**Sinclair Community College**

**Continuous Improvement Annual Update 2017-18**

**Please submit to your Division Assessment Coordinator / Learning Liaison for feedback no later than March 1, 2018**

**After receiving feedback from your Division Assessment Coordinator, please revise accordingly and make the final submission to your dean and the Provost’s Office no later than May 1, 2018**

**Department:** **BPS - 0423 - Paralegal / 0422 - Law**

Year of Last Program Review: FY 2012-2013

Year of Next Program Review: FY 2019-2020

**Section I: Progress Since the Most Recent Review**

Below are the goals from Section IV part E of your last Program Review Self-Study. Describe progress or changes made toward meeting each goal over the last year. Responses from the previous year’s Annual Update are included, if there have been no changes to report then no changes to the response are necessary.

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| **GOALS** | **Status** | **Progress or Rationale for No Longer Applicable** |
| The department continues to evaluate its required and elective courses. Based on input from the Advisory Board, internship meetings, graduate surveys and community surveys, the department is committed to expanding its selection of one- and two-hour electives, when appropriate. These courses give current students the basics for expanding their knowledge of specialty areas of the law and also provide opportunities for graduates to upgrade skills. Currently under consideration are courses in Elder Law, Mortgage Foreclosures, and Health Care Law. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **The Department has created an online Criminal Law course which consolidated two other electives and has boosted our Average Class Size. As mentioned in previous Annual Updates, the department does not plan to add more one and two credit hour electives due to students being more interested in three credit hour online electives than one or two credit hour electives. In addition, having a lot of one or two credit hour electives was damaging to our ACS. The department will continue to review our electives and assess the best possible method to give students variety in electives while at the same time keeping our ACS where it needs to be. In addition, the department will attempt to hold CLEs in areas where we are not offering electives so that the students can still hear about those areas of law.** |
| There is currently no plan to offer paralegal courses at other locations. The library requirements, software requirements, and faculty limitations do not make that feasible at this time. However, the department is committed to assisting the Courseview Campus in establishing an ABA-approved paralegal program when CVCC decides to move that project forward. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **Courses will be offered at Courseview beginning Fall Semester 2018. Guidance will be sought from the American Bar Association (ABA) regarding whether courses offered at Courseview will be considered a separate program required to obtain separate ABA approval. If so, the Courseview program will need to run for two years prior to being eligible to seek ABA approval.** |

Below are the Recommendations for Action made by the review team. Describe the progress or changes made toward meeting each recommendation over the last year. Responses from the previous year’s Annual Update are included, if there have been no changes to report then no changes to the response are necessary.

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| **RECOMMENDATIONS** | **Status** | **Progress or Rationale for No Longer Applicable** |
| The department noted that retention and graduation rates are a challenge – what can be done to increase graduation rates? Efforts should be made to document the number of students who fail to complete because they have accepted full-time employment and present that information along with graduation rate information. Perhaps the department should emphasize to a greater extent the benefits of finishing an associate’s degree prior to taking full-time employment in the field. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **We continue to engage in several practices that we hope will assist in this area. First, in our introductory course, Paralegal Principles, students are required to create a map of their courses and present it as part of a homework assignment. This is important as many students do not realize that they must take the Paralegal courses in a certain sequence. This makes them aware of this right up front through an assignment. While we already make this very clear through all of our promotional materials, we are hopeful that getting feedback as part of a grade will also help in this endeavor. Second, our Administrative Assistant does contact students that leave the program in their first term. She calculates these results for us and provides the data in a report to the Chair. Finally, we also hold a mandatory Orientation before school starts. We have been doing this for years, but in this orientation we do emphasize the importance of completion.** |
| Related to the issue of increasing graduation is consideration of which students are admitted into the Paralegal program. The department should explore and consider offering a survey course that students would take prior to getting into their other Paralegal courses that would serve as an introduction to the field and an opportunity for students to find out what becoming a paralegal entails. A model of this approach is used by the Dental Hygiene program, where the Introduction to Dental Hygiene course is taken prior to the student being officially admitted into the program, allowing students to know what they are getting into prior to beginning the program proper. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **The department has met with the Dean about the idea of a survey course. However, with the state requirement that degrees are reduced to 65 credit hours, a survey course does not make sense at this time.** |
| Similarly, the department should consider the approaches that are being used to admit students into the program who are most likely to succeed. Exploration of additional admissions requirements would be appropriate, with an emphasis on an improved writing assessment requirement (Core Grammar was mentioned in the review as one possible example of a writing assessment). There should likewise be discussions on the appropriateness of increasing the GPA requirement to get into the program. Attempts should be made to estimate the impact of any changes to admissions policies using available data. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **The department addressed this issue during the 2014 PAR retreat. The consensus of the department is to leave the admissions requirements as they stand. Faculty members have observed students starting with a 2.0 GPA being successful in our program and experiencing positive job placement. In addition, the department worries about enrollment if requirements were to be made any stricter.** |
| Like many other departments across the college, this department struggles with getting feedback from graduates and other students. Research, Analytics, and Reporting is working with departments to try and increase response rates for graduate surveys, the department is encouraged to be actively engaged in these efforts. Other new approaches to staying in touch with graduates for the purpose of tracking their outcomes should be considered. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **The department is using social media, both Facebook and LinkedIn, to keep in contact with alumni. During our most recent ABA review, the department was able to contact 96% of our recent Paralegal graduates. Chair Jenna Beck has worked with RAR and now survey links are sent from Jenna’s email and being posted in a private facebook group of alumni. This has greatly increased the number of responses the department has received.** |
| The department noted problems with student writing skills – exploring a writing assessment of some kind prior to admission to the program has already been recommended. What other things can be done to avoid having to teach students grammar in the Legal Research course? How can students be informed ahead of time of the intensive writing component of the program – is there the possibility of noting on MAPs that a high level of writing skill is required in the program? Should there be a course that addresses writing early in the curriculum, perhaps a “Composition and Contracts” course or something similar? | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **There are multiple ways in which the department is tackling this issue. First, more writing intensive assignments have been implemented into Paralegal Principles, our introductory course. In addition, the student can earn extra credit for writing assignments in this course for going to the Writing Center. Unfortunately, going to the Writing Center cannot be made mandatory due to the full-time work and class schedule held by some of our students. In Paralegal Principles, students will also start to learn correct citation format under the Ohio Manual of Citations in an effort to make them more prepared for the concepts they will learn in Legal Research & Writing. Second, we have already indicated successful students who did well in our writing intensive classes to tutor students who are having difficulties through tutorial services so that this option is available for a student as soon as they feel that they need extra assistance. Third, the notation has been made on department planning guides that a high level of writing skill is required. Finally, the department offered a writing workshop to all faculty, staff and students in the Fall of 2014.** |
| The upcoming retirement of a key faculty member highlights the importance of taking a close look at potential replacements as former faculty transition out and there is a need for new faculty to transition in. Formal documentation of processes and other issues should be a priority so that as little institutional memory as possible is lost with the retirement of long-time faculty members. Planning ahead for personnel changes should be a priority for the department. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **At this point, this is no longer applicable.** |
| The department should give consideration to opportunities for continuing education offerings, both in the Paralegal and Real Estate programs. | In progress  Completed  No longer applicable | **The Paralegal Department has offered multiple CLEs since given this recommendation including “Advanced Legal Writing” approved for 2 hours of general CLE credit, “E-Discovery: Process and Purpose” approved for 1.5 hours of general CLE credit, “Juvenile Law Update” approved for 1 hour of general CLE credit, and “Eliminating Bias in the Legal Profession” approved for 1 hour of general CLE credit.** |

**Section II: Assessment of General Education & Degree Program Outcomes**

For the FY 2016-17 Annual Update, departments are asked to provide assessment results for **Information Literacy**.

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| **General Education Outcomes** | Year assessed or to be assessed. | Course identified by the department where this outcome could be assessed | Assessment Methods  Used | What were the assessment results?  (Please provide brief summary data) |
| **THIS YEAR’S ASSESSMENT RESULTS** |  |  |  |  |
| Computer Literacy | **2017-2018** | **PAR1102** - Legal Technology**;** | Microsoft Office Suite Quiz | Our Legal Technology class requires an assessment over the Microsoft Office Suite. The average of Fall and Spring Semesters was 83%. This is an improvement over AY 2016-2017. However, an 83% corresponds to a letter grade of C (79-85%) in the Paralegal Program and a C is the minimum grade required to pass Paralegal courses. The instructor for this course began teaching in 2016 so it is possible the improvement this year is due to the instructor’s improving teaching techniques and additional emphasis on teaching this topic. |
| **LAST YEAR’S ASSESSMENT RESULTS** |  |  |  |  |
| Information Literacy | **2016-2017** | **PAR1201** - Legal Research & Writing | Final Interoffice Legal Memo/Rubric | This assignment is graded using a rubric where the student evaluates themselves in addition to the instructor. The data shows that the students frequently rated themselves higher than the instructor. In AY 2016-2017, the average grade for this assignment was 76.71% which is concerning as it is lower than the passing score for Paralegal classes which is 79%. |

The Program Outcomes for the degrees are listed below. Responses from previous years are provided below. **All program outcomes must be assessed at least once during the 5 year Program Review cycle, and assessment of program outcomes must occur each year**.

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| **Program Outcomes** | To which course(s) is this program outcome related? | Year assessed or to be assessed. | Assessment Methods  Used | What were the assessment results?  (Please provide brief summary data) |
| Competently conduct factual and legal research and communicate the results clearly and concisely. | COM-2206 ENG-1101 ENG-1199 ENG-1201 PAR-1103 PAR-1201 PAR-1203 PAR-2301 PAR-2401 PSY-1100 SOC-1101 | 13-14  16-17  13-14  14-15  15-16  17-18 | Internship Report | This assignment requires students collate and present detailed factual information about their internship experience including fifteen weeks of weekly time slips kept in tenth of an hour increments as well as lengthy written narrative sections. The data indicates students consistently perform well above the 79% benchmark for Paralegal courses. The class average for Spring Semester 2016 is lower than other semesters because three students did not submit this assignment. |
| Competently prepare and interpret legal documents. | ACC-1210 LAW-1101 MAT-1120 PAR-1201 PAR-2302 PAR-2303 | 14-15  16-17  17-18  13-14  15-16 | Open Legal Memorandum | This assignment requires students conduct legal research and write a legal memorandum. This is a challenging assignment and many students must work hard to bring their writing skills up the standard required. On average, students perform near or above the 79% benchmark for Paralegal courses. The most recent semester shows improvement in the average grade. |
| Demonstrate competency in current technology. | BIS-1120 PAR-1102 PAR-1202 | 15-16  13-14; 16-17  14-15; 17-18 | Clio Assignment 1 | This course was rewritten by a new instructor for Fall Semester 2016. The Clio Assignment 1 is a new assignment using Clio, a newer legal practice management software platform. As part of this assignment, students must utilize the calendar and tasks features in Clio. On average, students typically perform well above the 79% benchmark for Paralegal courses. The averages for Spring and Fall Semesters 2017 are greatly affected by students who did not submit this assignment and students who submitted an incomplete assignment. Therefore, this does not indicate a trend in students’ ability to successfully complete this assignment. |
| Exemplify a high standard of ethical and professional behavior individually and as a member of a legal team. | PAR-1101 ~~PAR-2304~~ PAR-2401 | 14-15, 15-16, 17-18  removed  13-14, 16-17 | Ethics Role Play Assignment | The Ethics Role Play Assignment contains both a group role play presentation element and a written element. Students consistently perform above the 79% benchmark for the Paralegal Program. |

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| **Are changes planned as a result of the assessment of program outcomes? If so, what are those changes?** | No changes are planned as a result of assessment of program outcomes. It is expected that we will continue to see improvement in computer literacy as we have this year because the dedicated Legal Technology instructor continues to emphasize competency in this area. |
| **How will you determine whether those changes had an impact?** |  |

**OPTIONAL:**

Please use the space below to keep track of any annual data that your department wishes to maintain. This section is completely optional and will not be reviewed by the Division Assessment Coordinators.