices for maintaining client files (files containing the materials relating to specific clients and specific legal matters), work product files (files containing the fruits of legal research projects for future reference), and forms files (files containing templates and forms for commonly used legal documents).

In addition, the most common legal fee arrangement that private law firms have with their clients is the hourly rate. In this arrangement, the firms charge their clients for the actual time spent by both lawyers and their paralegals in performing substantive legal work for the clients. Lawyers and paralegals, therefore, must carefully document the nature and time spent for each task of substantive legal work they perform for the clients. Law firms that charge by the hour use timekeeping software programs to record this information and to generate monthly or quarterly bills to the clients. Accordingly, in LGLA 1307, the Program introduces students to Sage® Timeslips, a popular legal billing software program. Students also learn the common methods of subdividing the clock hour into billing increments, practice describing tasks in legal timekeeping format, and even select their own fictional paralegal “hourly rate” to simulate the timekeeping process in actual law firms.

Finally, students who take the elective Law Office Management (LGLA 2307) learn about billing practices in further detail and about broader case-management computer programs used by many law offices.

**7. Marketable Skill 7: Assisting attorneys at trials, hearings, and depositions**

Litigation paralegals—in both civil and criminal cases—commonly accompany their attorneys to trials, hearings, and depositions (out-of-court pretrial discovery proceedings in which a witness or party, under oath, answers questions posed by attorneys in the case) to assist the attorneys during those proceedings. Accordingly, in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the Program teaches the types of tasks that paralegals perform at these proceedings, such as coordinating witnesses, retrieving file materials for the attorney as needed, assisting with trial presentation technology, taking notes of the proceedings, and observing the demeanors of potential jurors during jury selection and actual jurors during trial. In LGLA 1307, the Program also teaches students how to prepare notebooks for their attorneys’ reference during trials and other court proceedings. Students’ education in assisting attorneys at trials, hearings, and depositions continues in Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345), a required course, and in Criminal Law (LGLA 2313), an elective course.

**8. Marketable Skill 8: Complying with the ethical duties regarding confidentiality, competence, and conflicts of interest**

Attorneys, to practice law legally, must have a law license issued by the state in which they practice. Each state promulgates ethical rules that attorneys must follow. In Texas, these rules are the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct. These rules, which appear in the Texas Government Code, are also available on the website of the Texas Center for Legal Ethics: <https://www.legalethictexas.com/resources/rules/texas-disciplinary-rules-of-professional-conduct/>. A Texas attorney found by the State Bar of Texas to have violated a Disciplinary Rule is subject to

disciplinary action by the State Bar. Depending on the severity of the violation and surrounding circumstances, the disciplinary action can be a public or private reprimand, temporary suspension of the attorney's law license, or permanent disbarment.

Paralegals, by contrast, are not subject to direct state regulation, except in California. Rather, the regulation of paralegals is indirect. This indirect regulation includes the requirement that paralegals follow the same ethical rules that their supervising attorneys must follow. Therefore, paralegals supervised by Texas attorneys must follow the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.

In addition, the State Bar of Texas has a voluntary Paralegal Division, which has promulgated its own Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility. Paralegals who voluntarily join the Paralegal Division agree to follow this Code of Ethics, which forms a statement of best ethical practices for nonmember paralegals also. The preamble to this Code of Ethics affirms that Texas paralegals must follow the ethical rules that their supervising attorneys must follow:

The paralegal profession is by nature closely related to the legal profession. Although the Code of Professional Conduct [now called the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct] of the State Bar of Texas does not directly govern paralegals except through a supervising attorney, *it is incumbent upon the members of the Paralegal Division to know the provisions of the attorneys' code and avoid any action which might involve an attorney in a violation of that code or even the appearance of professional impropriety* [emphasis added].

(State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division, Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, <https://txpd.org/ethics-pages/professional-ethics-and-the-paralegal/>.) For example, if a paralegal violates one of the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, the State Bar of Texas cannot discipline the paralegal, but it can potentially discipline the paralegal's supervising attorney for that violation.

Of the many ethical duties that Texas attorneys have under the Disciplinary Rules, three especially tend to affect paralegals: (1) the duty of confidentiality; (2) the duty of competence; and (3) the duty to avoid conflicts of interest. In the Program, the most intensive training in these duties occurs in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), but each course to varying degrees covers the ethical dimensions of paralegal practice.

First, regarding the duty of confidentiality, students in LGLA 1307 learn the types of information constituting confidential client information, the persons to whom confidential client information can and cannot ethically be disclosed in general, and specific exceptions allowed under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct for extraordinary circumstances. Students then practice applying these principles to hypothetical factual scenarios that simulate real-world circumstances.

Second, regarding the duty of competence, the Program teaches the most common ways in which paralegals can inadvertently violate the duty, such as drafting legal documents containing errors or omissions, inadequately performing legal or factual research, and improperly calculating and calendaring deadlines. The Program then equips students with practical strategies for avoiding these ethical breaches. Students receive additional

instruction regarding the duty of competence in such courses as Legal Research (LGLA 1303), Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), and Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333).

Finally, regarding the duty to avoid conflicts of interest, the Program teaches students the types of circumstances that can give rise to a conflict of interest under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct and the ways in which law firms can proactively avoid conflicts of interest. For example, an attorney cannot ethically represent one client whose interests are directly adverse to those of another current or former client of the attorney or the attorney's law firm. Therefore, before an attorney agrees to represent a new client, the law firm will perform a "conflicts check"—a procedure in which the names of the prospective client and any persons or entities potentially adverse to the prospective client are compared to a master list of all the firm's current and former clients. If a "match" occurs, the attorney will investigate to determine whether a conflict indeed exists. Paralegals commonly assist in this process by generating the client data for review and evaluation by the attorney, and in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the Program instructs students regarding the mechanics of conflicts checks.

As another example, a conflict of interest can potentially arise when a paralegal changes employment from one law firm to another. Specifically, if the paralegal's new firm wishes to represent a client against a person or entity that the paralegal's previous firm represented while the paralegal was still there, the new law firm has a conflict of interest (because of the paralegal's access, actual or theoretical, to that client's confidential information at the previous firm). In LGLA 1307, students learn the procedures by which the new law firm can eliminate the conflict of interest. These procedures, collectively referred to as erecting an ethical wall (or "Chinese wall"), formally bar the paralegal from having any access to the case files or communications with firm personnel about the case, among other logistics.

- **Strengthening Character**

The Program strengthens students' character through its instruction that paralegals must follow the same ethical rules that their supervising attorneys must follow. In addition, paralegals who join voluntary professional paralegal organizations agree to be bound by the ethical rules or standards promulgated by those organizations. The State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division's Code of Ethics, referenced above, is one example. The preamble to the Code of Ethics states in part:

Fundamental to the success of any professional organization are the integrity of its members and a high standard of conduct. This Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility is promulgated by the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas and accepted by its members to accomplish these ends.

(State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division, Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, <https://txpd.org/ethics-pages/professional-ethics-and-the-paralegal/>.) Another example is the Code of Conduct promulgated by The National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA), the second largest paralegal organization in the country. In its Code of Conduct, the NFPA emphasizes that paralegals must be ethically fit for the profession:



A paralegal shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety and shall not engage in any conduct that would adversely affect the paralegal's fitness to practice. Such conduct may include, but is not limited to violence, dishonesty, unethical conduct, discriminatory practices, interference with the administration of justice, and/or abuse of a professional position or public office.

(NFPA Code of Ethics, Ethical Consideration EC-1.3(b), [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.paralegals.org/resource/resmgr/files/migration/1/2022-07-19\\_code\\_of\\_ethics\\_ap.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.paralegals.org/resource/resmgr/files/migration/1/2022-07-19_code_of_ethics_ap.pdf).)

Accordingly, the Program emphasizes ethical standards throughout its courses, but most extensively and directly in such courses as Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), Legal Research (LGLA 1303), and Legal Writing (LGLA 1305). These standards include the following:

- The duty of competence;
- The duty of confidentiality;
- The duty to avoid conflicts of interest;
- The duty of honesty in communications to courts and other adjudicative bodies; and
- The duty to avoid committing the unauthorized practice of law and assisting others in doing so. (In Texas, the unauthorized practice of law is prohibited by statute and can result in both civil and criminal penalties.)

The Program's commitment to strengthening character also extends to direct action in the community. The Program's faculty members emphasize that the success of a thriving community depends on the rule of law and access to legal resources. Legal professionals have specialized knowledge and skills that community members need and usually lack. Sometimes those community members lack the financial resources to access that legal expertise. Legal professionals address this very real problem by volunteering their services to underserved communities.

In the Program, students learn about and often participate in community-based volunteer activities, which legal professionals refer to as *pro bono* activities. For example, many students volunteer with Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT), a federally funded legal aid office that provides legal services free of charge to income-eligible persons. Jan Kearney, volunteer coordinator at LANWT and former member of the Program's Advisory Committee, regularly visits Program classes to educate students about the organization and its volunteer opportunities. LANWT's website address is <https://internet.lanwt.org/home>. Some students have volunteered with other *pro bono* groups, such as organizations that assist victims of domestic violence, veterans, the homeless, and individuals with immigration issues.

- **Challenging Intellect**

Finally, the Program's coursework is academically rigorous, requiring significant and sophisticated reading and writing. The Program's full-time faculty members recommend that students spend a minimum of two to three hours outside of class time for every hour in class; "A" and "B" students typically spend more than this minimum. In section 5, subsection G of this Program Review below, the Program provides the grade distributions of Program courses. These statistics demonstrate that a grade of "A" is far from automatic in Program courses and that Program students have to work diligently to earn an "A" or "B."

**Program’s Relationship to Collin’s 2020–2025 Strategic Plan**

The Program actively supports goals set forth in Collin’s 2020–2025 Strategic Plan in ways that include the following:

- **Strategic Goal 1: “Improve student outcomes to meet or exceed local, state, and regional accreditation thresholds and goals.”**

The Program’s student outcomes exceed local, state, and regional accreditation thresholds and goals on at least three different criteria: (1) the number of Program awards each year and the five-year average; (2) course completion rates; and (3) the integration of marketable skills into the Program curriculum.

**Number of Program Awards.** First, the number of Program awards far exceeds the minimum threshold established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) for career technical certificates and associate degree programs. That minimum standard is an average of five degrees awarded per academic year, to total not fewer than twenty-five degrees awarded for any five-year period. Figure 1 below reflects the numbers of Program awards over a five-year period:

Fig. 1

THECB Program Completion Standard	Paralegal Program Awards (A.A.S. and Certificate Combined)
Average of 5 degrees awarded per academic year, to total not fewer than 25 degrees awarded for any five-year period	Academic Year 2017–2018: 28
	Academic Year 2018–2019: 37
	Academic Year 2019–2020: 22
	Academic Year 2020–2021: 37
	Academic Year 2021–2022: 41

(Source of THECB standard: 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 4.287(4)(A) (Tex. Dep’t of Educ., Definitions). Source of Program award data: Spreadsheet of Program award statistics prepared by Institutional Research Office, as revised downward by Program to eliminate duplications, for inclusion in the Program’s 2023 Re-Approval Application to the American Bar Association.)

Second, the Program’s average course completion rates each Academic Year far exceed the minimum goal established by Collin. Collin’s goal is that 78% of students enrolled in program courses on the census date should still be enrolled on the last class day (grades of A through F). The Program far exceeds this goal with an average completion rate of 91% for its 19 (LGLA) courses during Academic Years 2019–2023. (Please see section 5.A. of this Program Review below for a more detailed discussion of the Program’s course completion rates.)

Third, the Program has satisfied the THECB’s mandate that Marketable Skills be integrated into curricula so that students can demonstrate and communicate those skills through established mechanisms. (Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2015–2030, pages 22–25,

<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/miscellaneous/the cb-60x30-strategic-plan/>.) Here, the Program incorporates by reference the descriptions of its Marketable Skills stated earlier in this Program Review as they relate to Collin’s mission statement.

- **Strategic Goal 2: “Develop and implement strategies to become a national exemplar in program and student outcomes.”**

The Program is approved by the American Bar Association (ABA). To earn this approval, the Program had to meet—and must continue to meet—the rigorous standards set forth in the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*. The *Guidelines* establish the gold standard for paralegal education programs nationally. Therefore, ABA approval places the Program in the top echelon of the nation’s paralegal programs. The current edition of the *Guidelines*, effective September 1, 2023, is available on the ABA’s website at <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/2023-approval-guidelines.pdf>.

The ABA’s purpose in approving paralegal programs is to foster paralegal education at superior level:

The principal objective of the American Bar Association’s program of approving paralegal education programs that meet ABA Guidelines, is to foster high quality paralegal education and training and the development of educational standards.

The Standing Committee on Paralegals and Approval Commission carr[ies] out this objective through an intensive review and on-site evaluation of such programs. The guidance and direction of the ABA through the Standing Committee and its Approval Commission has led to the development of superior paralegal education programs designed to raise the competence of those individuals who assist lawyers in the delivery of legal services.

(ABA, General Approval Process for Paralegal Education Programs, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/approval-resources/general\\_approval\\_process\\_information/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/approval-resources/general_approval_process_information/).)

More specifically, the *ABA Guidelines* establish high standards relating to the course content, academic rigor, faculty credentials, library resources, student advising and other services, and Advisory Committee membership and involvement. Further, Guideline G-301.E requires the Program systematically to review, evaluate, and improve itself:

### **Guideline G-301**

...

- E. The program must have a written organized plan for evaluation, review, and improvement of the program. There must be regular assessment of the extent to which a program meets its stated goals and objectives. At a minimum, the written assessment plan must include the following:

1. The program's stated goals and objectives;
2. The assessment tools with the specific questions/activities aligned to measure each stated goal and objective;
3. The way in which input is obtained from graduates and employers of graduates to assess how the program meets its stated goals and objectives; and
4. The frequency with which each assessment tool will be conducted.

(ABA Guidelines, <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/2023-approval-guidelines.pdf>.) The means by which the Program complies with ABA Guideline G-301.E include the following:

- Collin's five-year Program Review cycle, including the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) cycle and the Program-Level Learning Outcome (PLO) process;
- Students' formal online course evaluations at the end of each semester;
- Exit surveys of the Program's students, administered in the program's capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), regarding the effectiveness of the Program generally, the Program's strengths, and suggestions for improvement;
- Surveys of the Program's graduates regarding their employment or continuing educational status, the effectiveness of the Program generally, and suggestions for improvement;
- Feedback from local employers who supervise Program students enrolled in the elective Cooperative Education (Co-op) (LGLA 1380) and who employ Program graduates; and
- Informal feedback that students share with Program faculty members and the Program's Associate Dean.
- **Strategic Goal 3: "Create and implement comprehensive integrated pathways to support student transitions."**

As discussed more specifically below, the Program has created pathways to support student transitions both to the workforce as paralegals and, for those students who do not already have a bachelor's degree and wish to earn one, to four-year institutions.

- **Transition to Paralegal Employment**

The Program's two credentials, the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies and the Level 2 Paralegal Certificate, are alternatively the standard paralegal education expected by most legal employers of entry-level paralegals. Consequently, a large percentage of the Program's graduates enter the paralegal workforce immediately after completion of the Program or even before.

The Program has a systematic, coordinated approach to informing students of internship or employment opportunities and proactively seeking out opportunities for students who desire assistance. For details, please see the Program's response below regarding Collin's Strategic Goal 6 as it relates to paralegal employers.

- **Transfer to Four-Year Institutions**

Second, some legal employers prefer or require paralegal applicants to have a bachelor's degree. For the Program's students who do not already have a bachelor's degree, the Program has formal articulation agreements with Texas A&M University-Commerce (TAMUC) and with Texas Woman's University (TWU) that provide pathways to bachelor's degree programs involving paralegal studies or other legal studies.

Under the articulation agreement, TAMUC applies 12.0 semester hours of Collin paralegal courses credits toward the Bachelor of Arts/Science in Political Science with Emphasis in Paralegal Studies. The four paralegal courses that transfer are Legal Research (LGLA 1303); Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307); Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353); and Family Law (LGLA 1355).

Under the articulation agreement, TWU applies at least 9.0 semester hours of Collin paralegal course credits toward the Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies. The paralegal courses that transfer include Legal Research (LGLA 1303), Civil Litigation (now LGLA 1345), and Law Office Management (LGLA 2307).

- **Strategic Goal 4: "Implement the third Baccalaureate degree by Fall 2022 and continue adding 2+2 programs with university partners."**

Because the standard educational credential for an entry-level paralegal is an associate's degree in paralegal studies or a paralegal certificate, the Program does not plan to implement a baccalaureate program. Regarding university partners, the Program is currently in discussions Texas Wesleyan University regarding a potential articulation agreement relating to its Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies program.

- **Strategic Goal 5: "Develop and implement a comprehensive staffing and succession model."**

The Program has two full-time faculty members, both of whom collectively teach most of the Program's required paralegal courses. These required courses include Legal Research (LGLA 1303), Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), Contracts (LGLA 1351), Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370), Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303), Business Organizations (LGLA 2311), and Advanced

Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2323). The Program’s full-time faculty had extensive experience in these subjects as practicing attorneys before joining Collin’s faculty.

By contrast, other Program courses focus on more specialized areas of law, and the Program staffs these courses with adjunct faculty members who are, with one exception, practicing attorneys in these fields. These specialized courses include Bankruptcy (LGLA 1323), Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353), Family Law (LGLA 1355), Real Property (LGLA 2309), Criminal Law and Procedure (LGLA 2313), and Intellectual Property (LGLA 2323). The one exception during the review period is the instructor of the Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339). This instructor is not an attorney, but a highly experienced practicing paralegal with the advanced Registered Paralegal (RP) certification by The National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA).

During the review period, the Program increased its pool of approved adjunct faculty members to maintain continuity of course offerings when an adjunct faculty member may be unavailable to teach in a particular semester. For example, the Program hired additional adjunct faculty members to teach Bankruptcy (LGLA 1323); Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353); Real Property (LGLA 2309); Intellectual Property (LGLA 1323); and Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339). The Program also increased its pool of approved adjunct faculty to help meet student demand for such required courses as Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345), Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303) and Business Organizations (LGLA 2311).

- **Strategic Goal 6. “Develop a coordinated and systematic approach to engage external stakeholders.”**

The Program’s external stakeholders include paralegal employers, professional paralegal organizations, Program graduates, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT), and the Program’s Advisory Committee. The Program engages these stakeholders in the following coordinated, systematic ways:

### **1. Paralegal Employers**

Paralegal employers regularly contact the Program to express interest in hiring Program students or graduates as interns or employees. When the Program receives these inquiries, the Program’s policy is to request the employer to submit a written description of the position and instructions for applying. The Program then, with the employer’s permission, posts the information on the Program’s group on the professional networking website LinkedIn.com. This private group, called the Collin College Paralegal Association, consists primarily of current Program students, Program graduates, and legal employers. In the Program’s required introductory survey course, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), and indeed throughout the Program’s classes, the Program encourages all its students to join the group to stay abreast of all internship and employment opportunities of which the Program becomes aware.

The Program coordinates this procedure with Collin’s general Career Center staff, academic deans, and Workforce Program Coaches. Specifically, when a legal employer contacts them regarding its hiring needs, they will refer the inquiry to the Program, which in turn will communicate with the employer regarding the posting of the opportunity in the Collin College Paralegal Association group on LinkedIn.

In addition, the Program has a strong network of legal employers, paralegal organizations, bar associations, and other attorney groups that the Program can contact to proactively seek internship or employment opportunities for students. These contacts include private law firms, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, the Collin County Bar Association, and such online attorney networking groups as Texas Lawyers, Girl Attorneys—Texas, and Collin County Attorney Moms. For a more detailed list of Program partners, please see the Program’s Partnership Resources Table in section 7 of this Program Review below.

Finally, the Program systematically engages with local legal employers who supervise Program students enrolled in the elective Cooperate Education (Co-op) (LGLA 1380). Near the beginning of the Co-op semester, the Program’s discipline lead meets with the student and the supervising attorney to confirm the nature of the paralegal competency-based goals (substantive legal projects) that the student will perform for the employer. Near the end of the semester, the discipline lead meets again with the student and supervising attorney to verify completion of the goals. In addition, the supervising attorney submits a final written evaluation of the student’s performance on a standardized form developed by Collin.

## **2. Professional Paralegal Organizations**

In Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the Program informs students of opportunities to join local, state, and national paralegal organizations, most of which offer student memberships or access to paralegal events at discounted cost. These organizations include the Dallas Area Paralegal Association (DAPA), The Wendi Atwood Rogers Foundation, the State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division, the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), and The National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA). In these organizations, students can network with practicing paralegals, attend workshops and seminars relating to the paralegal profession, engage in community service projects, or participate in mentorship programs.

## **3. Program Graduates**

The Program administers surveys to its graduates regarding their employment or continuing education status, opinions about the effectiveness of the Program, and any suggestions they may have for improvement. The Program offers continuing assistance to its graduates who wish to seek or change employment, enter a baccalaureate program, or apply to law school by serving as references, writing letters of recommendation, and advising graduates regarding their educational or career goals.

In addition, graduates of the Program who pass a paralegal certification exam, such as NALA’s Certified Paralegal (CP) Exam, sometimes serve as guest speakers to students in the program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), regarding their experiences and their insights into successfully preparing for the exam.

## **4. Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas**

The Program strongly encourages its students to volunteer their time in *pro bono* activities benefiting the community. One important opportunity students have is to volunteer for Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT). Students first learn about LANWT in Introduction to Law and the Legal

Professions (LGLA 1307), and the Program regularly has LANWT's volunteer coordinator, Jan Kearney, speak to LGLA 1307 students about volunteer opportunities there. Many Program students volunteer for LANWT, where they gain valuable experience, network with local attorneys and other legal professionals, and help people in need.

#### **5. Paralegal Advisory Committee**

As required by both Collin and the American Bar Association, the Program has an Advisory Committee, which meets biannually to advise the Program regarding trends and developments in the paralegal profession, desirable curriculum changes, the paralegal job market, and other topics to assist the Program in staying current with the profession and ensuring that the Program continues to prepare students well for the demands of the legal workplace.

The Advisory Committee's voting members are external stakeholders. For example, the Advisory Committee has included practicing attorneys who employ and supervise paralegals, paralegals in private law firms, paralegals in corporate legal departments, self-employed contract paralegals, a representative of Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, and a legal job recruiter.



**□ 3. WHY WE DO THE THINGS WE DO: PROGRAM RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT DEMAND**

**Make a case with evidence to show that students want the certificate. Discuss whether or not there appears to be any disproportionate enrollment by gender, race, and ethnicity (compared to Collin College’s overall student demographic distributions <http://inside.collin.edu/iro/programreview/prfilehostpage.html>). If any differences exist discuss possible reasons why the gap exists, and plans to address these issues to close gaps in enrollment rates between groups of students (refer to the Program Review portal for Enrollment Reports and Average Section Size data files for your program [HTTP://INSIDE.COLLIN.EDU/INSTITUTIONALEFFECT/PROGRAM\\_REVIEW\\_PROCESS.HTML](HTTP://INSIDE.COLLIN.EDU/INSTITUTIONALEFFECT/PROGRAM_REVIEW_PROCESS.HTML)).**

*Suggested/possible points to consider:*

- *What is the enrollment pattern? Declining, flat, growing, not exhibiting a stable pattern, please explain. For required program courses where there is a pattern of low enrollment (fewer than 15 students), explain your plan to grow enrollment and/or revise the curriculum.*
- *What are the implications for the next 5 years if the enrollment pattern for the past 5 years continues?*
- *Describe any actions taken to identify and support students enrolled in program-required courses early in the degree plan. If no actions are taken at the present, please develop and describe a plan to do so.*
- *How does your program support (or plan) to support attraction of a diverse student population?*
- *Check with Institutional effectiveness for Data Reports -names of reports*
- *Analyze the evidence you provide. What does it show about the program?*

The Program’s increasing enrollment trajectory indicates that students want the Program’s paralegal credentials. Further, the Program’s demographic statistics indicate that the students who want these credentials are increasingly racially and ethnically diverse.

**Enrollment Pattern**

- **Program-Wide Enrollment**

The Program’s total enrollment increased from 196 in Academic Year 2017–2018 to 389 in Academic Year through 2021–2022. More specifically, Figure 2 below contains a yearly breakdown of unduplicated Program majors enrolled in Program courses for this period:

Fig. 2

<b>UNDUPLICATED PROGRAM ENROLLMENT BASED ON DECLARED PROGRAM MAJORS</b>	
<b>Academic Year 2017–2018</b>	
A.A.S.	155
Certificate	41
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Academic Year 2018–2019</b>	
A.A.S.	185
Certificate	62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>Academic Year 2019–2020</b>	
A.A.S.	302
Certificate	69
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>Academic Year 2020–2021</b>	
A.A.S.	275
Certificate	94
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>369</b>
<b>Academic Year 2021–2022</b>	
A.A.S.	326
Certificate	63
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>389</b>

(Source: Spreadsheets of enrollment statistics prepared by the IRO, per the Program’s request, for inclusion in the Program’s 2020 Interim Report and 2023 Re-Approval Application to the American Bar Association.)

As Figure 2 illustrates, the Program’s enrollment increased throughout the five academic years. The most dramatic increase occurred in Academic Year 2019–2020, when unduplicated Program enrollment jumped from 247 to 371, an increase of 124. The apparent cause of this spike was an influx of “second-career” students who had been laid off from their previous jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic or had otherwise used the pandemic as an opportunity to change careers. Program enrollment continued to increase in Academic Year 2020-2021. (Beginning in Academic Year 2022–2023, however, enrollment has begun to course-correct, dropping back to approximately pre-pandemic levels.)

Barring another pandemic or other unforeseen circumstance, a repeated spike in enrollment like the one occurring in Academic Year 2019–2020 is unlikely. The Program anticipates that, after a course-correction, its enrollment levels will approximate those of pre-pandemic Academic Years 2017–

2018 and 2018–2019, but with modest increases thereafter as a result of the positive outlook for paralegal employment growth in the DFW area through 2030. Please see section 4 of this Program Review for an extended discussion of that outlook.

• **Enrollment Patterns in Required Program Courses**

The enrollment patterns in required Program courses also indicate strong student demand. Figure 3 below contains the average enrollment statistics of all Program courses—both required and elective—for Academic Years 2018–2019 through 2022–2023:

Fig. 3

Average Section Size in Courses by Term Academic Years 2018-2019 through 2022-2023																
	2019			2020			2021			2022			2023			
	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	
LGLA-1303	30	28	-	30	26	-	30	24	-	20	32	11	30	27	-	
LGLA-1305	25	30	-	25	30	-	23	23	-	33	25	-	48	12	-	
LGLA-1307	28	17	16	18	16	25	21	23	17	24	15	15	19	11	19	
LGLA-1323	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	24	-	21	-	-	-	25	-	
LGLA-1343	26	-	-	21	-	-	-	-	13	-	12	-	-	9	-	
LGLA-1345	-	28	21	30	29	24	30	24	20	31	33	15	34	27	13	
LGLA-1351	23	23	24	24	24	22	38	21	36	33	32	24	38	25	24	
LGLA-1353	27	17	-	28	16	-	29	24	-	27	14	-	34	21	-	
LGLA-1355	29	13	-	30	28	-	33	28	24	31	30	25	33	20	17	
LGLA-1370	25	26	25	25	24	24	30	26	33	33	32	32	49	29	27	
LGLA-1380	2	2	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	5	1	1	
LGLA-2303	27	46	-	25	26	-	38	25	-	49	33	-	50	25	-	
LGLA-2307	22	-	-	27	-	-	30	-	-	31	-	-	22	-	-	
LGLA-2309	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	18	-	-	
LGLA-2311	24	24	22	25	24	25	25	23	30	21	29	22	25	23	22	
LGLA-2313	-	29	-	-	28	-	-	24	-	-	26	-	-	29	-	
LGLA-2323	-	19	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	11	-	
LGLA-2333	-	49	21	-	40	24	-	37	22	31	33	19	48	23	23	
LGLA-2339	12	16	10	9	12	-	19	22	-	28	24	-	23	41	-	

(Source: Collin IRO kr; 07/12/2023; page 1; j:\IRO\Robinson\Data\2023-24\Paralegal-Legal Assistant\Paralegal-Legal Assistant – Average Section Size.)

Overall, the enrollment pattern in required Program courses was consistent and strong. Of the courses identified in Figure 3, 12 are required: LGLA 1303, LGLA 1305, LGLA 1307, LGLA 1345, LGLA 1351, LGLA 1353 (required in A.A.S. program only), LGLA 1355 (required in A.A.S. Program only), LGLA 1370, LGLA 2303, LGLA 2311, LGLA 2333, and LGLA 2339. Of these required courses, five had average section enrollments exceeding 15 in every term in which they were offered, and another six required courses had an average enrollment below 15 in only one term in which they were offered. Only the Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), had an enrollment below 15 in more than one term, but those terms were early in the five-year period. The Program then adjusted the number of LGLA 2339 offerings, resulting in an enrollment exceeding 15 for the duration of the relevant period.

Below is a more detailed discussion of the required courses whose enrollment fell below 15 in one or more terms:

- **LGLA 1303, Legal Research (Summer 2022)**

The Program rarely offers this required course during the Summer term. Instead, the Program offers one section—occasionally two—each Fall and Spring semester. Because the Program had not offered a Summer section of LGLA 1303 in quite a few years, and because of increasing Program enrollment generally, the Program chose to offer one section of LGLA 1303 in Summer 2022, but the enrollment of 11 revealed the reality of a lower Summer demand for the course.

- **LGLA 1305, Legal Writing (Spring 2023)**

The Program offers this course each Fall and Spring semester. Because of the spike in enrollment that the Program had experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an unusually large number of students needed to take LGLA 1305 in Fall 2022. The course is a prerequisite to the Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), and these students needed to take LGLA 1305 in Fall 2022 so that they could take LGLA 2339 in Spring 2023 and complete the program. To assist these students in completing the program by their target date, the Program offered a double section of LGLA 1305 in Fall 2022. The Program’s customary enrollment cap in LGLA 1305 is 25; however, the Fall 2022 double section had a cap of 50 and an actual enrollment of 48. Because of the Fall 2022 double section, demand for the course dropped in Spring 2023, hence the relatively low enrollment of 12 in the course’s sole Spring 2023 section.

- **LGLA 1307, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (Spring 2023)**

This course is the Program’s required introductory survey course, which most students take in their first semester of the Program. In Spring 2023, the Program offered three sections: one on the Frisco Campus during the day, one at the Plano Campus during the day, and a third at the Plano Campus at night. The night class had an enrollment of 15, but the Frisco and Plano daytime classes had enrollments of only ten and nine, respectively. Because many of the Program’s students work full-time or have other obligations during the day, they are not able to attend daytime classes. The number of

students in this circumstance can fluctuate from term to term, and in Spring 2023 the demand for daytime classes happened to be unexpectedly low. By contrast, in the following semester, Fall 2023, the average enrollment of the three sections of LGLS 1307 was 19.

- **LGLA 1345, Civil Litigation (Summer 2023)**

The Program typically offers one section of this required course each Fall, Spring, and Summer term. Of the three terms, the Summer term has the lowest student demand, but the Program elected to offer a Summer section because the course is a prerequisite to the capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339). As the Figure 3 chart indicates, the previous four Summer sections of LGLA 1345 had enrollments of 15 or higher, so the relatively low enrollment of 13 in Summer 2023 was an anomaly.

- **LGLA 1353, Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (Spring 2022)**

This course is required for A.A.S. students but elective for Certificate students. The Program typically offers one section of this required course every Fall and Spring semester. The enrollment of 14 during the Spring 2022 semester was an anomaly, for all other sections of LGLA 1353 reflected in the Figure 3 chart had enrollments of at least 15 and typically much higher.

- **LGLA 1355, Family Law (Spring 2019)**

This course is required for A.A.S. students but elective for Certificate students. This course is a required course in the A.A.S. program and an elective course in the Certificate program, although many students in the Certificate program do take it as one of their electives. Because of its popularity, the Program typically offers one section of this course every Fall, Spring, and Summer term. The relatively low enrollment of 13 in Spring 2023 was an anomaly, for all other sections of the course reflected in the Figure 3 chart had enrollments well in excess of 15.

- **LGLA 2339, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (Fall 2019, Summer 2019, Fall 2020, Spring 2020)**

This required course, the Program's capstone course, prepares students to take the Certified Paralegal (CP) Exam, administered by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA). Students typically take the course during their final semester of the Program. As the Figure 3 chart indicates, the Program at first offered LGLA 2339 in the Fall, Spring, and Summer terms. However, student demand did not support offering the course in all three terms, as evidenced by the relatively low enrollments in Fall 2019, Summer 2019, Fall 2020, Spring 2020. Therefore, the Program reduced the offerings to twice each calendar year. Since the adjustment, the section enrollments have all exceeded 15.

### **Identifying and Supporting Students Enrolled in Program-Required Courses Early in the Degree Plan**

In the Program's required introductory survey course, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), which almost all Program students take during their first semester, the Program presents an orientation to the Program. As part of this presentation, the Program explains the credentials offered by the Program (A.A.S. and Certificate); describes the required courses and elective options for each (including the general education course requirements for the A.A.S.); explains course prerequisites and corequisites; and provides detailed guidance for course selection and sequencing to maximize students' ability to complete the program by their target date. The Program also provides reference handouts and

PowerPoint slides relating to course selection and sequencing, answers students' questions, and offers to meet with students individually to plan out their course schedules and answer questions.

The Program presents this orientation in each LGLA 1307 section before early registration opens for the upcoming term. During the orientation, the Program shows students the paralegal course schedule for the upcoming term, makes recommendations, and answers students' questions about delivery formats, meeting times and locations for synchronous courses, and other general course logistics.

In addition, the Program's full-time faculty and assigned Workforce Programs Coaches regularly perform degree audits and certificate audits for Program students and meet with them in person or by Zoom to discuss course selection and sequencing.

### **Diversity of Program's Student Population**

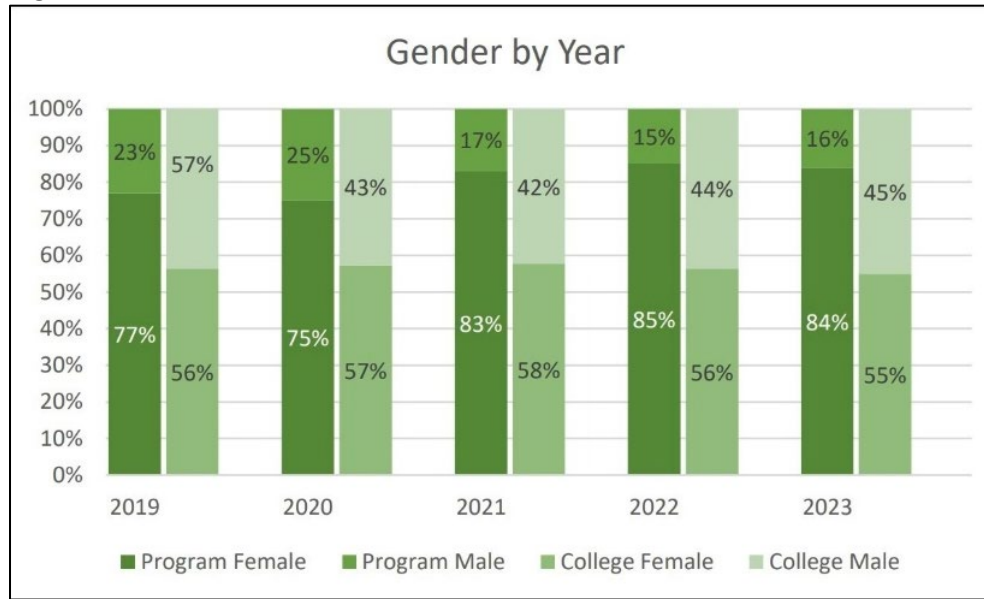
As discussed more specifically below, the Program's students are disproportionately female compared to the College-wide student population, although the percentage of Program students who are female aligns more closely with the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are female. Racially and ethnically, the percentages of Program students who are from historically underrepresented groups are—with one exception—equal to or greater than the corresponding percentages of the College-wide student population. The one exception is the percentage of Program students who are Asian, but that percentage is nevertheless higher than the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are Asian.

- **Gender**

Historically, the paralegal profession has been predominantly female. The paralegal position emerged as a distinct role in law offices in the early 1970s, when the vast majority of attorneys were men and the vast majority of attorneys' support personnel, such as legal secretaries, were women. The earliest paralegals were typically highly trained and skilled legal secretaries promoted as paralegals. Over time, women increasingly attended law school and became attorneys, and men increasingly became paralegals. (National Association of Legal Support Professionals, "Men at Work," <https://www.nals.org/blogpost/1359892/280914/Men-at-Work>.) As of 2022, approximately 38% of attorneys nationwide were women. (American Bar Association, National Lawyer Population Survey, [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market\\_research/national-lawyer-population-demographics-2012-2022.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market_research/national-lawyer-population-demographics-2012-2022.pdf).) Today, approximately 78% of paralegals nationwide are women. (Zippia, Paralegal Demographics and Statistics in the US, <https://www.zippia.com/paralegal-jobs/demographics/>.)

As Figure 4 below reflects, the Program's gender demographics in Academic Years 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 mirrored this national trend: 77% of Program students were female in 2019–2020, and 75% of Program students were female, compared to the College-wide percentages of 56% and 57%, respectively. In the Program, the percentages of female students rose to the middle 80s in the following three academic years despite relatively stable percentages of male students College-wide.

Fig. 4



(Source: Collin IRO kr; 07/27/2023; page 2; j:\IRO\Robinson\Data\2023-24\Paralegal-Legal\Paralegal-Legal – Unduplicated Enrollment.)

Although both female and male students in the Program increasingly express interest in attending law school, the proportion of the male students expressing that interest appears greater. Given this level of interest, male students lacking a bachelor’s degree may be more likely than their female counterparts to transfer to a four-year institution without declaring Paralegal Studies as their major at Collin. Similarly, male students who already have a bachelor’s degree may be more likely than their female counterparts to apply to and begin law school without declaring Paralegal Studies as their major at Collin.

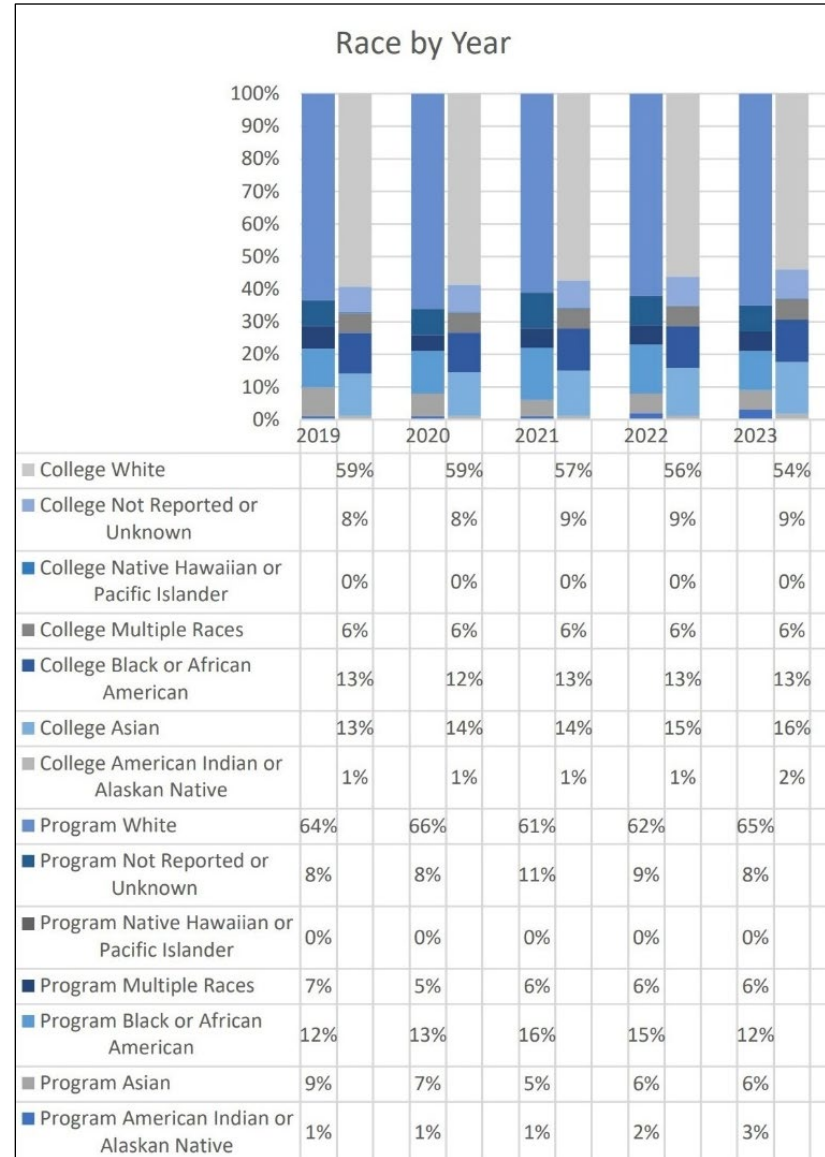
The Program desires that persons of all genders learn about the paralegal profession and take advantage of the educational opportunities for entering that profession. Local paralegal organizations, such as the Dallas Area Paralegal Association (DAPA), sponsor guest speakers and seminars regarding men in the paralegal professions (for example, the June 2023 presentation “Male Paralegals—A Personal Perspective,” sponsored by DAPA: <https://dallasparalegals.org/event-5276583>), and the Program will keep its students informed of such programs of which the Program becomes aware.

- **Race**

The Program's students are racially diverse. As Figure 5 and the discussion below demonstrate, the percentages of Program students who are from historically underrepresented groups equal or exceed the corresponding percentages of the College-wide student population. The one exception is the percentage of Program students who are Asian, although that percentage exceeds the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are Asian.



Fig. 5



(Source: Collin IRO kr; 07/27/2023; page 3; j:\IRO\Robinson\Data\2023-24\Paralegal-Legal\Paralegal-Legal – Unduplicated Enrollment.)

- **Black or African-American Students.** During the relevant period, the average yearly percentage of Program students who are Black or African-American was 13.6%, higher than the corresponding percentage of 12.8% of the College-wide student population. The Program’s yearly average of Black or African-American students also exceeded the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are Black or African American—namely, 9.2%. (Zippia, Paralegal Demographics and Statistics in the US, [https://www.zippia.com/paralegal-jobs/demographics/.](https://www.zippia.com/paralegal-jobs/demographics/))
- **American Indian or Alaskan Native Students.** During the relevant period, the average yearly percentage of Program students who are American Indian or Alaskan Native was 2%, higher than the corresponding percentage of 1.2% of the College-wide student population.
- **Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Students.** During the relevant period, the average yearly percentage of Program students who are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander was 0%, equal to the corresponding percentage of the College-wide student population.
- **Multiracial Students.** During the relevant period, the average yearly percentage of Program students who are multiracial was 6%, equal to the corresponding percentage of the College-wide student population.
- **Asian Students.** During the relevant period, the average yearly percentage of Program students who are Asian was 6.6%, lower than the corresponding percentage of 14.4% of the College-wide student population. Nevertheless, the Program’s average percentage of Asian students exceeded the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are Asian—namely, 5.7%. (Zippia, Paralegal Demographics and Statistics in the US, [https://www.zippia.com/paralegal-jobs/demographics/.](https://www.zippia.com/paralegal-jobs/demographics/))

- **Ethnicity**

During Academic Years 2019 through 2023, the Program’s average yearly percentage of students who are Hispanic was 23.2%, higher than the corresponding percentage of 21.4% of the College-wide student population. The percentage of Hispanic students in the Program has steadily increased from 21% in Academic Year 2019 to 27% in Academic Year 2023. The Program’s percentages all exceeded the percentage of paralegals nationwide who are Hispanic or Latinx—namely, 20.2%. (Zippia, Paralegal Demographics and Statistics in the US, [https://www.zippia.com/paralegal-jobs/demographics/.](https://www.zippia.com/paralegal-jobs/demographics/))

- **Conclusion**

The Program’s students are racially and ethnically diverse. Still, the Program remains committed encouraging diversity in the Program’s student population consistently with federal and Texas laws. For example, faculty members will continue to volunteer at campus activities for nontraditional student attendees; participate in campus orientation activities and other campus events, such as Collin's Mentor Program, the Frisco ISD–Collin Career Fair, and faculty roundtables; and support students with letters of recommendation for scholarship programs serving underrepresented groups.

### □ 4. WHY WE DO THE THINGS WE DO: PROGRAM RELATIONSHIP TO MARKET DEMAND

Make a case with evidence to show that employers need and hire the program's graduates. Some resources to utilize for information could be: JobsEQ [http://inside.collin.edu/iro/programreview/202021/ProgramLaborMarketInfo\\_2020-21AY.pdf](http://inside.collin.edu/iro/programreview/202021/ProgramLaborMarketInfo_2020-21AY.pdf), Burning Glass, O-Net <https://www.onetonline.org>, Texas Labor Market Information <https://www.twc.texas.gov/businesses/labor-market-information>.

*Suggested/possible points to consider:*

- *How many program-related jobs are available in the DFW Metroplex for program graduates? If the majority of related jobs in the DFW Metroplex require a baccalaureate degree, provide evidence that you have a current signed articulation agreement with one or more transfer institutions or that you plan to develop one.*
- *What proportion of the program's graduates (seeking employment) found related employment within six months of graduation?*
- *What changes are anticipated in market demand in the next 5 years? Do program completers meet, exceed, or fall short of local employment demand? How will the program address under- or over-supply?*
- *Identify and discuss the program's strengths and weaknesses related to market demand.*

#### **Paralegal Profession: A "High-Demand Field"**

On June 26, 2023, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) identified Legal Support Services as one of 25 "high-demand fields" based on information from the Texas Workforce Commission. The THECB described its selection criteria as follows:

The list of high-demand fields for FY 24 was assembled from a list of the 25 occupations that provide at least a median wage, require education or training beyond high school but below a bachelor's degree, and are projected to experience the most growth in each of the 10 higher education regions. These 25 occupations are based on data from the Texas Workforce Commission. The list also includes occupations that appear in at least seven of the 10 regional lists or in any region's top five. . . .

(THECB, FY24 Community College Formula Funding: High-Demand Fields, <https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/supporting-our-institutions/community-college-finance/high-demand-fields/>.) The Texas Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code for Legal Support Services is 22.03, a subdivision of which is Legal Assistant/Paralegal Services, whose CIP Code is 22.0302. Figure 6 below shows these subdivisions

Fig. 6

			<b>Legal Support Services</b>
<b>22 .03</b>			
22 .0301	.00	12	Legal Administrative Assistant/Secretary
22 .0302	.00	12	Legal Assistant/Paralegal
22 .0303	.00	12	Court Reporting and Captioning/Court Reporter
22 .0304	.00	12	Court Interpreter
22 .0305	.00	12	Scopist

(Source: THECB, Texas CIP Codes, <http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/CIP/>.)

The Program’s A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies and Level 2 Paralegal Certificate, therefore, qualify as “fundable credentials of value for the ‘high-demand’ bonus in the performance tier of community college funding.” (See THECB, FY24 Community College Formula Funding: High-Demand Fields, <https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/supporting-our-institutions/community-college-finance/high-demand-fields/>.)

**Paralegal Employment Growth: Statewide and Local Projections**

The paralegal profession continues to grow. For years 2020–2030, the profession’s projected rate of growth in Texas statewide (23–24%) and in the DFW area (over 25%) far outpaces the profession’s projected rate of growth nationally (4%).

- **Statewide Projections**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Texas ranks fourth among the five states with the highest employment level in paralegals and legal assistants as of May 2022. This ranking appears in Figure 7 below:

Fig. 7

States with the highest employment level in Paralegals and Legal Assistants:

<b>State</b>	<b>Employment (1)</b>	<b>Employment per thousand jobs</b>	<b>Location quotient (9)</b>	<b>Hourly mean wage</b>	<b>Annual mean wage (2)</b>
<a href="#">California</a>	37,270	2.11	0.91	\$ 36.58	\$ 76,080
<a href="#">Florida</a>	36,060	3.92	1.68	\$ 27.24	\$ 56,650
<a href="#">New York</a>	30,020	3.30	1.41	\$ 33.59	\$ 69,860
<a href="#">Texas</a>	24,600	1.89	0.81	\$ 28.83	\$ 59,970
<a href="#">Georgia</a>	12,510	2.71	1.16	\$ 27.83	\$ 57,890

(Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2022—Paralegals and Legal Assistants, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes232011.htm>, with footnotes omitted.)

In addition, in 2023 the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) designated the paralegal profession a “high-growth professional service occupation” with a projected growth of 24.2% from 2020 to 2030. Figure 8 below reflects the TWC’s statistics:

Fig. 8

Occupation Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020–2030	Percent Growth 2020–2030
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	22,456	27,884	5,428	24.2

(Source: TWC, 2023 Report on Texas Growth Occupations, pages 81 and 84, <https://lmci.state.tx.us/shared/PDFs/High-Growth-Annual-Report-Final-Review-full.pdf>.)

The statistics on O\*NET® OnLine reflect a comparably large growth projection—23%—in Texas paralegal and legal assistant employment. This projection greatly exceeds the 4% growth projected for the occupation nationally, as reflected in Figure 9 below:

Fig. 9



(Source: This image includes information from O\*NET OnLine, <https://www.onetonline.org>, by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA). Used under the CC BY 4.0 license, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. O\*NET® is a trademark of USDOL/ETA.)

- **Local Projections**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington area ranks eighth nationwide among the metropolitan areas with the highest employment level in paralegals and legal assistants. Figure 10 below contains the entire list:

Fig. 10

Metropolitan areas with the highest employment level in Paralegals and Legal Assistants:

Metropolitan area	Employment (1)	Employment per thousand jobs	Location quotient (9)	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
<a href="#">New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA</a>	29,080	3.17	1.36	\$ 34.77	\$ 72,320
<a href="#">Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA</a>	16,530	2.71	1.16	\$ 36.46	\$ 75,850
<a href="#">Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL</a>	13,240	5.05	2.16	\$ 28.54	\$ 59,360
<a href="#">Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV</a>	12,190	4.03	1.72	\$ 38.37	\$ 79,810
<a href="#">Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI</a>	10,520	2.38	1.02	\$ 31.47	\$ 65,450
<a href="#">Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA</a>	8,900	3.26	1.40	\$ 29.96	\$ 62,310
<a href="#">Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD</a>	8,830	3.19	1.36	\$ 33.34	\$ 69,350
 <a href="#">Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX</a>	6,610	1.74	0.74	\$ 31.89	\$ 66,330
<a href="#">San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA</a>	6,330	2.65	1.13	\$ 42.44	\$ 88,270
<a href="#">Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX</a>	6,160	2.02	0.86	\$ 31.67	\$ 65,880

(Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes232011.htm#st>, with footnotes omitted.)

TWC projections support this ranking. As Figure 11 below reflects, for the period 2020–2030 the TWC projects a 25.62% increase—or 2,058 new job openings—in paralegal and legal assistant employment in the three relevant Texas Workforce Development Areas (TWDAs) combined: North Central, Dallas, and Tarrant County. The North Central TWDA includes Collin, Denton, Hunt, and Rockwall Counties.

Fig. 11

<b>TWC OCCUPATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS: 2020–2030 PARALEGALS AND LEGAL ASSISTANTS NORTH CENTRAL, DALLAS, AND TARRANT COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS</b>	
2020 Employment (Base Year)	8,033
Current Employment (2022)	6,700
Projected 2030 Employment	10,091
<b>Change in Employment, 2020–2030</b>	<b>2,058</b>
<b>Percentage Change</b>	<b>25.62</b>
Help Wanted Ads—4th Quarter 2023	772

(Source: Texas Labor Analysis, Demand Analysis Custom Report, <https://texaslaboranalysis.com>.)

- **Articulation Agreements**

The standard educational credential for a paralegal expected by most legal employers is an associate’s degree in paralegal studies or, for persons with a preexisting associate’s or bachelor’s degree, a paralegal certificate. Therefore, at Collin, many Program graduates enter the workforce directly after completing the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies or the Level 2 Paralegal Certificate—and sometimes earlier.

However, some employers do prefer or require that their paralegals have a bachelor’s degree. To assist Program students who desire to continue their paralegal studies at the baccalaureate level, the Program has articulation agreements with Texas A&M University-Commerce regarding its Bachelor of Arts/Science in Political Science with Emphasis in Paralegal Studies and with Texas Woman’s University regarding its Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies program. In addition, the Program is currently in discussions with Texas Wesleyan University concerning a potential articulation agreement regarding its Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies program.

For additional details regarding these existing and prospective articulation agreements, please see the Program’s response in Section 2 of this Program Review above.

### **Proportion of Program's Graduates Employed Within Six Months After Graduation**

Students attend the Program for a variety of reasons—for example, to prepare themselves to enter the paralegal profession, to prepare themselves to enter the legal profession in another capacity, to explore a potential interest in attending law school, or simply to study a field that interests them apart from career goals. Therefore, although many Program graduates enter the workforce as paralegals, many pursue such other paths.

Because of this diversity of career and educational goals, evaluating the career success of the Program's students can be challenging. The challenges include the following:

1. Many Program students continue their education at four-year institutions. While in their four-year programs, some students may choose not to work at all or choose to work only part-time, as in an unpaid internship.
2. Some Program students already have a four-year degree and plan to attend law school shortly after their time at Collin. Most law students attend law school on a full-time basis and, therefore, do not seek employment.
3. Third, some Program students elect not to earn a Collin credential if they attain their career goals before completing the Program, although the Program strongly urges these students to complete.

For these reasons, the number of recent Program graduates who are employed shortly after their completion at Collin does not present a full picture of the success of the Program's students.

Nevertheless, the data do have some limited utility. To ascertain the employment status or continuing education goals of its graduates and imminent graduates, the Program administers written surveys to its graduates and exit surveys to students enrolled in the Program's capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), which most students take during their final semester.

Figure 12 below reflects the relevant post-graduate data based on graduate survey responses and other obtainable data, broken down by academic year. In calculating the percentages, if any graduates both secured employment and continued their education, the Program has counted those persons only in the applicable employment category.



Fig. 12

PROGRAM GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT OR CONTINUING EDUCATION STATUS (Percentages are based on the number of graduates for whom information was obtainable.)							
Academic Year of Graduation	Number of Graduates for Whom Information Obtainable	Working as Paralegal	Working in Another Capacity in Legal Field	Continuing Education	Seeking Employment	Working in Nonlegal Field	Not Seeking Employment
2019–2020	15	<b>40%</b>	13.3%	33.3%	<b>0%</b>	13.3%	0%
2020–2021	32	<b>21.9%</b>	12.5%	21.9%	<b>9.4%</b>	34.4%	0%
2021–2022	37	<b>37.8%</b>	8.1%	10.8%	<b>8.1%</b>	29.7%	5.4%

The percentage of 2019–2020 graduates known to be working as paralegals was 40%, but that figure dropped to 21.9% for 2020–2021 graduates. By contrast, the percentage of 2019–2020 graduates known to be working in nonlegal fields was 13.3%, but that figure rose to 34.4% for 2020–2021 graduates. This inverse relationship may have resulted from layoffs and hiring freezes by legal offices during the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in Spring 2020, although the extent to which graduates may have voluntarily chosen nonlegal jobs over paralegal jobs is unknown. The percentage of 2021-2022 graduates known to be working as paralegals was higher—37.8%—and much closer the pre-pandemic percentage. Based on this trend, combined with the ongoing population growth in the DFW area, the Program anticipates that the percentage of its graduates who secure employment as paralegals may increase at least to the pre-pandemic percentage of 40%, if not higher.

The drop in paralegal employment numbers during the pandemic is consistent with the Texas Workforce Commission’s 2020–2030 projections for paralegal employment in the North Central, Dallas, and Tarrant County Workforce Development Areas. Although the number of paralegal jobs dipped from 8,033 in 2020 to 6,700 in 2022, the TWC still projects an increase in the number of paralegal jobs to 10,091 by 2030. (Texas Labor Analysis, Demand Analysis Custom Report, <https://texaslaboranalysis.com>.)

**Program Completion Statistics in Relation to Market Demand**

In section 2 of this Program Review above, the Figure 1 chart indicates the number of Program awards in each of the five Academic Years from 2017–2018 through 2021–2022. The number of awards dropped from 28 in Academic Year 2017–2018 to 22 in 2019–2020 but then rose to a five-year high of 41 in Academic Year 2021–2022. The dip to 22 in Academic Year 2019–2020 coincided with the Spring 2020 outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic so that some students who otherwise would have completed the Program in May 2020 or August 2020 did not. Once the pandemic began, as employers laid off employees and froze hiring—particularly in the hospitality industry—the Program experienced an influx of new “second career” students who were interested in exploring the paralegal profession. The ensuing increase in award numbers in Academic Years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 was a result of this influx.

### **Program Strengths and Weaknesses Relating to Market Demand**

The Program is well positioned to meet the increasing market demand for paralegals in the DFW area. Among the Program's strengths are the following:

- The Program's ABA approval, according to many students, is a key draw.
- The Program is flexible in the timing of its courses. Specifically, it is able schedule some of its synchronous (live) course sections either during the day or in the evening to accommodate students' work schedules or childcare obligations.
- The Program is flexible, within the boundaries established by the *ABA Guidelines*, in the delivery format of its courses. Specifically, the Program is able to offer many of its courses in fully online, synchronous (live) online, or hybrid format.
- The Program is increasingly flexible in the geographic location of its face-to-face courses. Specifically, the Program offers courses at both the Frisco Campus and the Plano Campus. In addition, in Spring 2024, the Program is offering its first course at the McKinney Campus—a section of Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307).
- The Program is responsive to student demand, changes in topics covered on paralegal certification exams, and recommendations by the Advisory Committee. For example, during the review period, NALA added Real Property to the list of topics tested on the Certified Paralegal (CP) Exam. In response, the Program began offering the elective course Real Property (LGLA 2309). Further, in response to student demand and upon recommendation by the Program's Advisory Committee, the Program currently has an application pending before the Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) to add another elective, Immigration Law, to the curriculum. If CAB approves this addition, the Program hopes to offer Immigration Law for the first time in Fall 2024.
- The Program robustly markets itself to prospective students at career and program fairs sponsored by Collin, and the Program's website (<https://www.collin.edu/department/paralegal/>) and program information sheet (<https://www.collin.edu/academics/info/paralegalInfoSheet.pdf>) prompt multiple inquiries from prospective students each month. In addition, Collin's assigned Workforce Programs Coaches promote the Program during recruitment events at area high schools.

Still, continuing improvement is important. To meet the projected increase in market demand, for example:

- The Program will improve its outreach to people who are already working in legal offices in non-paralegal capacities, such as legal secretaries and receptionists, but who may be interested in a paralegal education to qualify for raises or promotions. To this end, the Program has been developing new marketing materials that target area legal employers with the dual purpose of (1) encouraging the employers to hire Program

students and graduates as interns or employees; and (2) advertising the Program as an excellent means for existing non-paralegal employees to improve their pay or positions.

- The Program's faculty will engage more directly with area high schools. For example, in February 2024, the discipline lead will represent the Program at Brighter Horizons Academy's College Fair, and in April 2024, the discipline lead will represent the Program at Plano Senior High School's College Fair. The Program will participate in additional opportunities to meet with area high school students, both at the high schools themselves and at events on Collin's campuses.
- The Program will closely monitor enrollment and continue to add adjunct faculty as appropriate to meet student demand.

## Section II. *Are We Doing Things Right?*

### □ 5. HOW EFFECTIVE IS OUR CURRICULUM, AND HOW DO WE KNOW?

**A. Make a case with evidence that there are no curricular barriers to program completion. Review data related to course enrollments, course completion rates, course success rates, and the frequency with which courses are scheduled to identify barriers to program completion.**

*Suggested/possible points to consider:*

- *Number of students who completed the program awards in each of the last 4 years? If the number of graduates does not average 5 or more per year, describe your plan to increase completions and address this issue in the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP).*
- *At what point(s) are substantive percentages of students dropping out of the program? Use data in the “Program-Based Course Performance” tool to examine enrollment flow through the program curriculum. Does the data suggest any curricular barriers to completion? Address problems in the CIP.*
- *Analyze the course success rates and the course completion rates of each course in your program. Address problems in the CIP.*

The Program’s course enrollments, completion rates, success rates, and frequency indicate no curricular barriers to program completion.

#### **Program Course Enrollments**

When appropriate, the Program has increased the enrollment caps or offered double sections of courses, particularly prerequisites or a corequisite, to accommodate student demand and avoid delaying students’ progression through the curriculum.

Five Program courses have one or more prerequisites or a corequisite, as indicated in Figure 14 below:

Fig. 14

<b>PROGRAM COURSES WITH PREREQUISITE(S) OR COREQUISITE</b>	
<b>Course</b>	<b>Its Prerequisite(s) or Corequisite</b>
Legal Writing (LGLA 1305)	Prerequisite: Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370)
Employment Law (LGLA 1323)	Prerequisite: Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307)
Business Organizations (LGLA 2311)	Prerequisite: either . . . Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307); or Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333)
Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333)	Prerequisite or corequisite/concurrent enrollment: Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370)

<p>Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339)</p>	<p>Prerequisites: Legal Writing (LGLA 1305); and Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345)</p>
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The standard enrollment cap for all face-to-face Program courses except Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) courses is 30, and the standard enrollment cap for LGLA 1305 is 25. The standard enrollment cap for all online Program courses is 25. Because of the Program’s relatively small size, the Program normally cannot offer more than one or two sections of a prerequisite or corequisite each term without the substantial risk that at least one section will fail to make. In addition, student demand for a particular prerequisite or corequisite course can fluctuate from term to term. Because of these circumstances, the Program and its Associate Dean closely monitor course enrollments for each upcoming semester to evaluate whether the demand for a particular course, especially a prerequisite or corequisite, may justify either adding a new section or increasing the enrollment cap of an existing section.

On the following page, the Figure 15 chart reflects the average section enrollments of all Program courses for Academic Years 2018–2019 through 2022–2023. The five prerequisite courses listed on Figure 15 (LGLA 1305, LGLA 1307, LGLA 1345, LGLA 1370, and LGLA 2333) reflect adjustments that the Program made to remove potential barriers to students’ progression through the curriculum.

Fig. 15

Average Section Size in Courses by Term Academic Years 2018-2019 through 2022-2023															
	2019			2020			2021			2022			2023		
	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer
LGLA-1303	30	28	-	30	26	-	30	24	-	20	32	11	30	27	-
LGLA-1305	25	30	-	25	30	-	23	23	-	33	25	-	48	12	-
LGLA-1307	28	17	16	18	16	25	21	23	17	24	15	15	19	11	19
LGLA-1323	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	24	-	21	-	-	-	25	-
LGLA-1343	26	-	-	21	-	-	-	-	13	-	12	-	-	9	-
LGLA-1345	-	28	21	30	29	24	30	24	20	31	33	15	34	27	13
LGLA-1351	23	23	24	24	24	22	38	21	36	33	32	24	38	25	24
LGLA-1353	27	17	-	28	16	-	29	24	-	27	14	-	34	21	-
LGLA-1355	29	13	-	30	28	-	33	28	24	31	30	25	33	20	17
LGLA-1370	25	26	25	25	24	24	30	26	33	33	32	32	49	29	27
LGLA-1380	2	2	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	5	1	1
LGLA-2303	27	46	-	25	26	-	38	25	-	49	33	-	50	25	-
LGLA-2307	22	-	-	27	-	-	30	-	-	31	-	-	22	-	-
LGLA-2309	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	18	-	-
LGLA-2311	24	24	22	25	24	25	25	23	30	21	29	22	25	23	22
LGLA-2313	-	29	-	-	28	-	-	24	-	-	26	-	-	29	-
LGLA-2323	-	19	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	11	-
LGLA-2333	-	49	21	-	40	24	-	37	22	31	33	19	48	23	23
LGLA-2339	12	16	10	9	12	-	19	22	-	28	24	-	23	41	-

(Source: Collin IRO kr; 07/12/2023; page 1; j:\IRO\Robinson\Data\2023-24\Paralegal-Legal Assistant\Paralegal-Legal Assistant – Average Section Size.)

Of the prerequisites listed in Figure 15 above, the face-to-face course Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307) posed no barrier to completion and, therefore, required no adjustments to the number of sections or their enrollment caps. In each of the five Academic Years, the Program offered three sections of LGLA 1307 each Fall and Spring semester and one section each Summer term. As Figure 15 indicates, the largest average term enrollment of that course was 28.

By contrast, at times the Program adjusted its other four prerequisite or corequisite courses to increase the enrollment caps or double the sections to remove any barriers to students' completion.

- **Legal Writing (LGLA 1305)**

The Program normally offered one section of Legal Writing each Fall and Spring semester. To give students the necessary individualized attention on their in-depth writing projects in this face-to-face course, the Program normally capped the enrollment at 25. Nevertheless, to accommodate a spike in student demand for the course in Fall 2021 and especially in Fall 2022—and thereby facilitate students' ability to take the Program's capstone course afterward—the Program increased the Fall 2021 enrollment cap to 33 and offered a double section in Fall 2022.

- **Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345)**

The Program normally offered a single section of this face-to-face prerequisite each Fall, Spring, and Summer term. The normal enrollment cap was 30. Nevertheless, to accommodate student demand and facilitate students' ability to take the Program's capstone course afterward, the Program increased the enrollment cap to 31 in Fall 2021, 33 in Spring 2022, and 34 in Fall 2022.

- **Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370)**

The Program normally offered one section of this fully online prerequisite each Fall, Spring, and Summer term. The normal enrollment cap was 25. Nevertheless, to accommodate an increase in student demand and facilitate students' ability to take Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) afterward or Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333) either afterward or concurrently, the Program increased the enrollment cap in the Spring 2019 term and in almost every term in 2022 and 2023. The increased enrollments ranged from 26 in Spring 2019 and Spring 2021 all the way to a double section in Fall 2022.

- **Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333)**

In 2019, 2020, and 2021, the Program offered one section of this fully online prerequisite each Spring and Summer term. The normal enrollment cap was 25. Nevertheless, to facilitate students' ability to take Business Organizations (LGLA 2311) afterward or otherwise proceed through the curriculum, the Program began, in 2022, offering the course in the Fall semester also. In addition, the Program increased the enrollment cap to a double section in Spring 2019, to 40 in Spring 2020, to 37 in Spring 2021, to 31 in Fall 2021, to 33 in Spring 2022, and to a double section in Fall 2022.

### **Program Completers**

Figure 16 below reflects the number of Program awards from Academic Year 2017–2018 through Academic Year 2021–2022:

Fig. 16

<b>NUMBER OF PROGRAM AWARDS</b>	
<b>Academic Year 2017–2018</b>	
A.A.S.	18
Certificate	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Academic Year 2018–2019</b>	
A.A.S.	22
Certificate	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Academic Year 2019–2020</b>	
A.A.S.	16
Certificate	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Academic Year 2020–2021</b>	
A.A.S.	22
Certificate	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Academic Year 2021–2022</b>	
A.A.S.	26
Certificate	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

(Source of Program award data: Spreadsheet of Program award statistics prepared by Institutional Research Office, as revised downward by Program to eliminate duplications, for inclusion in the Program’s 2023 Re-Approval Application to the American Bar Association.)

Over the previous five Academic Years, the average annual number of program completers was 33, and the five-year trajectory did not suggest any noteworthy barriers to Program completion apart from the intervening COVID-19 pandemic, which began in Spring 2020.

As Figure 16 above illustrates, the number of Program awards increased from 28 in Academic Year 2017–2018 to 37 in Academic Year 2018–2019. The number of awards dropped to 22 in Academic Year 2019–2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Thereafter, the number of awards increased to 41—exceeding pre-pandemic levels—in Academic Year 2021–2022.



### **Timing of Program Attrition**

Students are most likely to drop out of the Program, if at all, after taking the Program's introductory survey course, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307). Almost all students take this course during their first semester in the program. Although the majority of students enter the program with a preexisting interest in the legal profession, some students take LGLA 1307 because they want to test the waters or because the course happens to fit their schedules. During the course of LGLA 1307, a few of these students may conclude either that the paralegal profession does not interest them after all or that the Program is more academically demanding than they had expected. These students commonly complete LGLA 1307 but take no additional paralegal courses.

Attempting to pinpoint any other stage in the Program at which substantive percentages of students may tend to withdraw is particularly difficult for two reasons. First, the Program's students come to the Program with a wide diversity of career and personal goals, and the fulfillment of those goals may occur at virtually any stage of the program and potentially result in withdrawal. For example:

- A student whose goal is to enter the paralegal workforce may elect to drop out of the Program once he or she has secured paralegal employment (although the Program strongly urges students in this circumstance to complete the credential regardless).
- A student who already has a bachelor's degree and whose purpose in taking Program courses is to preview law school subjects may drop out of the program as soon as he or she begins law school.
- A student who wishes to enter a baccalaureate program may elect to transfer to a four-year institution before completing the Program.

Second, because many of the Program's students are nontraditional and can attend classes only on a part-time basis, the Program maintains a relatively flexible curriculum. The Program, for example, does not have a cohort arrangement. Although some full-time students attempt to follow the Program course curriculum outlines in the *Collin Catalog*, following those schedules to the letter is not necessary and, for part-time students, is impossible. Except for the Co-op elective (LGLA 1380) and the five courses that have a formal prerequisite(s) or corequisite—namely, Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), Employment Law (LGLA 1323), Business Organizations (LGLA 2311), Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333), and Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339)—students are generally free to take Program courses whenever they appear on the schedule, subject to seat availability. As a result, pointing to specific stages in the Program when substantive percentages of students are most likely to withdrawal is extremely difficult.

The only significant challenge relating to timely program completion has been to ensure that Program students are aware of the Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) prerequisite to the Program's capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339). In the Program orientation provided as part of the required introductory survey course, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the Program identifies each course prerequisite(s) and corequisite and recommends course sequencing to maximize the chances that students will complete the Program by their target dates. The Program's full-time faculty members and assigned Workforce Programs Coaches also regularly prepare degree audits and certificate audits and counsel students on course sequencing. Still, on occasion, a student will unsuccessfully attempt to register for LGLA 1305 and LGLA 2339 concurrently

in what he or she had thinks will be the final semester of the program, having forgotten that LGLA 1305 is a formal prerequisite to LGLA 2339. To minimize recurrences of this circumstance, the Program has increased its emphasis on the prerequisites in the Program orientation and in other Program classes and has developed a course sequencing reference chart for Program students that highlights this prerequisite even more.

**Course Success and Completion Rates**

For Academic Years 2018–2019 through 2022–2023, the completion and success rates of the Program’s courses reveal no curricular barriers to completion. The average completion rate of all 19 Program courses combined was 91%, well above Collin’s minimum standard of 78%. The average success rate was 85%, well above Collin’s minimum standard of 75%. Broken down, the respective success and completion rates for elective Program courses was only slightly below the corresponding percentages for required Program courses, as illustrated below.

- **Required Courses**

Figure 17 below contains the average completion and success rates for the Program’s required courses for Academic Years 2019 through 2023:

Fig. 17

AVERAGE COMPLETION AND SUCCESS RATES: REQUIRED COURSES									
ACADEMIC YEARS 2019–2023									
	LGLA 1303	LGLA 1305	LGLA 1307	LGLA 1345	LGLA 1351	LGLA 1353*	LGLA 1355*	LGLA 1370	LGLA 2303
<b>Completion</b>	93%	90%	93%	95%	91%	95%	95%	92%	92%
<b>Success</b>	82%	86%	82%	90%	84%	93%	86%	85%	86%
	LGLA 2311	LGLA 2333	LGLA 2339	AVERAGE	*Required course in A.A.S. program, elective course in Certificate program				
<b>Completion</b>	92%	80%	98%	<b>92%</b>					
<b>Success</b>	87%	71%	97%	<b>86%</b>					

(Source: Collin IRO kr; 07/26/2023; pages 1–19; j:\IRO\Robinson\Data\2023-24\Paralegal-Legal Assistant\Paralegal Legal Assistant – Grade Distribution.)

For Academic Years 2019–2023, the average completion rate for the 12 required courses combined was 92%, well above Collin’s minimum completion standard of 78%. The average success rate for these courses was 86%, also well above Collin’s minimum standard of 75%.

- **Elective Courses**

Figure 18 below sets forth the average completion and success rates for the Program’s seven elective courses for Academic Years 2019 through 2023:

Fig. 18

AVERAGE COMPLETION AND SUCCESS RATES: ELECTIVE COURSES ACADEMIC YEARS 2019–2023								
	LGLA 1323	LGLA 1343	LGLA 1380	LGLA 2307	LGLA 2309	LGLA 2313	LGLA 2323	AVERAGE
<b>Completion</b>	87%	86%	100%	98%	90%	95%	74%	<b>90%</b>
<b>Success</b>	81%	80%	97%	90%	85%	90%	66%	<b>84%</b>

(Source: Collin IRO kr; 07/26/2023; pages 1–19; j:\IRO\Robinson\Data\2023-24\Paralegal-Legal Assistant\Paralegal Legal Assistant – Grade Distribution.)

For this period, the average completion rate of the seven elective courses combined was 90%, again well above Collin’s minimum completion standard of 78%. The average success rate of these courses was 84%, again well above Collin’s minimum standard of 75%.

Of all the paralegal courses, required and elective, the one course that, on average, fell below Collin’s 78% completion standard was the elective Intellectual Property, LGLA 2323. Figure 19 below contains a breakdown of that course’s statistics for each of the five relevant years:

Fig. 19

LGLA-2323		Intellectual Property																
Year	Enrollment	Grade Assigned							Grade Distribution							Completion Rate	Success Rate *	Course GPA**
		A	B	C	D	P	F	W	A	B	C	D	P	F	W			
2019	19	8	2	2	1	0	4	2	42%	11%	11%	5%	0%	21%	11%	89%	68%	3.31
2020	16	3	2	2	0	0	1	8	19%	13%	13%	0%	0%	6%	50%	50%	44%	3.14
2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2022	17	5	3	3	1	0	1	4	29%	18%	18%	6%	0%	6%	24%	76%	71%	3.00
2023	11	5	3	1	0	0	0	2	45%	27%	9%	0%	0%	0%	18%	82%	82%	3.44

Averages..... 34% 17% 12% 3% 0% 8% 26% 74% 66%

Note: The program’s course list is based on the 2022-2023 academic catalog. The data source is Collin College’s ZogoTech Data System on 6/19/2023.

\*Success Rate is calculated by adding A, B, C, and P grades and dividing the total by total enrollment.  
 \*\*Course GPA is calculated by multiplying the counts of A, B, C, and D by 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The results are summed and divided by the aggregated count of A, B, C, D, and F.  
 Sums of distributions may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

(Source: Collin IRO kr; 07/26/2023; page 17; j:\IRO\Robinson\Data\2023-24\Paralegal-Legal Assistant\Paralegal Legal Assistant – Grade Distribution.)

The lower completion and success rates for this course stemmed chiefly from three circumstances. First, the subject of the course is the law and practice of patents, copyrights, and trademarks—a highly specialized, technical field. Because of these characteristics, the Program assigned the

course to an adjunct faculty member who practiced in intellectual property law. Thus, the subject matter of LGLA 2323 itself was an especially challenging subject of study relative to other substantive-law courses in the Program.

Second, the year in which the course had its lowest completion and success rates, 2020, was the year in which the COVID-19 pandemic began. That year, the Program offered the course in the 16-week Spring 2020 semester in face-to-face format. After the extended Spring Break, Collin converted all face-to-face courses—including LGLA 2323—to online format. The sudden transition to a new delivery format, combined with the already challenging subject matter, contributed to the drop in the course’s completion and success rates. This drop was disproportionate to that of other face-to-face courses in Spring 2020 because of issues with the adjunct instructor who taught the course.

Finally, after the Spring 2020 semester, the adjunct instructor of LGLA 2323 assumed teaching opportunities at another institution and, therefore, was no longer able to continue teaching the course. During the pandemic, finding qualified practicing IP attorneys to teach the course on an adjunct basis proved challenging, leading to a hiatus in offering the course in 2021. The next offering occurred the following year, 2022, when a new adjunct, also an IP attorney, taught the course. The same instructor taught the course again in 2023, when the course achieved a completion rate above Collin’s minimum standard and an improved success rate more in line with the success rates of the Program’s other courses.

**B. Show evidence that the institutional standards listed below have been met. For any standard not met, describe the plan for bringing the program into compliance.**

**1. Completers Standard: Average 25 completers over the last five years or an average of at least five completers per year.**

Number of completers: 165 in last five years.

If below the state standard, attach a plan for raising the number of completers by addressing barriers to completion and/or by increasing the number of students enrolled in the program. Definition of completer—Student has met the requirements for a degree or certificate (Level I or II)

**2. Licensure Standard: 93% of test takers pass licensure exams.**

If applicable, include the licensure pass rate: Not applicable: Unlike attorneys, paralegals are not subject to licensing.

For any pass rate below 93% (Collin College’s standard), describe a plan for raising the pass rate.

**3. Retention Standard: 78% of students enrolled in program courses on the census date should still be enrolled on the last class day (grades of A through F).**

Include the retention rate: The average retention rate, or completion rate, of all Program courses during the relevant period was 91%.

If the retention rate is below 78%, describe a plan for raising the course completion rate.

The Program's 91% average course retention (completion) rate was well above Collin's 78% standard.

**C. Make a case with evidence that the program curriculum is current.**

*Suggested/possible points to consider:*

- *How does the program curriculum compare to curricula at other schools? Review programs at two or more comparable colleges. Discuss what was learned and what new ideas for improvement were gained.*
- *How does the program curriculum align with any professional association standards or guidelines that may exist?*
- *Is the curriculum subject to external accreditation? If so, list the accrediting body and the most recent accreditation for your program.*
- *If the program curriculum differs significantly from these benchmarks, explain how the Collin College curriculum benefits students and other college constituents.*

**American Bar Association (ABA) Guidelines**

No state or federal agency mandates the curricula of paralegal programs. As an ABA-approved paralegal program, however, the Program complies with the current version of the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*. The ABA periodically revises the *Guidelines* to reflect the evolution of the paralegal field and other new circumstances, such as the increased use of online course delivery beginning with the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The current version of the *Guidelines* took effect on January 1, 2023.

**Comparison with Peer Programs: Dallas College and Tarrant County College**

A comparison of the Program's curriculum at the two most comparable paralegal programs in the DFW area—Dallas College and Tarrant County College—demonstrates that the Program is current with respect to both the current needs of the paralegal profession and the current needs of Collin's own students.

The Program is most comparable to those of Dallas (that is, Dallas County Community College) and of Tarrant County (that is, Tarrant County Community College) because both of them are also ABA-approved. No other paralegal program in the DFW Metroplex, whether at a two-year or a four-year institution, is ABA-approved. In addition, like the Program, the programs at Dallas and Tarrant County both serve the DFW area, although the geographic overlap between the Program's service area that of Dallas is somewhat greater than the overlap with that of Tarrant County (Tarrant County).

- **Credentials Offered**

Collin, Dallas, and Tarrant County all offer the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies degree. Collin and Tarrant County offer a Paralegal Certificate, but Dallas does not. Below are the links to the programs' respective online curriculum outlines:

- For Collin, the catalog curriculum outline for the A.A.S. program is available at [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_AAS.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_AAS.html), and the catalog curriculum outline for the Level 2 Certificate Program is available here: [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_Cert2.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_Cert2.html).
- For Dallas, the catalog curriculum outline for the A.A.S. program is available at [https://www1.dcccd.edu/catalog/programs/degree.cfm?degree=aas\\_paralegal](https://www1.dcccd.edu/catalog/programs/degree.cfm?degree=aas_paralegal).
- For Tarrant County, the catalog curriculum outline for the A.A.S. program is available at [https://catalog.tccd.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=14&poid=3798&returnto=1487](https://catalog.tccd.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=14&poid=3798&returnto=1487), and the catalog curriculum outline for the Advanced Technical Certificate is available at [https://catalog.tccd.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=14&poid=3799](https://catalog.tccd.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=14&poid=3799).

- **Distinctions Among the Collin, Dallas, and Tarrant County Paralegal Curricula**

A comparison of the three programs' curricula reveals distinctions in the following five types of courses: (1) required writing-specific courses; (2) required introductory paralegal (LGLA) courses; (3) certain other required paralegal (LGLA) courses; (4) certain elective paralegal (LGLA) course options; and (5) certain required general education or other non-paralegal courses. The Program discusses each of these distinctions below.

- 1. Required Writing-Specific Courses**

Over the past decade, the Program has sought to differentiate itself from its primary local competitors by emphasizing the development of legal writing skills. This goal arose not only from the obvious importance of written communication skills in the legal profession generally but also from feedback from local legal employers and the Program's Advisory Committee. In Figure 20 below, a side-by-side comparison of the programs' writing-specific course requirements illustrates the Program's emphasis:

Fig. 20

REQUIRED WRITING-SPECIFIC COURSES: COMPARISON		
Collin College	Dallas College	Tarrant County College
Composition I (ENGL 1301)*	Composition I (ENGL 1301)*	Composition I (ENGL 1301)*
Composition II (ENGL 1302)*	—	Composition II (ENGL 1302)*
Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1345)	—	—
Legal Writing (LGLA 1305)	—	Legal Writing (LGLA 1305)
—	Legal Research and Writing (LGLA 1301)	—
—	Advanced Legal Research and Writing (LGLA 2331)	—
Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333)	—	—
*Applicable to an A.A.S. program only		

Of the general education requirements for the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies, Dallas requires only one English Composition course, whereas Collin College and Tarrant County College require two. Further, of the required paralegal courses, Dallas requires two sequential sections of Legal Research and Writing—both of which combine instruction in legal writing with instruction in legal research. By contrast, in both the A.A.S. and Certificate programs, Collin requires Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) as a separate course from Legal Research (LGLA 1303) to provide more focused instruction in each. Further, in both the A.A.S. and Certificate programs, Collin requires two additional writing-specific courses that Dallas College and Tarrant County College do not offer: Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370) and Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333), described separately below.

- **Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370)**

Given the Program’s goal of emphasizing legal writing skills, the Program developed LGLA 1370 as a local-needs course to hone students’ skills in understanding and using the “[c]onventions of legal communication, including grammatical conventions, diction, style, legal citation form, proofreading skills, and editing skills.” (*Collin College 2023–2024 Catalog*, [https://catalog.collin.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4252](https://catalog.collin.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4252).)

Writing in the legal profession is a very formal discipline. Relatively minor writing errors or an informal writing style may work in many industries, but in the legal profession, a small grammatical error or imprecise language can have devastating legal and reputational effects for the paralegal and the client. Unfortunately, most paralegal students do not possess these skills when they enter the Program, so Program developed LGLA 1370 to develop these skills. For example:

1. Outside the legal profession, a writer may commonly use the plural pronoun “they,” “them,” or “their” to refer generically to a single person who could be of any gender—“A good *paralegal* can think on *their* feet”—without causing confusion. In legal writing, however, the grammatical disagreement in number between the plural pronoun (“their”) and its singular antecedent (“paralegal”) could cause an ambiguity (“How many paralegals does the author intend?”) with unintended legal consequences. Further, a judge or client who sees this grammatical disagreement may think, “If the writer cannot use pronouns correctly, what other errors has he or she committed?”
2. Outside the legal profession, many legal writers may consider the Oxford comma, or serial comma, optional when stating a list of three or more items. Legal writers today, by contrast, normally include the Oxford comma to avoid a potential ambiguity. The following sentence illustrates the point: “In his will, the testator gave his money in equal shares to his friend Donna, his son Raul, and his wife Cordelia.” In this sentence, the Oxford comma before “and” clarifies that the testator intended to give his money in *three* equal shares (one each to Donna, Raul, and Cordelia) instead of only *two* equal shares (half to Donna and half to Raul and Cordelia combined).

In addition, the legal profession uses a special citation system for documenting sources in legal writing. Nationally, the most widely used citation system is that prescribed in *The Bluebook®: A Uniform System of Citation®*. Texas also uses the *Bluebook* but supplements it with additional rules prescribed in *The Greenbook: Texas Rules of Form*. Although Program students learn about this citation system in Legal Research (LGLA 1303) and Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), LGLA 1370 provides a more holistic exposure to this method. Because many paralegals use *Bluebook* and *Greenbook* skills every day in their jobs, learning these skills early gives Program students an important edge.

- **Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333)**

Another characteristic of legal writing is that the format of a legal document can be just as important as the substance. Court documents, for example, must be in the formats prescribed by the procedural rules of the particular courts or their jurisdictions. The rules governing formats commonly govern page sizes, margin widths, font styles and sizes, spacing, page headers and footers, and pagination. At best, nonconforming documents can appear unprofessional to judges, clients, and other attorneys. At worst, judges may refuse to consider nonconforming documents, in which case the errors may harm the client’s case and give rise to a legal claim of malpractice against the paralegal’s supervising attorney, the law firm, or even the paralegal individually. Accordingly, Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333) focuses on the “[u]se of office technology skills in preparation of legal documents by paralegals based on hypothetical situations



drawn from various areas of law.” (*Collin College 2023–2024 Catalog*, [https://catalog.collin.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4260](https://catalog.collin.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4260).)

**2. Required Introductory Paralegal (LGLA) Courses**

A distinction between the Dallas curriculum, on the one hand, and the Collin and Tarrant County curricula, on the other hand, relates to the programs’ required introductory survey course(s), which most students take during their first year of the programs. In this regard, Collin’s and Tarrant County’s courses are aligned. Figure 21 contains a side-by-side comparison of the three schools’ respective introductory courses:

Fig. 21

REQUIRED INTRODUCTORY COURSES ON LAW AND THE PROFESSION: COMPARISON		
Collin College	Dallas College	Tarrant County College
Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307)	—	Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307)
—	Introduction to Law (LGLA 1311)	—
—	Introduction to Paralegal Studies (LGLA 1312)	—

Dallas divides the introductory survey into two separate 3.0-hour courses—one devoted to law (Introduction to Law, LGLA 1311) and the other devoted to the paralegal profession (Introduction to Paralegal Studies, LGLA 1312). According to the Dallas catalog, LGLA 1311 “[p]resents legal terminology relating to substantive areas of law and the federal and state judicial systems” and “[e]mphasizes the paralegal’s role in the legal system,” and LGLA 1312 presents “[a]n overview of the paralegal profession including, [sic] professional regulation, trends and issues, ethical obligations, and the paralegal’s role in the delivery of legal services.” (*Dallas College 2023–2024 Catalog*, <https://www1.dcccd.edu/catalog/coursedescriptions/detail.cfm?loc=econ&course=LGLA>.)

By contrast, both Collin and Tarrant County combine these two subjects into a single 3.0-hour course: Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307). The catalog description of LGLA 1307—like those of LGLA 1311 and LGLA 1312 at Dallas—appears in the Texas Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM) and, therefore, is standardized. Specifically, LGLA 1307 presents “[a]n overview of the law and the legal professions including legal concepts, systems, and terminology; substantive areas of law and the federal and state judicial systems; ethical obligations and regulations; professional trends and issues with emphasis on the paralegal’s role.” (*Collin College 2023–2024 Catalog*, [https://catalog.collin.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4244](https://catalog.collin.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4244); *Tarrant County College 2023–2024 Catalog*, <https://catalog.tccd.edu/content.php?catoid=14&navoid=1395>.)

Combining these subjects into one course has worked well for the Program at Collin. In LGLA 1307, the Program gives due focus to the paralegal profession itself, covers the sources of American law, and then provides introductory overviews of legal topics, areas of practice, and skills that students will study and practice in more depth in other Program Courses.

**3. Other Required Paralegal (LGLA) Courses**

Besides the writing-specific courses and introductory courses discussed above, the curricula of the three institutions’ paralegal programs differ in some respects regarding other required paralegal (LGLA) courses. Figure 22 below contains a side-by-side comparison of these courses in the three programs, with certain details highlighted in **boldface font** to identify distinctions of particular interest:

Fig. 22

<b>OTHER REQUIRED PARALEGAL (LGLA) COURSES IN A.A.S. PROGRAMS: COMPARISON</b>		
<b>Collin College</b>	<b>Dallas College</b>	<b>Tarrant County College</b>
<b>Legal Research (LGLA 1303)</b>	<b>Legal Research and Writing (LGLA 1301)</b>	<b>Legal Research (LGLA 1303)</b>
—	<b>Advanced Legal Research and Writing (LGLA 2331)</b>	—
Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345)	Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345)	Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345)
Contracts (LGLA 1351)	Contracts (LGLA 1351)	—
Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353)	Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353)	Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration (LGLA 1353)
Family Law (LGLA 1355)	Family Law (LGLA 1355)	Family Law (LGLA 1355)
Business Organizations (LGLA 2311)	Business Organizations (LGLA 2311)	Business Organizations (LGLA 2311)
Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303)	Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303)	Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303)
—	<b>Law Office Technology (LGLA 1317)</b>	—
<b>[Real Property is elective.]</b>	<b>Real Property (LGLA 2309)</b>	—
<b>Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339, capstone course)</b>	—	—

	<p><b>[Co-op is elective.]</b></p>	<p><b>[Co-op is elective.]</b></p>	<p><b>Choice between: Cooperative Education (Co-op) (LGLA 2380, 3.0 hours) or both of the following: Cooperative Education (Co-op) (LGLA 2281, 2.0 hours) and Internship (LGLA 2288, 2.0 hours)</b></p>	
<p>First, as already discussed in the context of the writing-specific courses, Dallas requires two sequential sections of Legal Research and Writing—both of which combine instruction in legal writing with instruction in legal research. By contrast, in both the A.A.S. and Certificate programs, Collin requires Legal Writing (LGLA 1305) as a separate course from Legal Research (LGLA 1303) to provide more focused instruction in each.</p> <p>Second, of the three schools, Dallas requires the paralegal course Law Office Technology (LGLA 1317). According to the Dallas catalog, LGLA 1317 presents “[c]omputer technology and software applications within the law office emphasizing the paralegal's role in the use of law office technology.” Tarrant County requires the non-paralegal course Business Computer Applications (BCIS 1305). By contrast, Collin does not offer a freestanding technology course at all. Instead, Collin embeds instruction in law office technology in multiple other paralegal courses—for example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. In Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the Program introduces students to the Sage® Timeslips legal billing software, which many law firms use to document their attorneys’ and paralegals’ time when charging clients at hourly rates, and introduces Westlaw, one of the most widely used commercial online legal research platforms in the country.</li> <li>5. In Legal Research (LGLA 1303), the Program most intensively trains students to perform legal research on Westlaw and on noncommercial websites.</li> <li>6. In Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333), the Program develops students’ skills in using Microsoft Word—the word-processing program most widely used in the legal profession—to craft legal correspondence and other legal documents in proper format.</li> <li>7. In Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), the Program further develops students’ skills in using Microsoft Word to format legal documents in proper format.</li> </ol>				

8. In Law Office Management (LGLA 1307), an elective, the Program introduces students to other common law office technologies.

Despite this existing instruction in law office technology, the Program is currently exploring whether a freestanding Law Office Technology elective would be an appropriate addition to the Program's curriculum. At the November 2023 meeting of the Program's Advisory Committee, the Committee approved exploring further the prospect of adding this elective. This exploration will include surveys of area legal employers regarding the types of law office technology they use, plus investigation of the logistical issues that would be involved in providing students with access to the relevant technologies for instruction and practice.

Third, Dallas requires Real Property (LGLA 2309), whereas at Collin the course is elective, and Tarrant County does not offer the course at all. In this sense, Collin holds the middle ground, which in the Program's view is the most appropriate for its students. Real Property involves the law of property rights and ownership, real estate transactions, the associated legal documents (such as deeds, sales contracts, and leases), and landlord-tenant law. In the Program, the level of student interest has been strong enough to justify offering the course as an elective. In addition, the Knowledge Portion of the NALA Certified Paralegal Exam currently includes a section on real property law (<https://nala.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Certified-Paralegal-Exam-Specifications-2024.pdf>), and the Program desires to offer courses on subjects covered on certifications exams. However, although some Program graduates go on to work as real estate paralegals, the field is relatively specialized, and employment prospects for real estate paralegals can fluctuate greatly depending on economic conditions. Given these circumstances, continuing to offer Real Property as an elective rather than a requirement appears the best course for the time being.

Fourth, of the three schools, only Collin offers Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), which is the Program's capstone course. The course itself reflects the Program's encouragement of its students to sit for the voluntary certification exam after graduation (or during their last semester of the program, which NALA allows). In addition, the course forms a logical capstone to the Program in that it reviews many of the topics and skills students have learned throughout the program, but this time with the focused goal of preparing them for the certification exam. (In a similar way, new law school graduates commonly take a bar review course to help them review the legal subjects potentially to be covered on state bar exams.)

Finally, Tarrant County requires a Co-op course, whereas Co-op is an elective at both Collin and Dallas. At Collin, because students come to the Program with widely different career and educational goals, and because some students work full-time at nonlegal jobs, the Program does not believe that requiring every student to participate in a paralegal internship for academic credit is appropriate or feasible. Offering Co-op as an elective affords those students who qualify for Co-op and wish to participate in Co-op to do so, while leaving other students free to pursue other elective options that may better suit their schedules, interests, or goals.

**1. Elective Paralegal (LGLA) Course Offerings**

Tarrant County offers no paralegal (LGLA) course electives. By contrast, Collin and Dallas allow students two elective course slots for paralegal courses. Figure 23 below contains a side-by-side comparison of the three programs' elective landscape, with certain portions in *italics* to identify distinctions of particular interest:

Fig. 23

<b>ELECTIVE PARALEGAL (LGLA) COURSE OFFERINGS IN A.A.S. PROGRAMS: COMPARISON</b>		
<b>Collin College (Two Electives)</b>	<b>Dallas College (Two Electives)</b>	<b>Tarrant County College (No Electives)</b>
—	<i>Elder Law (LGLA 1300)</i>	—
Employment Law (LGLA 1323)	Employment Law (LGLA 1323)	—
Bankruptcy (LGLA 1343)	Bankruptcy (LGLA 1343)	—
—	Immigration Law (LGLA 1359)	—
Cooperative Education (Co-op) (LGLA 1380)	Cooperative Education (Co-op) (LGLA 2380)	[Co-op/Internship is required]
<i>Law Office Management (LGLA 2307)</i>	—	—
Real Property (LGLA 2309)	[Real Property is required.]	—
Criminal Law and Procedure (LGLA 2313)	Criminal Law and Procedure (LGLA 2313)	—
—	<i>Oil and Gas Law (LGLA 2315)</i>	—
Intellectual Property (LGLA 2323)	Intellectual Property (LGLA 2323)	—

Dallas offers three paralegal electives that Collin currently does not: Elder Law (LGLA 1300), Immigration Law (LGLA 1359), and Oil and Gas Law (LGLA 2315). Collin offers one paralegal elective that Dallas does not: Law Office Management (LGLA 2307).

Regarding Immigration Law, based on the anticipated high student demand as reflected in both surveys of Program students and based on supportive feedback from the Program’s Advisory Committee, the Program has submitted a proposal to the Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) to add Immigration Law as an elective. The proposal is on the agenda of CAB’s February 9, 2024, meeting. If CAB approves the proposal, the Program hopes to debut the course in Fall 2024.

Regarding Elder Law, the Program has not detected sufficient demand by students to justify adding the course to the curriculum. Although Elder Law is a growing field, the term “elder law” is more accurately an umbrella term for a cluster of existing fields of law when the clients in those fields are elderly. Many of these existing fields the program already teaches—for example, Wills, Trusts, and Probate Administration; Family Law; Contracts; and Torts and Personal Injury Law. Nevertheless, the Program will continue to monitor the elder law job market, survey student demand, and solicit feedback from the Advisory Committee regarding any developments that may warrant revisiting the prospect of adding an Elder Law elective.

Finally, the Program is currently not contemplating the addition of an Oil and Gas Law elective to the curriculum. An extremely specialized area of law, and one whose job market can greatly fluctuate according to economic and geopolitical vicissitudes, oil and gas law has not ranked highly in student surveys regarding the course subjects they would like to see added to the curriculum. Further, the Knowledge Portion of NALA’s Certified Paralegal (CP) Exam, which is a national exam, currently does not cover oil and gas law. Some fundamental concepts related to oil and gas law—such as the severability of surface and mineral estates, deeds, and property rights generally—are topics covered in the Program’s Real Property (LGLA 2309) elective, but overall the Program does not see a current need for the elective. As with Elder Law, the Program will continue to monitor any shifts in the paralegal job market, student interest, or Advisory Committee feedback that may justify adding an Oil and Gas Law elective.

**4. General Education or Other Non-Paralegal Courses**

Figure 24 below contains a side-by-side comparison of the three programs’ general education courses or other nonlegal courses, with certain portions highlighted in **boldface font** to identify distinctions of particular interest:

Fig. 24

<b>GENERAL EDUCATION OR OTHER NON-PARALEGAL COURSES IN A.A.S. PROGRAMS: COMPARISON</b>		
<b>Collin College</b>	<b>Dallas College</b>	<b>Tarrant County College</b>
<b>One Math course chosen from A.A.S. General Education Course list <u>other than Mathematics for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1324) and Calculus for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1325)</u></b>	<b>One Math course chosen from Core Options for A.A.S. Awards list, <u>including Mathematics for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1324) and Calculus for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1325)</u></b>	<b>One Math or Science course chosen from Core Curriculum list, <u>including Mathematics for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1324) and Calculus for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1325)</u></b>

One Humanities/Fine Arts course from A.A.S. General Education Course list, but Program recommends Introduction to Formal Logic (PHIL 2303) for students planning to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT)	One Humanities/Fine Arts chosen from Core Options for A.A.S. Awards list	One Creative Arts or Language, Philosophy and Culture course chosen from Core Curriculum list
One Social/Behavioral Sciences course chosen from A.A.S. General Education Course list, but Program recommends Federal Government (GOVT 2305)	One Social/Behavioral Science course chosen from Core Options for A.A.S. Awards list	Texas Government (GOVT 2306)
One Speech course chosen from A.A.S. General Education Course list	—	Business and Professional Communications (SPCH 2301)
—	—	<b>Principles of Financial Accounting (ACCT 2301)</b>
—	—	<b>Business Computer Applications (BCIS 1305)</b>
—	—	<b>Business Law (BUSI 2301)</b>
—	—	<b>Psychology of Adjustment (PSYC 2315)</b>
—	—	<b>Court Systems and Practices (CRIJ 1306)</b>

First, with respect to Collin’s general education math course requirement, the Program has deleted Mathematics for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1324) and Calculus for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1325) from the course options. The reason is that these two courses, in the Program’s view, were specifically designed to develop professional, vocational, or technical skills (namely, business and social sciences skills) and, therefore, did not meet the definition of a "general education course" under Guideline G-302.E of the *ABA Guidelines*:

**Guideline G-302.E**

- E. A general education course is an academic college-level course designed to give students a broadly based liberal arts education. This definition of general education may differ from the definition adopted by a particular institution or a particular accrediting agency. For purposes of these Guidelines:

....

- c. Courses specifically designed to develop professional, vocational, and technical skills or that are remedial in nature are not classified as general education [emphasis added].
- d. Examples of courses that are not classified as general education include, but are not limited to, physical education, performing arts, accounting, computers, technical writing, *business mathematics*, business English, keyboarding, and business law [emphasis added].

(*ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*, effective January 1, 2023, <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/2023-approval-guidelines.pdf>.) By contrast, Dallas and Tarrant County retain MATH 1324 and MATH 1325 among the available course options.

Second, Tarrant County requires that students take Principles of Financial Accounting (ACCT 2301) and Psychology of Adjustment (PSYC 2315). Although both courses would provide useful information to paralegal students, they do not directly assist the students in mastering a particular substantive legal practice area. In the opinion of the Program’s full-time faculty members, these courses are less helpful for paralegal students than paralegal (LGLA) courses would be. Unlike Tarrant County, Dallas does not require a specific non-paralegal course except those identified in its Core Options for A.A.S. Awards list.

Third, both Collin and Dallas rely solely on paralegal (LGLA) courses to provide legal education. In fact, the *ABA Guidelines* do not permit non-paralegal courses to count as “legal specialty” courses in the curriculum:

**Guideline G-302.I**

- I. The following requirements apply to legal specialty courses.
    - 1. A legal specialty course is a course that (1) covers substantive law or legal procedures or process, (2) *has been developed for paralegals*, (3) *emphasizes practical paralegal skills*, and (4) meets the instructional requirements of G-301.B [emphasis added].
- ....
- b. Courses prepared, developed, and taught in departments or programs other than the paralegal program ordinarily are not classified as legal specialty courses.



(*ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*, effective January 1, 2023, <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/2023-approval-guidelines.pdf>.) Tarrant County, by contrast, appears to use two non-paralegal courses for some of its legal education: Business Law (BUSI 2301) and Court Systems and Practice (CRIJ 1306).

The Program’s full-time faculty members agree with the ABA that non-paralegal courses should not serve as legal specialty courses. For example, one of the Program’s full-time faculty, Cynthia Farris Gruver, teaches both Contracts (LGLA 1351, a paralegal course) and Business Law (BUSI 2301, a non-paralegal course). In her estimation, LGLA 1351 is a much more rigorous course in terms of legal education and, consistently with the *ABA Guidelines*, focuses on paralegal skills instead of business skills. As a result, LGLA 1351 is a much better fit for paralegal students than BUSI 2301. The primary audience for BUSI 2301 is business and accounting students. Similarly, the primary audience for CRIJ 1306 is criminal justice students, who usually plan to become peace officers, not paralegals.

Finally, as discussed above, the Program is exploring the prospect of adding a Law Office Technology elective to the curriculum, although the Program currently instructs students in some key law office technologies in other Program courses. If the Program were to add a freestanding course in law office technology, that course would be a paralegal (LGLA) course like Law Office Technology (LGLA 1317), which Dallas offers, rather than a non-paralegal course like Business Computer Applications (BCIS 1305), which Tarrant County offers.

**D. Present evidence from advisory committee minutes, attendance, and composition that the advisory committee includes employers who are actively engaged on the committee and who are representative of area employers.**

1. How many employers does your advisory committee have? The committee currently has 9 representatives of employers.
2. How many employers attended the last two meetings? Representatives of 3 employers attended each meeting (once by proxy).
3. How has the advisory committee impacted the program over the last five years (including latest trends, directions, and insights into latest technologies)?

Apart from curriculum recommendations, standard agenda items at Advisory Committee meetings include (1) any changes and trends in the paralegal field; (2) an assessment of the current job market for paralegals; and (3) an assessment of the adequacy of the Program’s library resources.

**Changes and Trends in the Paralegal Field**

First, the committee has provided feedback and insights regarding changes and trends in the paralegal field. For example:

- At the Fall 2019 meeting, the committee advised that attorneys are increasingly looking for employees who can assist with the firms’ marketing and paralegals who can bring to the job the ability to file documents electronically and skills in using Microsoft Word and Excel.

- At the Spring 2020 meeting, the big trend discussed by the committee was the impact on the paralegal field of the then-recent onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as telecommuting, remote court proceedings, and the videoconferencing technology and delays involved. A benefit to students of the remote court hearings, however, was the ability to observe court hearings on YouTube.
- At the Spring 2022 meeting, some committee members noted a trend toward career-changing as a result of people’s reevaluating their careers and a growing trend toward contract work.
- At the Fall 2023 meeting, committee members discussed the potential impact of using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the practice of law, the reliability or unreliability of the results, and the potential impact on the paralegal profession as AI technology improves and more legal employers implement AI tools.

### **Assessment of Job Market for Paralegals**

Second, the committee has provided feedback and insights regarding the job market for paralegals. For example:

- At the Fall 2019 meeting, some committee members noted that the demand for paralegals was there, but that paralegal job candidates needed on-the-job experience.
- At the Fall 2020 meeting, which occurred approximately eight months after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee advised that paralegals were having difficulty finding jobs and that some older paralegals had been forced to retire. Some committee members predicted that the paralegal job market would not improve until Spring 2021.
- At the Spring 2021 meeting, committee members advised that the job market for paralegals had grown extremely strong in the fields of real estate and contracts but weak in the field of bankruptcy.
- At the Fall 2021 meeting, a committee member reported that the job market for paralegals was hot and that commercial firms were poaching paralegals from other employers. Another member advised that her law firm was always starving for paralegals. Yet another member, an attorney in a legal aid office, advised that her office had taken in numerous eviction cases and was looking for a new paralegal, preferably one who was bilingual in English and Spanish.
- At the Spring 2022 meeting, some committee members noted that the paralegal job market was good, with many opportunities. Some committee members also noted a trend toward career-changing as a result of people’s reevaluating their careers and a growing trend toward contract work.

**Assessment of Adequacy of Program’s Library Resources**

Third, the committee has provided feedback and insights regarding the adequacy of the Program’s library resources. For example:

- At the Fall 2019 meeting, a committee member said she understood that every student enrolled in at least one paralegal class in the Program receives access to the commercial online legal research platform Westlaw, but she asked how much Program students were actually using their student Westlaw accounts. This question prompted a discussion regarding those Program courses that focus extensively on Westlaw skills, such as Legal Research (LGLA 1303), and those courses whose Westlaw usage is at the discretion of the individual instructors.
- At the Spring 2020 meeting, committee members discussed the legal books they use in their law offices to help the Program gauge the resources that it should potentially consider making available to students.
- At the Fall 2020 meeting, a committee member asked whether the Program’s students had access to the commercial online legal research service Lexis, which is the chief competitor of Westlaw. (The Program does not provide students with access to Lexis the way the Program provides access to Westlaw. Nevertheless, the platforms are relatively similar from a user standpoint, and proficiency in one is easily transferable to the other.)
- At the Fall 2021 meeting, a committee member recommended that the Program’s student Westlaw account should include access to Form Builder and that students who wish to practice in the field of family law should be trained to use Form Builder and ProDocs.

4. Briefly summarize the curriculum recommendations made by the advisory committee over the last five years.

A standard agenda item at virtually every Paralegal Advisory Committee meeting is an assessment of the Program in terms of its curriculum and objectives, the needs of the legal community, and graduate performance. In this regard, the committee has provided feedback and recommendations, including the following:

- At the Fall 2019 meeting, noting that the NALA’s Certified Paralegal (CP) exam was now covering the topic of real property, the committee recommended offering Real Property (LGLA 2309) to prepare the Program’s graduates for that portion of the exam. In addition, the Committee emphasized the importance of continuing to provide students with practical writing experience and of developing students’ proficiency with Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

- At the Spring 2020 meeting, the committee recommended deleting the Texas Civil Litigation (LGLA 1344) elective from the curriculum since the Program had previously, upon the committee’s recommendation, combined the subjects of that course and Federal Civil Litigation (LGLA 1343) into one required Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345) course. The committee also suggested ways of incorporating training relating to the marketing of law firms into the Program’s curriculum, such as a separate class or a specific learning outcome in an existing class.
- At the Fall 2020 meeting, some committee members expressed the need for training in electronic discovery (e-discovery), and another member expressed interest in providing students with a virtual office setting for developing telecommuting skills. Further, one committee member recommended that practicing paralegals serve as mentors to help students understand the realities of working for attorneys in law firms. To this end, the committee suggested that the Program host paralegals as guest speakers and encouraged students to join the Dallas Area Paralegal Association (DAPA), which offers student memberships and a mentoring program.
- At the Spring 2021 meeting, some committee members recommended that the Program offer as many classes in online format as possible. The discipline lead, Gage Waggoner, described the Program’s existing online course offerings while emphasizing that the Program must continue to satisfy the ABA’s requirement that students take a minimum of 9.0 credit hours of paralegal courses in synchronous format. The discipline lead also reported that the Program had recently submitted a report to the ABA describing its course-delivery formats since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. One committee member complimented the ABA for requiring its approved paralegal programs to report on the course-delivery formats and for taking that level of interest in the programs.
- At the Fall 2022 meeting, a committee member noted that immigration law was “not new and not going away,” thus expressing support for adding a new Immigration Law elective course to the Program’s curriculum.
- At the Fall 2023 meeting, the committee voted in favor of adding a new Immigration Law elective course to the curriculum. Later, on February 9, 2024, the Curriculum Advisory Board approved the Program’s formal proposal to add this course.) The committee also voted in favor of exploring whether a freestanding Law Office Technology elective would be a good fit for the Program.

**E. Make a case with evidence that the program is well managed.**

*Suggested/possible points to consider (Data can be found at [http://inside.collin.edu/institutionaleffect/Program\\_Review\\_Process.html](http://inside.collin.edu/institutionaleffect/Program_Review_Process.html)):*

- *Average class size*
- *Grade distributions*
- *Contact hours taught by full-time and part-time faculty*
- *Identify all courses that have a success rate below 75%. If any of these are core courses, visit with the discipline lead for the course(s) in question to determine whether or not the content of the course(s) is appropriate to the workforce program learning outcomes. Using assessment evidence and instructor observations, identify the student learning outcomes that are the greatest challenges for students in courses with low success rates. Explain what instructional and other intervention(s) might improve success rates for each identified course.*
- *How well are general education requirements integrated with the technical coursework?*
- *Student satisfaction: What evidence do you have that students are satisfied with the program? What kinds of complaints are made to the associate dean/director by program students?*

The Paralegal Program is well managed. Evidence for this conclusion includes the average class size data, the rising annual enrollment data, the grade distributions (including the success rates and completion rates of the Program's courses), the selection and organization of the courses (including the General Education courses), the selection of highly qualified legal professionals to teach the curriculum, and the level of satisfaction that paralegal students have with the Program. Although much of this information appears in other parts of this Program Review, below is a discussion of some of the more salient evidence.

**Average Class Size**

As discussed in section 3 of this Program Review above, the Program's average class sizes evidence a well-managed Program. Specifically, of the Program's 12 required courses, five had average section enrollments exceeding 15 in every term in which they were offered, and another six required courses had an average enrollment slightly below 15 in only one term in which they were offered. Only the Program's capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339), had an enrollment below 15 in more than one term, but those terms were early in the five-year period. The Program then adjusted the number of LGLA 2339 offerings, resulting in an enrollment exceeding 15 for the duration of the relevant period.

Also as detailed in section 3 above, the Program closely monitors course enrollment in the months and weeks leading up to the start of each term and doubles section sizes or otherwise raises section enrollment caps to accommodate unexpectedly high student demand, especially for courses that are a prerequisite(s) or corequisite. In the relatively rare circumstance in which student demand is unexpectedly low for a course, the Program has also been fortunate in that its two full-time faculty members and many of its adjuncts have been willing to teach classes per head for the benefit of the enrolled students.

**Grade Distributions**

In addition, as discussed more specifically in section 5.A. of this Program Review above, the Program’s grade distributions evidence a well-managed Program. The average success rate of all program courses—that is, the percentage of students who completed the courses with grades of “A,” “B,” or “C” — was 85%. This rate reflects that the Program is rigorous (not all students receive As) and, at the same time, that the Program calibrates its teaching well (a large majority of students is successful).

The 85% average success rate is particularly impressive given the wide range of ages and educational backgrounds of the Program’s students. Those students range from persons still in high school or newly graduated from high school, on the one hand, to nontraditional second-career or third-career students with associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, or even law degrees from other countries, on the other hand. Students who enter the program also range from those having virtually no knowledge of the legal field to those who have been working in the legal field in one capacity or another for many years.

The 85% average success rate is also impressive in that the five-year period in question included the COVID-19 epidemic, the conversion of face-to-face classes to online format mid-semester in mid-Spring 2020, and the other adjustments required of, and challenges faced by, students, faculty, and administration generally during the pandemic.

**Contact Hours Taught by Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty**

The Program has two full-time paralegal faculty members. No other full-time faculty members at Collin teach LGLA courses. Both of the full-time faculty members routinely teach overloads of paralegal courses, and one of them also teaches courses in other disciplines at Collin.

Because the practice of law often involves long working hours, the Program sometimes has difficulty finding attorneys who are able to teach paralegal courses for the Program, especially during the daytime. The challenge has been particularly acute in such specialty areas as Intellectual Property (as discussed earlier in this Program Review) and Bankruptcy, and the challenge appeared to increase following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 25 below reflects the numbers of contact hours taught by the Program’s full-time and part-time faculty over the past five years:

Fig. 25

<b>CONTACT HOURS TAUGHT BY FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME FACULTY</b>					
<b>End of Term</b>	<b>Full-Time Faculty</b>		<b>Part-Time Faculty</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	
<b>Fall 2018</b>	12,048	63%	7,008	37%	19,056
<b>Fall 2019</b>	9,984	59%	7,056	41%	17,040
<b>Fall 2020</b>	13,488	67%	6,768	33%	20,256

<b>Fall 2021</b>	13,968	60%	9,504	40%	23,472
<b>Fall 2022</b>	18,288	67%	8,880	33%	27,168
<b>Fall 2023 Census</b>	12,912	68%	5,952	32%	18,864

(Source: IRO Faculty Contact Hour Reports, [https://inside.collin.edu/iro/institutional\\_data.html](https://inside.collin.edu/iro/institutional_data.html).)

**Courses With Success Rates Below 75%**

Of all Program courses, the only two with an average five-year success rate below 75% were Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333) (71%) and Intellectual Property (LGLA 2323) (66%). During the review period, two key circumstances affecting the success rate in LGLA 2323 were anomalous and soon resolved, and the Program is already taking steps to address the success rate in LGLA 2333.

First, the average five-year success rate of 66% in LGLA 2323, as discussed in section 5.A. of this Program Review above, resulted not only from the course’s uniquely specialized, technical subject matter but also from the confluence of two anomalous circumstances: (1) the course’s mid-semester conversion from face-to-face format to online format when the COVID-19 pandemic began; and (2) the change of adjunct instructors to teach the course after Spring 2020, when the original instructor, electing to pursue a teaching opportunity at another institution, could no longer teach at Collin. As the Program indicated in section 5.A. of this Program Review above, under the new adjunct instructor, the course’s success rate rose to 82% in the last year of the five-year period, 2023.

Second, LGLA 2333 focuses primarily on preparing various types of documents in proper legal format using Microsoft Word, the word-processing program most widely used in the legal profession. Most students enter the Program with strong Microsoft Word skills, but a small minority of students do not. In addition, students are increasingly using Mac laptop computers to prepare class assignments, and on Mac devices Microsoft Word—though available on those devices—sometimes presents technical difficulties that Windows-based computers do not. To address this issue, the Program will be increasing its referrals of students to the eCollin Learning Center (eLC), online tutorials, and other resources for technical assistance with the challenges of generating Word documents in general and generating them on Mac devices in particular. In addition, to address the word-processing challenges on a more granular level, the Program is proposing a new Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) outcome that focuses on students’ ability to perform specific functions on Microsoft Word: “Students will be able to properly format a legal document in Microsoft Word with respect to margins, font, line spacing, footers, and file name” (CIP 2).

**Integration of General Education Requirements with Technical Coursework**

The A.A.S in Paralegal Studies Program requires students to take Composition I (ENGL 1301) and Composition II (ENGL 1302), a mathematics course, a speech course, a Social/Behavioral Sciences course, and a Humanities/Fine Arts course. The Program integrates these requirements with the Program’s technical (LGLA) coursework in the following ways:

- **Composition I (ENGL 1301)**

Collin encourages A.A.S. students to complete as many of their General Education courses as possible early in the program. The most important General Education courses to take at the beginning of the Program are Composition I (ENGL 1301) and the student-selected General Education mathematics course. ENGL 1301 is the paralegal student's first introduction to the rigors of college-level writing. It prepares students for the later challenges of Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370) and Legal Writing (LGLA 1305).

- **Mathematics Course**

For many paralegal students, starting the mathematics curriculum as soon as possible is important. Many paralegal students struggle with mathematics and sometimes avoid those classes. Some need to take developmental mathematics courses before they are ready for college-level math work. By starting mathematics course(s) early in the Program, students will minimize the chances of delaying their completion of the program because of the unfulfilled mathematics requirement. A solid understanding of college-level mathematics helps students master the material in LGLA 1353 (Wills, Trusts, and Estate Administration) and can be of some assistance in other courses, such as Family Law (LGLA 1355).

- **Composition II (ENGL 1302)**

During the third semester, Collin recommends that A.A.S. students take Composition II (ENGL 1302). This course also helps to prepare students for the writing requirements of Legal Writing (LGLA 1305).

- **Social/Behavioral Sciences Course**

The Program requires one course from the Social/Behavioral Sciences area, which students may select from Collin's list of A.A.S. General Education Courses. That list is available at [https://catalog.collin.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=3&poid=821](https://catalog.collin.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=3&poid=821). However, the Program recommends that students take Federal Government (GOVT 2305), which reinforces information about the legal system that the student is acquiring through paralegal coursework. GOVT 2305 concepts like federalism and separation of powers are very important to such Program courses as Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), Legal Research (LGLA 1303), and Civil Litigation (LGLA 1345). In LGLA 1307, students learn about the sources of U.S. law and their bases in the federal system of government. In LGLA 1303, students learn about the interaction of state and federal laws and how to research the laws made by each branch within each legal system. In LGLA 1345, students learn how to determine whether a lawsuit should be filed in a state or federal court. Thus, these three courses fit together well and reinforce each other's subject matter.



- **Humanities/Fine Arts Course**

The Program also requires one course from the Humanities/Fine Arts area, which students may select from Collin’s list of A.A.S. General Education Courses. However, the Program recommends that students take Introduction to Formal Logic (PHIL 2303), especially if the students plan to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). The Program recommends that students consider taking this course in their third semester. PHIL 2303 is very helpful for students as a preparation tool for the LSAT, for law school in general, and indeed for the paralegal profession itself.

- **Speech Course**

The Program also requires one Speech course, which students may select from Collin’s list of A.A.S. General Education Courses. The Program recommends that students take this course during the first semester of the second year. Paralegals often communicate orally with court personnel, clients, witnesses, opposing attorneys, and their own supervising attorneys; therefore, speaking confidently and effectively is very important skill for paralegal students to develop.

**Student Satisfaction**

The Program conducts surveys of both its recent graduates and exit surveys of its imminent graduates regarding their satisfaction with the Program and suggestions for improvement, among other topics. The responses to these surveys have been overwhelmingly positive.

- **Graduate Survey Results**

In the Program’s Spring 2023 graduate survey, for example, recent graduates rated the Program on a scale of one to five on various criteria. A rating of “1” meant “strongly disagree,” and a rating of “5” meant “strongly agree.” As Figure 26 below indicates, the relevant responses averaged a high “4”:

Fig 26

<b>SPRING 2023 SURVEY OF PROGRAM GRADUATES: RESULTS (55 Graduates Responding)</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Average Rating Based on 5-Point Scale 1 = “Strongly Disagree” 5 = “Strongly Agree”</b>
Collin’s paralegal program produces graduates who possess the legal knowledge and technology skills necessary to qualify them for employment in a legal work environment.	4.53

Collin’s paralegal program produces graduates who demonstrate an understanding of their ethical responsibility in the legal profession.	4.89
Collin’s paralegal program emphasizes written communication skills.	4.85

On the same survey, graduates had the opportunity to provide narrative comments about the Program, and again the comments were overwhelmingly positive. For example:

*I greatly value the education I received during my time in the Collin College Paralegal Program. The professors are top notch and the program promotes academic and professional rigor. I owe part of my academic and professional success to the wonderful professors at Collin College and the support structure they offer me. You know who you are. Thank you!*

*I was able to take my education and experience and move up to a leadership position quickly. I became a Sr. Litigation paralegal by 2020, Managing Paralegal by 2022 and the VP of Operations at a legal support firm in 2023!*

- **Exit Survey Results**

In addition, the Program conducts exit surveys of its students near the end of the Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339). Again, comments on these surveys have been overwhelmingly positive. Below are examples from the May 2022 survey:

*I love it. I have recommended it to other co-workers and anyone in the field that wants to learn more about our field. I highly recommend all of the legal professors at Collin College.*

*I would recommend Collin's Paralegal Program to anyone! The lawyers I work for have commented on how robust Collin's Paralegal Program is.*

*The program has tremendously helped improve my writing, researching, and analytical skills for the better. It helped me improve my communication skills and helped me glean better insight into the legal profession from the point of view of a paralegal.*

Below are examples of comments from the May 2023 exit survey:

*I feel that this is an excellent program at Collin College. I've always been interested in the legal field. I moved into the legal department at my employer and decided to get a legal degree to broaden my knowledge. I chose Collin College*

*because it was ABA [approved], and I was very pleased with the program. The knowledge I have gained is beyond what I expected.*

*This program has been exciting and one that is truly valuable.*

### **Suggestions for Improvement**

Beginning in Fall 2023, the Program has been under the leadership of Associate Dean Meredith Martin. According to Associate Dean Martin, thus far in Academic Year 2023–2024, her office has received zero complaints or concerns from Program students. Periodically, students contact her office to request assistance meeting certificate and degree requirements. If a student contacted the Associate Dean's office with concerns, college procedures would be followed as outlined in the Board of Trustee policies and the current *2023–2024 Student Handbook*. Generally, students are expected to address their questions and concerns with their professor before utilizing the Associate Dean's office and the formal grievance process.

In the survey responses, some graduates or imminent graduates provided constructive suggestions for improvement. The Program carefully considers all suggestions and implements them when warranted and feasible.

Occasionally, for example, students have suggested that the Program offer certain fully online courses occasionally in face-to-face format, and vice versa. Of its required courses, the Program has normally offered the following in fully online format: Introduction to Legal Conventions (LGLA 1370), Torts and Personal Injury Law (LGLA 2303), Business Organizations (LGLA 2311), and Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333) in fully online format. In response to students' suggestions, however, the Program offered LGLA 2311 in face-to-face format in Fall 2023 and is offering both LGLA 2303 and LGLA 2333 in hybrid format in Spring 2024. In addition, the Program is considering offering LGLA 1370 in either face-to-face format or hybrid format in the near future.

When deciding the delivery formats of its paralegal courses, however, the Program has always been careful to comply with the American Bar Association's requirement that students take a minimum of 9.0 credit hours (three courses) of their paralegal courses in synchronous format:

#### **Guideline G-302.J.3**

- J. Programs may offer legal specialty courses in a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instructional formats, as long as the courses meet the stated hour requirements of G-302.D, the synchronous hour requirements of G-302.J.3, and the other requirements that apply to each instructional format used as set forth in this section J.

....

3. Programs must provide and students must be required to take at least nine semester credits or the equivalent of legal specialty courses through synchronous instruction. The program can satisfy the synchronous instruction requirement through any of the following means:
  - a. Synchronous face-to-face courses taught by the program.
  - b. Blended/hybrid courses taught by the program, with only the synchronous hours counting towards the equivalent of nine semester credits.
  - c. Compressed courses taught by the program that allow between scheduled classes out-of-classroom time for students to reflect, read, study, and complete assignments.
  - d. Courses taught through remote synchronous instruction that include in real time faculty-to-student and student-to-student interaction.

*(ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs, effective January 1, 2023, <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/2023-approval-guidelines.pdf>.)*

In addition, students have occasionally suggested more assistance in locating internship and employment opportunities. Every month, the Program typically receives multiple communications from area legal employers regarding open paralegal positions, internship opportunities, and other open positions in their offices. The Program's protocol is to post these job descriptions, authored by the employers, on the Program's private group on LinkedIn called Collin College Paralegal Association, which consists primarily of Program graduates, current students, and employers. The Program urges all its students to join this group to stay abreast of the continually updated job postings. In addition, upon request by a student, the Program will proactively seek employment or internship opportunities from area legal employers. The Program is expanding its outreach to area employers through local bar associations and other networks to enhance its ability to keep students abreast of these opportunities.

Probably the most common concern expressed by students relates to course offerings and the waiver of prerequisites. Although the Associate Dean is responsible for course schedules, prerequisite waivers, and the consideration of over-enrollment of courses, the discipline lead and other faculty members support student requests for such waivers or over-enrollments when appropriate.

**□ 6. HOW EFFECTIVELY DO WE COMMUNICATE, AND HOW DO WE KNOW?**

**A. Make a case with evidence that the program literature and electronic sites are current, provide an accurate representation of the program, and support the program's recruitment plan, retention plan and completion plan.**

*Suggested/possible points to consider:*

- *Demonstrate how the unit solicits student feedback regarding its website and literature and how it incorporates that feedback to make improvements.*
- *How does the program ensure that students are informed/aware of program literature? Is program literature made accessible to all students (i.e. can they obtain the information they need)?*
- *Designate who is responsible for monitoring and maintaining the unit's website, and describe processes in place to ensure that information is current, accurate, relevant, and available.*

The Program has a robust communications strategy regarding prospective students, current students, former students, and members of the legal community. These communication tools include the following:

- The Collin College Paralegal Association group on LinkedIn, which comprises current Program students, Program graduates, and legal employers, and which is the central forum in which the Program posts announcements relating to internship opportunities, job opportunities, paralegal-related events and seminars, and other topics of interest to paralegals or paralegal students;
- The Program's department website, <https://www.collin.edu/department/paralegal/>;
- The Program's information sheet, <https://www.collin.edu/academics/info/paralegalInfoSheet.pdf>, which the Program distributes at program and career fairs and the assigned Workforce Programs Coaches distribute to prospective students at area high schools;
- The Program's description in the *Collin College Catalog*, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_1Overview.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_1Overview.html);
- The Program's A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies curriculum outline in the *Collin College Catalog*, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_AAS.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_AAS.html);
- The Program's Level 2 Paralegal Certificate curriculum outline in the *Collin College Catalog*, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA\\_Cert2.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/PARA_Cert2.html);
- The Program's online list of marketable skills, [https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MrktSkills\\_Paralegal.html](https://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MrktSkills_Paralegal.html);

- The Program’s orientation materials, including PowerPoint slides and a course-sequencing resources, which provide guidance to students for selecting and sequencing their Program courses and which the Program distributes to all students in the Program’s required introductory survey course, Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307);
- E-mails in response to those of individual prospective students and legal employers in which the Program’s full-time faculty answer questions and provide other information about the Program or the paralegal profession;
- In-person meetings between the Program’s full-time faculty and individual prospective students in which the faculty answer questions and provide other information about the program or the paralegal profession;
- Biannual meetings of the Program’s Advisory Committee, which includes local attorneys and paralegals;
- Student exit surveys, administered to students enrolled in the Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339);
- Graduate surveys, administered to recent graduates of the program;
- Legal employer surveys;
- Collin’s general Cooperative Work Experience (Co-op) webpage, <https://www.collin.edu/studentresources/support/internships/coopsinternships.html>, which, though not controlled by the Program, contains information for both students and employers; and
- The American Bar Association’s online Directory of Approved Paralegal Education Programs, <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/paralegal-resource-directory/paralegal-resource-directory1/?path=%2Fcontent%2Faba-cms-dotorg%2Fen%2Fgroups%2Fparalegals%2Fparalegal-resource-directory&q=Collin+College&src=aba-section-search-bar-groupsparalegalsparalegal-resource-directory>, which, though not controlled by the Program or Collin, is publicly accessible and serves as an important resource for prospective students who seek an ABA-approved paralegal program.

The Program’s discipline lead, Gage Waggoner, is responsible for the currency, accuracy, relevancy, and availability of information stated on the Program’s department website, <https://www.collin.edu/department/paralegal/>, subject to the applicable guidelines or protocols of Collin’s Communications Department, Curriculum Office, or Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB), and subject to the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs*.

**B. In the following Program Literature Review Table, document that the elements of information listed on the website and in brochures (current academic calendars, grading policies, course syllabi, program handouts, program tuition costs and additional fees, description of articulation agreements, availability of courses and awards, and local job demand in related fields) were verified for currency, accuracy, relevance, and are readily available to students and the public. **Please fill out the table only for this prompt (B.), no analysis is necessary here.****

**Program Literature Review Table**

Title	Type (i.e. URL, brochure, handout, etc.)	Date of Last Review/Update		Responsible Party
Program Website	<a href="https://www.collin.edu/department/paralegal/">https://www.collin.edu/department/paralegal/</a>	3/28/2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accurate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available	Gage Waggoner (discipline lead)
Program Information Sheet	<a href="https://www.collin.edu/academics/info/paralegalInfoSheet.pdf">https://www.collin.edu/academics/info/paralegalInfoSheet.pdf</a>	6/2/2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accurate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available	Gage Waggoner (discipline lead), except for paralegal job market data
LinkedIn Group: "Collin College Paralegal Association"	Private group that is open, upon request, to Program students and graduates, legal employers, and Advisory Committee members	Weekly or more frequently	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accurate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available	Cynthia Farris Gruver; Gage Waggoner (discipline lead)

### □ 7. HOW WELL ARE WE LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIP RESOURCES AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, AND HOW DO WE KNOW?

**Partnership Resources: On the table below, list any business, industry, government, college, university, community, and/or consultant partnerships, including internal Collin departments, to advance the program outcomes.**

The Program enjoys relationships with many external partners that benefit the Program and its students. These partnerships fall primarily into the following categories:

- Articulation agreements with area universities to facilitate students who wish to transfer to a baccalaureate program to do so with as many transferable paralegal course credits as possible;
- Professional paralegal organizations, which offer student memberships at reduced cost and that afford students the opportunity to attend paralegal-related seminars, network with other paralegals, and participate in mentorship programs;
- Paralegal education organizations—namely, the Committee on Paralegals of the American Bar Association (ABA), which approves the Program, and the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE);
- Local attorney organizations, which provide a valuable network of potential employers for Program students regarding Co-op internships and permanent employment and of potential adjunct faculty members to teach more specialized courses in the Program;
- Area law firms, which commonly hire Program students or graduates as interns or employees; and
- The Program’s Advisory Committee, which provides necessary feedback regarding trends in the paralegal profession and the paralegal job market and advises the Program on curriculum, resources, and other topics.

In addition, the Program also enjoys many relationships internally at Collin that are extremely valuable to the Program—for example:

- Workforce Programs Coaches;
- Assistants to the Program’s District Discipline Dean and Associate Dean;
- Academic Advisors; and
- Collin’s Libraries, especially the Director of the Plano Campus Library and the Program’s dedicated Reference Librarians at the Plano and Frisco Campuses.



In the Partnership Resources Table below, the Program describes the nature of these partnerships and their value to the Program.

**Partnership Resources Table\*\***

Partner/Organization	Description	Formal Agreement Duration, if any.	How is it Valuable to the Program?
Texas A&M University-Commerce	Articulation agreement	2004–Present	Under the agreement, the university applies general education course credits and 12.0 semester credits of Collin paralegal courses toward the Bachelor of Arts/Science in Political Science with Emphasis in Paralegal Studies.
Texas Woman’s University	Articulation agreement	1999–Present	Under the agreement, the university applies at least 9.0 semester credits of Collin paralegal course credits toward the Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies.
Texas Wesleyan University	Potential articulation agreement	N/A	The Program is currently in discussions with Texas Wesleyan University regarding a potential articulation agreement relating to its Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies program.
American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE)	Professional development	N/A	Collin is an institutional member of the AAfPE, and the Program’s discipline lead has attended multiple conferences with extremely valuable resources for paralegal educators.

Dallas Area Paralegal Association (DAPA)	Scholarships, mentors, and networking	N/A	Collin students routinely win its annual scholarship; many students are members and have DAPA mentors.
Paralegal Advisory Committee	Advice and direction	N/A	The Committee makes curricular and other recommendations to improve the Program.
The Hawkins Law Firm (law firm)	Mentorship, Co-op, and permanent employment placement	N/A	This attorney routinely offers Co-op opportunities to Program students and employs graduates.
American Bar Association (ABA)	Program approval	N/A	This prestigious attorney group approves the Program.
Texas Lawyers (attorney networking group)	Co-op, employment placement, and adjunct instructor recruitment	N/A	The Program receives job and internship leads from members; members also apply to teach in the Program as adjuncts.
Girl Attorney – Texas (attorney networking group)	Co-op, employment placement, and adjunct instructor recruitment	N/A	The Program receives job and internship leads from members; members also apply to teach in the Program as adjuncts.
Collin County Attorney Moms (attorney networking group)	Co-op, employment placement, and adjunct instructor recruitment	N/A	The Program receives job and internship leads from members; members also apply to teach in the Program as adjuncts.
Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT)	Volunteer or internship placement, guest speaking, networking	N/A	Many Program students perform volunteer intake services at LANWT's evening clinics for income-eligible clients in need of <i>pro bono</i> legal services in civil matters. LAWNT staff

			serve as guest speakers to Program students on campus.
Collin County Bar Association	Potential Co-op, employment placement, and adjunct instructor recruitment	N/A	The Association, a voluntary group comprising Collin County attorneys, is a potential source of leads for Co-op, employment placement, and adjunct instructor recruitment.
State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division	Mentors and networking	N/A	This voluntary association offers student memberships with access to paralegal-related resources, events, and a mentorship program.
The Wendi Atwood Rogers Foundation	Mentors, community service projects		This charitable organization, named after a late influential paralegal, provides mentor workshops, community service projects, and grants to support mentoring programs.
The Law Offices of Lisa Schwamkrug (law firm)	Co-op and employment placement	N/A	This attorney routinely offers Co-op opportunities to Program students and employs graduates.
Collin College: Workforce Programs Coaches	Co-op eligibility review, course registration assistance, degree and certificate audits, transfer credit evaluations, Program enrollment presentations at Advisory Committee meetings	N/A	The assigned Workforce Programs Coaches, John Hines at the Frisco Campus and Scott Hensley at the Plano Campus, have greatly assisted the Program by screening interested students for eligibility to take the Cooperative Education (Co-op) (LGLA 1380) elective, assisting students with the logistics of course registration, performing degree and certificate audits, evaluating transfer credit for general education courses, and

			presenting Program enrollment statistics at the biannual meetings of the Advisory Committee.
Collin College Assistants to District Discipline Dean and Associate Dean	Payment processing, administration of Advisory Committee meetings	N/A	<p>Ashley McGee, assistant to District Discipline Dean Dawn Richardson, greatly assists the Program in processing payments for key Program memberships, such as the American Bar Association (ABA) and American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE).</p> <p>Shanice Bellot and Grace Fox, assistants to Associate Dean Meredith Martin, greatly assist the Program by coordinating the scheduling of the biannual Advisory Committee meetings, reserving meeting rooms and providing refreshments, preparing meeting handouts, calculating quorum, preparing meeting minutes, obtaining member proxies when necessary, and communicating with members regarding other meeting logistics.</p>
Collin College Academic Advisors	Academic advising, particularly regarding general education courses in A.A.S. program; registration assistance	N/A	The academic advisors greatly assist the program by counseling students regarding the selection and sequencing of courses, particularly the general education courses required for the A.A.S. in Paralegal Studies, and by assisting students with the logistics of course registration.

<p>Collin College Libraries, especially Plano Campus Library</p>	<p>Funding of Westlaw for Program students; reserving library computer lab for online Westlaw legal research instruction sessions in Legal Research (LGLA 1303); assisting Program students with print library resources</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The cost of Collin’s subscription to the commercial online legal research service Westlaw, which Collin offers free of charge to Program students and faculty, comes out of the Collin Libraries’ budget. The director of the Plano Campus Library, Reina Williams, has been instrumental in securing continued funding for this vital service to the Program. In addition, most of the print legal resources are in the Plano Campus Library.</p> <p>The Program has a dedicated librarian at the Plano Campus and Frisco Campus Libraries. At the Plano Campus Library, this librarian, Shannon Alexander, reserves the library’s computer lab twice each semester for the instructor to provide Westlaw online legal research training to students in Legal Research (LGLA 1303). The librarians at both campuses assist students in locating and using the print legal resources.</p>
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**□ 8. WHAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES ADD VALUE TO YOUR PROGRAM?**

The professional developmental opportunities that add value to the Program are primarily (1) teaching-related professional development; and (2) continuing legal education (CLE).

Regarding CLE, the Program’s two full-time faculty are attorneys with Texas law licenses, and the Program’s adjunct faculty—with one exception—are Texas attorneys in active law practice. The exception is a highly experienced practicing paralegal with an advanced paralegal certification by The National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA) who has taught the Program’s capstone course, Certified Paralegal Exam Review (LGLA 2339).

To maintain their Texas law licenses, the attorneys must participate each year in a minimum of 15 clock hours of Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) activities certified by the State Bar of Texas. All the Program’s full-time faculty members and current adjunct faculty members meet this requirement. The subject matter of MCLE activities directly relates to legal subjects and the legal profession, including professional responsibility, legal ethics, or law practice management. Because the law and its practice are continually evolving—courts issue new opinions, legislatures enact new laws, government agencies make new regulations, new legal technologies emerge, and so on—MCLE activities are vital for attorneys to stay current on the law and trends in the legal fields they teach or in which they practice. The most valuable MCLE activities to the Program are those that relate to the subject matter of the faculty members’ courses so that the faculty, in turn, can equip the Program’s students with the latest knowledge and skills for success in the paralegal profession.

To maintain her Registered Paralegal certification, the one faculty member who is not an attorney must also participate every two years in a minimum of 12 clock hours of CLE activities approved by the NFPA.

The Program’s Employee Resources Table appears in the Appendix. The faculty identified in the table are those who taught one or more Program classes during the Program Review period and are still actively teaching for the Program.

**PROVIDE A LIST OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES EMPLOYEES HAVE PARTICIPATED IN SINCE THE LAST PROGRAM REVIEW.**

The Employee Resources Table appears in the Appendix.

**9. ARE FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND FUNDING SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM? IF NOT, PLEASE EXPLAIN.**

**[OPTIONAL—ONLY RESPOND TO PROMPT 9 IF YOU ARE REQUESTING IMPROVED RESOURCES FOR YOUR PROGRAM. IF CURRENT FACILITIES AND BUDGET ARE ADEQUATE, PLEASE PROCEED TO PROMPT 10.]**

**Make a case with evidence that current deficiencies or potential deficiencies related to facilities, equipment, maintenance, replacement, plans, or budgets pose important barriers to the program or student success.** As part of your response, complete the resource tables, below, to support your narrative.

*Possible points to consider:*

- *The useful life of structure, technologies and equipment*
- *Special structural requirements*
- *Anticipated technology changes impacting equipment sooner than usual*

The Program is not requesting improved resources at this time.

## Section III. Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)

### □ 10. HOW HAVE PAST CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLANS CONTRIBUTED TO SUCCESS?

Program Review at Collin College takes place for each unit or program every five years. During the last (fifth) year, the program evaluates the data collected during the CIP process.

**Please describe how you have used your Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) to make the following improvements to your program over the past 4 years (your last program review can be found on the Program Review Portal):**

- a. **Program Learning Outcomes/Program Competencies**
- b. **Overall improvements to your program**

#### **Program Learning Outcomes/Program Competencies**

Over the past four years, the Program has used its Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) to make improvements with respect to the following learning outcomes/program competencies:

- **CIP 1.** The program increased the success rates of its students in Advanced Legal Document Preparation (LGLA 2333). Specifically, the Program decreased the percentage of completers, defined as those students who took the final exam—who earned a grade of “D” or “F” from 16.7% in Spring 2020 to 0% in Summer 2020. The Program, therefore, met its target outcome that that no more than 14% of completers would earn a grade of “D” or “F.”
- **CIP 2.** In Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions (LGLA 1307), the program increased the average score on two assessment questions requiring students to calculate the deadlines for civil defendants to file original answers in state and federal courts, respectively. Regarding the federal court calculation, the average score of students who attempted the assessment question rose from a low of 60% to a perfect 100%. Regarding the Texas court calculation, the average score of students who attempted the assessment question rose from a low of 43% to 78%. For both questions, the Program, therefore, met its target outcome of an average score of 75% or higher on each assessment question.
- **CIP 3.** In Legal Writing (LGLA 1305), the program increased the average score on an assessment requiring students to be able to draft an affidavit in a legally valid and conventional format. Specifically, the average score of students who attempted the measure increased from a low of 63% to 96%. The Program, therefore, met its target outcome of an average score of 75% or higher on the assessment.

The Program’s CIP tables for Years 1–4 of the Program Review Cycle appear in the Appendix.



**Overall Improvements to the Program**

The Program used its CIP to improve instruction regarding topics or skills that students often find difficult. In implementing its CIP, the Program improved not only with respect to the learning outcomes described above but also with respect to its approach to difficult topics and skills more generally. For example, as a result of evaluating assessment data and revising its action plans (especially regarding CIPs 1 and 3), the Program improved its instruction regarding other especially challenging topics by teaching them more incrementally to ensure that students properly grasp foundational principles before the Program builds on them with practical applications or more complex concepts. Further, in its revisions to its action plan regarding CIP 3, in which the Program implemented more focused instruction on the problem area and then assigned group practice exercises in class, the Program improved the proportionality of its instruction with respect to the importance of the topics and the challenges they commonly pose for students.

From an even broader perspective, the CIP process has equipped Program faculty to structure their entire courses more effectively as a whole. The process of formulating desired student-level and program-level outcomes is becoming less the ending point and more the starting point for structuring the topics and lesson plans for entire classes. In this way, the Program will be seeking always to make its classes and instruction more coherent, focused, and ultimately beneficial to its students.

**□ 11. HOW WILL WE EVALUATE OUR SUCCESS?**

**NOTE: PLEASE CONTACT THE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OFFICE IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE FILLING OUT THE CIP TABLES.**

As part of the fifth year Program Review, the program should use the observations and data generated by this process along with data from other relevant assessment activities to develop the program’s CIP and an action plan for the next two years. At the conclusion of the first two years, data collected from the first year, plus any other relevant data that was collected in the interim, should be used to build on the accomplishments of those first two years by developing another two-year action plan for the CIP to help the program accomplish the expected outcomes established in its CIP or by implementing one of your other plans.

**Based on the information, analysis, and discussion that have been presented up to this point, summarize the strengths and weaknesses of this program. There should be no surprise issues here! This response should be based on information from prior sections of this document. Describe specific actions the faculty intends to take to capitalize on the strengths, mitigate the weaknesses, improve student success and program learning outcomes. Provide the rationale for the expected outcomes chosen for the CIP(s).**

**Program Strengths**

As this Program Review demonstrates, Program’s strengths are many. They include the following:

- ABA-Approval;
- An enrollment that has increased over the past four years;
- The projected increase in market demand for paralegals, especially at the local and state levels;
- A highly skilled, knowledgeable, and committed full-time and part-time faculty;
- A student population that is diverse in its backgrounds, goals, race, and ethnicity;
- A rigorous and innovative curriculum that emphasizes technology, practical skills, legal writing, and legal ethics;
- Robust marketing and correspondence with prospective students;
- A large network of professional relationships with the legal and paralegal community;
- An active Advisory Committee that provides invaluable feedback and direction;
- Relative flexibility in course offerings regarding the time of day, delivery formats, and campus locations;
- Invaluable support from the Program’s District Discipline Dean and Associate Dean in improving the Program and facilitating scheduling and course enrollments to maximize students’ timely completion of the Program; and
- Invaluable support from Collin’s library system regarding the offering of Westlaw to all Program students and other vital Program support.

The Program's faculty intend to capitalize on these strengths in ways that include the following:

- Enhancing Program marketing to legal employers as both sources of internships and employment for Program students and graduates and sources of prospective students;
- Continuing to explore the potential addition of a Law Office Technology elective to the curriculum;
- Recruiting a qualified attorney to teach the anticipated new Immigration Law elective, if the Curriculum Advisory Board approves the approval at its February 9, 2024, meeting;
- Identifying additional ways of connecting with prospective students; and
- Creatively adjusting the delivery formats or locations of Program courses—to the extent permissible by the ABA Guidelines— to maximize the effectiveness and accessibility of Program courses.

### **Program Challenges**

Program challenges also exist, however. They include the following:

- Recruiting additional attorneys to teach the more specialized courses and thereby increase the pool of approved adjunct faculty;
- Finding sufficient internship and employment opportunities for those students who seek that assistance;
- Increasing the Program's marketing to non-paralegals who are currently working in legal offices;
- Ensuring that all students know of course prerequisites and assisting them with course planning to minimize the need for prerequisite waivers and to maximize students' chances of completing the program by their target dates; and
- Increasing the number of articulation agreements with four-year institutions.

As indicated in this Program Review, the Program plans to address these challenges, respectively, in the following ways:

- Taking greater advantage of existing attorney bar associations and networks for recruiting adjunct faculty to teach more specialized Program courses and for recruiting potential employers of Program students and graduates as interns or employees;
- Developing marketing materials to area legal employers that target non-paralegals who may want or need a paralegal education to qualify for pay raises or promotions;
- Enhancing recruitment efforts at area high schools;
- Increasing the emphasis on the need to meet the Program's formal course prerequisites and corequisite in written Program orientation materials and other Program resources for students; and
- Proceeding with the discussions with Texas Wesleyan University toward a new articulation agreement and seeking out potential additional articulation agreements with additional four-year institutions.

### **New CIP Outcomes**

The Program chose three new CIP outcomes for the following reasons:

- **Proposed New CIP 1 Outcome: “Students will be able to identify the characteristic, benefits, and response deadlines of written discovery requests in civil litigation.”**

The Program chose this outcome because the majority of paralegals work in the field of litigation, and the longest phase of a lawsuit is the pretrial phase called “discovery.” In that phase, the applicable procedural rules allow parties’ attorneys to send, and the receiving parties to respond to, formal written requests for facts, documents, and other relevant information to other parties, and sometimes non-party witnesses, to enable the party to prepare for trial and avoid being ambushed at trial by a party who had withheld evidence. The procedural rules also allow parties’ attorneys to take oral sworn statements, called depositions, of other parties or witnesses. The applicable procedural rules of the jurisdiction or court dictate the precise form of written discovery requests and the written responses, the proper scope and content of the requests, and the deadlines for the receiving party to send written responses. The procedural rules also dictate the proper way in which a party can demand a deposition in writing and the restrictions that apply during the deposition proceeding itself. Because of the centrality of discovery to civil litigation and the intricacy of the rules surrounding the permissible discovery tools, the Program wanted to improve students’ understanding of the discovery process through CIP 1.

- **Proposed New CIP 2 Outcome: “Students will be able to properly format a legal document in Microsoft Word with respect to margins, font, line spacing, footers, and file name.”**

As indicated earlier in this Program Review, in the legal profession, the format of legal documents can be as important as their substance. Most law offices use Microsoft Word for word processing, so the ability of paralegals to be proficient in setting up legal documents in proper format on Microsoft Word is essential. Although most students enter the Program with strong Microsoft Word skills, a small minority of students do not. To address the word-processing challenges on a granular level, the Program is proposing this CIP 2 outcome.

- **Proposed New CIP 3 Outcome: “Students will be able to identify passive-voice verbs, recognize them in sentences, and choose effective active-voice equivalents.”**

The Program places great emphasis on legal writing skills. One weakness that students commonly exhibit when writing legal documents is the overuse of verbs in passive voice. Though not grammatically “incorrect,” verbs in passive voice are commonly very poor writing “style” in the legal profession, causing the writing to become wordy and weak. Many students have great difficulty understanding how to recognize verbs in passive voice and how to reword sentences that contain them to eliminate this weakness. Because of this difficulty, the Program desires to focus more intently on the topic in its proposed CIP 3.

12. COMPLETE THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) TABLES THAT FOLLOW.

Within the context of the information gleaned in this review process and any other relevant data, identify program priorities for the next two years, **including at least one program learning outcome (or program competency)**, and focus on these priorities to formulate your CIP. You may also add short-term administrative, technological, assessment, resource or professional development outcomes as needed.

Please see the completed CIP tables below. These tables also appear in the Appendix.

**Table 1. CIP Outcomes, Measures & Targets Table (focus on at least one for the next two years)**

<p><b>A. Expected Outcomes</b> Results expected in this unit (e.g. Authorization requests will be completed more quickly; Increase client satisfaction with our services)</p>	<p><b>B. Measures</b> Instrument(s)/process(es) used to measure results (e.g. sign-in sheets, surveys, focus groups, etc.)</p>	<p><b>C. Targets</b> Level of success expected (e.g. 80% approval rating, 10 day faster request turn-around time, etc.)</p>
<p><b>CIP #1</b> Students will be able to identify the characteristic, benefits, and response deadlines of written discovery requests in civil litigation.</p>	<p>10 multiple-choice questions in a test or quiz in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions-LGLA 1307 in which students will identify the characteristics of different discovery requests, the benefits of those requests, and the deadlines for</p>	<p>The average of the success rates on the 10 assessment questions will be at least 80%.</p>
<p><b>CIP #2</b> Students will be able to properly format a legal document in Microsoft Word with respect to margins, font, line spacing, footers, and file name.</p>	<p>10 multiple-choice questions in a test or quiz in Advanced Legal Document Preparation-LGLA 2333 in which students will identify proper margin widths, font style and size, line spacing, footer format, and file name for a legal document</p>	<p>The average of the success rates on the 10 assessment questions will be at least 80%.</p>
<p><b>CIP #3</b> Students will be able to identify passive-voice verbs, recognize them in sentences, and choose effective active-voice equivalents.</p>	<p>10 multiple-choice questions in a quiz in Introduction to Legal Conventions-LGLA 1370 in which students will identify the grammatical characteristics of passive-voice verbs, recognize passive-voice verbs in sentences, and choose effective active-voice equivalents</p>	<p>The average of the success rates on the 10 assessment questions will be at least 80%.</p>

**Continuous Improvement Plan**

Outcomes might not change from year to year. For example, if you have not met previous targets, you may wish to retain the same outcomes. *You must have at least one program learning outcome.* You may also add short-term administrative, technological, assessment, resource or professional development goals, as needed. Choose 1 to 2 outcomes from Table 1 above to focus on over the next two years.

- A. Outcome(s)** - Results expected in this program (from column A on Table 1 above--e.g. Students will learn how to compare/contrast Conflict and Structural Functional theories; increase student retention in Nursing Program).
- B. Measure(s)** – Instrument(s)/process(es) used to measure results (e.g. results of essay assignment, test item questions 6 & 7 from final exam, end of term retention rates, etc.).
- C. Target(s)** - Degree of success expected (e.g. 80% success rate, 25 graduates per year, increase retention by 2% etc.).
- D. Action Plan** - Implementation of the action plan will begin during the next academic year. Based on analysis, identify actions to be taken to accomplish outcome. What will you do?
- E. Results Summary** - Summarize the information and data collected in year 1.
- F. Findings** - Explain how the information and data has impacted the expected outcome and program success.
- G. Implementation of Findings** – Describe how you have used or will use your findings and analysis of the data to make program improvements.

**Table 2. CIP Outcomes 1 & 2**

<b>A. Outcome #1</b> Students will be able to identify the characteristic, benefits, and response deadlines of written discovery requests in civil litigation.	
<b>B. Measure (Outcome #1)</b> 10 multiple-choice questions in a test or quiz in Introduction to Law and the Legal Professions-LGLA 1307 in which students will identify the characteristics of different discovery requests, the benefits of those requests, and the deadlines for responding to those requests	<b>C. Target (Outcome #1)</b>  The average of the success rates on the 10 assessment questions will be at least 80%.
<b>D. Action Plan (Outcome #1)</b> The instructor will lecture on the contents of different discovery requests, the benefits of those requests, and the methods of calculating the deadlines for responding to those requests. The instructor will also provide students with examples of discovery requests that simulate those prepared by actual litigation law firms.	
<b>E. Results Summary (Outcome #1) TO BE FILLED OUT IN YEAR 2</b>	
<b>F. Findings (Outcome #1) TO BE FILLED OUT IN YEAR 2</b>	

**G. Implementation of Findings (Outcome #1) TO BE FILLED OUT IN YEAR 2**



Table 2. CIP Outcomes 1 & 2 (continued)

<p><b>A. Outcome #2</b> Students will be able to properly format a legal document in Microsoft Word with respect to margins, font, line spacing, footers, and file name.</p>	
<p><b>B. Measure (Outcome #2)</b> 10 multiple-choice questions in a test or quiz In Advanced Legal Document Preparation-LGLA 2333 in which students will identify the proper margin widths, font style and size, line spacing, footer format, and file name of a legal document</p>	<p><b>C. Target (Outcome #2)</b>  The average of the success rates on the 10 assessment questions will be at least 80%.</p>
<p><b>D. Action Plan (Outcome #2)</b> The instructor will provide one or more recorded (or face-to-face) lectures on how to properly format a legal document. The lecture(s) will cover proper margin widths, font style and size, line spacing, footer format, and file name for a legal document</p>	
<p><b>E. Results Summary (Outcome #2) TO BE FILLED OUT IN YEAR 2</b></p>	
<p><b>F. Findings (Outcome #2) TO BE FILLED OUT IN YEAR 2</b></p>	
<p><b>G. Implementation of Findings (Outcome #2) TO BE FILLED OUT IN YEAR 2</b></p>	

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? THE PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT PATHWAY

**A. Following approval by the Steering Committee,**

- Program Review Reports will be evaluated by the Leadership Team;
- After Leadership Team review, the reports will be posted on the Intranet prior to fall semester;
- At any point prior to Intranet posting, reports may be sent back for additional development by the unit.

**B. Unit responses to the Program Review Steering Committee recommendations received before July 31<sup>st</sup> will be posted with the Program Review Report.**

**C. Leadership Team members will work with program supervisors to incorporate Program Review findings into planning and activity changes during the next five years.**

**Please make sure to go back and complete your Executive Summary at the start of the Review.**