

Mission / Purpose

The mission of the B.A. program in paralegal studies is to provide students with a well-rounded liberal arts education, including the legal terminology, concepts, and skills necessary to function effectively in the legal profession, whether in a private law firm, business, or government environment.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Research and create a legal memorandum

Students will demonstrate the ability to research a legal issue resulting in a legal memorandum that correctly cites legal authorities

Related Measures:

M 1: Legal Memorandum

Graduating seniors will research and create a legal memorandum scored on a standard program-developed rubric with criteria set for format, contents, mechanics and grammar, and style.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will receive an overall score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for the legal memorandum.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 82% (9 of 11 who completed the senior capstone PLS 490 Advanced Paralegalism) received an overall score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for the legal memorandum.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no students who completed the senior capstone course.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8 of 8 who completed the senior capstone PLS 490 Advanced Paralegalism) received an overall score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for the legal memorandum.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: 50% (1 of 2) students who completed the senior capstone PLS 490 Advanced Paralegalism received an overall score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for the legal memorandum. 50% (1 of 2) did not turn in a legal memorandum in the senior portfolio so no grade could be given on the legal memorandum.

M 2: Legal Research Exit Exam

Graduating seniors will take the program-developed exit assessment examination in legal research before graduation.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will score 70% or better on the program-developed exit assessment examination in legal research.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 73% (8/11) of graduating seniors scored 70% or better on the program-developed exit assessment examination in legal research.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 88% (7/8) of graduating seniors scored 70% or better on the program-developed exit assessment examination in legal research.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 50% (1/2) of graduating senior scored 70% or better on the program-developed exit assessment examination in legal research.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Legal researching skills

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

In an attempt to improve the scores of the legal research exit exam, the exam results will be re-examined to determine exactly w...

M 3:Graduate Exit Survey - Legal Memorandum Skills

Graduating seniors will evaluate their ability to research a legal issue and to culminate the results of the research into a legal memorandum on a 5 point scale with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will strongly agree or agree that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to research a legal issue. 80% of graduating seniors will strongly agree or agree that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to put the results of their research of a legal issue into a legal memorandum.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 100% (11/11) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to research a legal issue. 100% (11/11) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to put the results of their research of a legal issue into a legal memorandum.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors on the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to research a legal issue. 100% (8/8) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to put the results of their research of a legal issue into a legal memorandum.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to research a legal issue. 50% (1/2) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to put the results of their research of a legal issue into a legal memorandum. 50% (1/2) neither agreed nor disagreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to put the results of their research of a legal issue into a legal memorandum.

SLO 2:Compose basic legal documents

Students will demonstrate the ability to draft basic legal documents, including correspondence, basic pleadings, interrogatories, and a research memorandum.

Related Measures:

M 4:Legal Documents in Senior Portfolio

Graduating seniors will submit a senior writing portfolio which includes 5 legal documents each scored on a standard program-developed rubric.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will receive a score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for each legal document in their senior writing portfolio.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 91% (10/11) received a score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for each legal document in their senior writing portfolio.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors from the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) received a score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for each legal document in their senior writing portfolio.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) received a score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for each legal document in their senior writing portfolio.

M 5:Senior Portfolio

Graduating seniors will organize a professional writing portfolio for presentation to prospective employers which is scored on a standard program-developed rubric with criteria for format and organization, contents, and appearance.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will receive a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for a professional writing portfolio that they organize for presentation to prospective employers.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 82% (9/11) received a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for a professional writing portfolio that they organize for presentation to prospective employers.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) received a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for a professional writing portfolio that they organize for presentation to prospective employers.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) received a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for a professional writing portfolio that they organize for presentation to prospective employers.

M 6:Graduate Exit Survey - Drafting Legal Documents

Graduating seniors will evaluate on a graduate exit survey their ability to draft basic legal documents, including correspondence, basic pleadings, and interrogatories on a 5 point scale with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors on a graduate exit survey will strongly agree or agree that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to draft basic legal documents, including correspondence, basic pleadings, and interrogatories.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 100% (11/11) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to draft basic legal documents, including correspondence, basic pleadings, and interrogatories.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to draft basic legal documents, including

correspondence, basic pleadings, and interrogatories.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) strongly agreed or agreed that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to draft basic legal documents, including correspondence, basic pleadings, and interrogatories.

SLO 3:Locate and research ethical rules for paralegals

Students will demonstrate familiarity with the ethical rules for paralegals and attorneys and will be able to locate and research the ethical rules and guidelines for paralegals and attorneys

Related Measures:

M 7:Ethical Documents in Senior Portfolio

Graduating seniors will submit a senior writing portfolio which includes an ethics section which is graded on a standard program-developed rubric with criteria of format and organization, contents, and appearance.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will receive a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for the ethics portion of their senior writing portfolio.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 82% (9/11) received a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for the ethics portion of their senior writing portfolio.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 82% (9/11) received a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for the ethics portion of their senior writing portfolio.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) received a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for the ethics portion of their senior writing portfolio.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) received a score of 80 or better on the grading rubric for the ethics portion of their senior writing portfolio.

M 8:Graduate Exit Survey - Ethical Rules familiarity

Graduating seniors will evaluate on a graduate exit survey familiarity with the ethical rules for attorneys and paralegals on a 5 point scale with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree..

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will strongly agree or agree on a graduate exit survey that their education experience at USM has allowed them to demonstrate familiarity with the ethical rules for attorneys and paralegals.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 100% (11/11) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience at USM has allowed them to demonstrate familiarity with the ethical rules for attorneys and paralegals.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that

their education experience at USM has allowed them to demonstrate familiarity with the ethical rules for attorneys and paralegals.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience at USM has allowed them to demonstrate familiarity with the ethical rules for attorneys and paralegals.

SLO 4:Identify and resolve ethical dilemmas

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in the workplace.

Related Measures:

M 9:Ethics Exit Exam

Graduating seniors will take the American Association for Paralegal Education exit assessment examination in ethics before graduation.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will score 70% or better on the American Association for Paralegal Education exit assessment examination in ethics.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Partially Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 73% (8/11) scored 70% or better on the American Association for Paralegal Education exit assessment examination in ethics.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 75% (6/8) scored 70% or better on the American Association for Paralegal Education exit assessment examination in ethics.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) scored 70% or better on the American Association for Paralegal Education exit assessment examination in ethics.

M 10:Graduate Exit Survey - Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

Graduating seniors will evaluate on a graduate exit survey the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that arise in the legal workplace on a 5 point scale with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will strongly agree or agree on a graduate exit survey that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in workplace.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 100% (11/11) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in workplace.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in workplace.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to identify and

resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in workplace.

SLO 5: Prepared to enter job market

Students will be prepared to enter the job market in the legal profession.

Related Measures:

M 11: Graduate Exit Survey - Professional Preparation

Graduating seniors will evaluate on a graduate exit survey that they are prepared for the paralegal workplace by their education on a 5 point scale with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree.

Target:

80% of graduating seniors will strongly agree or agree on a graduate exit survey that their education experience at USM has prepared them to enter the job market in the legal profession.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg Fall 2011: 100% (11/11) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience at USM has prepared them to enter the job market in the legal profession.

Gulf Coast Fall 2011: There were no graduating seniors for the Gulf Coast.

Hattiesburg Spring 2012: 100% (8/8) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience at USM has prepared them to enter the job market in the legal profession.

Gulf Coast Spring 2012: 100% (2/2) strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience at USM has prepared them to enter the job market in the legal profession.

M 12: Alumni Survey - Professional Employment

Alumni will report on an alumni survey that they are employed within the legal profession within six months of graduation. Alumni are surveyed in the spring following the calendar year in which they graduate.

Target:

70% of responding alumni will report on an alumni survey that they are employed within the legal profession within six months of graduation.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

Hattiesburg/Gulf Coast: 75% (9/12) of responding alumni (class of calendar year 2010 - 12 of 22 graduates responded) reported on an alumni survey that they were employed within the legal profession as a working paralegal or in another legal capacity within six months of graduation. Additionally, 8% (1/12) worked in another field and 17% (2/12) were continuing their education, one in law school and one in a master's degree program.

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Emphasis on paralegal ethics in class

A continued emphasis on paralegal ethics will be implemented in all paralegal courses.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Fall 2008

Responsible Person/Group: All paralegal faculty

Encourage students to enroll in PLS 389 Internship

Students should be encourage to enroll in the PLS 389 internship so that they can obtain valuable law office experience.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: Medium

Implementation Description: Fall 2008

Responsible Person/Group: All paralegal faculty

Encourage students to respond to the alumni survey

Encourage students to respond to the alumni survey

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: Medium

Implementation Description: Fall 2008

Responsible Person/Group: All paralegal faculty

Job interviewing skills, resume, cover letter

Faculty must teach job interviewing skills and must have the students submit a resume and cover letter in the PLS 490 Advanced Paralegalism senior capstone course. Some faculty have failed to cover this most important aspect.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Fall 2008

Responsible Person/Group: All paralegal faculty

Reassess the legal research exit exam

The legal research exit exam will be reassessed to determine exactly what concepts our students are having difficulty with.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: Finished

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Fall 2008

Responsible Person/Group: All paralegal faculty

Research Assignments given in most PLS courses

Legal research assignments should be given in most paralegal courses in order to hone our students` legal researching skills.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Fall 2008

Responsible Person/Group: All paralegal faculty

Submission of sr portfolios, surveys, exit exams

Faculty teaching the PLS 490 Advanced Paralegalism senior capstone course must timely assign the senior portfolio to the students at the beginning of the semester. Additionally, they must collect the senior portfolios, exit surveys, and exit exams to be graded. Our data is skewed because not all students submitted a senior portfolio or because the students had such short notice that the quality is poor.

Established in Cycle: 2007-2008

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Fall 2008

Responsible Person/Group: All paralegal faculty who teach PLS 490

Legal researching skills

In an attempt to improve the scores of the legal research exit exam, the exam results will be re-examined to determine exactly what concepts our students are having difficulty with. Additionally, the exam itself will be examined to determine if any questions are ambiguous or are simply not a good measure of a student's knowledge of researching skills. The legal research exit exam is largely one that was developed by the American Association for Paralegal Educators (AAfPE) many years ago. The legal researching instructor and the director will review the exam and refine it so that the questions asked would be more indicative of the concepts that students should have mastered in legal research.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

Implementation Status: Finished

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Legal Research Exit Exam | **Outcome/Objective:** Research and create a legal memorandum

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?

One of the strengths of the paralegal program is the students' ability to compose legal documents, specifically legal memorandums. For 2011-2012, 89% (17/19) of the Hattiesburg students received a score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for the legal memorandum which is turned in as a part of their senior portfolio during the senior capstone class, PLS 490 Advanced Paralegalism. While this was slightly down from the 100% of Hattiesburg students doing such in 2010-2011, the Gulf Coast students did not meet the goal with only 50% of the students receiving a score of 70 or better. This number is actually deceiving, however, due to the fact that only two students completed the PLS 490 class and one student just simply did not turn in the legal memorandum so no grade could be given on the memorandum. Students continue to consistently report on exit surveys that they feel their paralegal education at Southern Miss has prepared them to draft basic legal documents, the ability of which is the cornerstone of a good paralegal.

Additionally, in years past, our students did not fare well when it came to the legal research exit exam. While the legal drafting skills of our students are unquestioned, the students appeared to be having difficulty with the exit exam in legal research. This year, however, our students have turned a corner. In 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, the program did not meet its goal of having 80% of graduating seniors scoring 70% or better on the legal research exit examination. In fact, for 2009-2010, only 55% (6 of 11) of Hattiesburg students and 40% of Gulf Coast students scored 70% or better. For 2010-2011, the students improved slightly with 63% (12/19) of Hattiesburg students and 100% of Gulf Coast students scoring 70% or better. This academic year 2011-2012, 79% (15/19) of Hattiesburg students scored 70% while only 50% (1/2) of the Gulf Coast students scored 70%. The program's continual emphasis on legal research and drafting is paying off.

The job market outlook has increased dramatically for paralegals. Only 38% of responding alumni (class of calendar year 2009) reported on an alumni survey that they were employed within the legal profession as a working paralegal or in another legal capacity within six months of graduation. However, 75% of responding alumni (class of calendar year 2010 - 12 of 22 graduates responded) reported that they were employed within the legal profession. Additionally, 8% worked in another field and 17% were continuing their education. The increased emphasis on paralegal internships to provide our students with work experience and emphasis on job interviewing skills could account for this increase.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

Our program will need to continue its emphasis on ethics throughout the curriculum. For the first time in three years, our program failed to meet its target goal of having 80% of its graduating seniors score 70% or better on the exit assessment examination in ethics. In 2009-2010, 82% (9/11) of Hattiesburg students and 100% of Gulf Coast students scored 70% or better. In 2010-2011, 84% (16/19) of Hattiesburg students and 100% of Gulf Coast students scored 70% or better. However, in 2011-2012, only 74% (14/19) of Hattiesburg students scored 70% or better. The Gulf Coast, however, continued to meet the goal at 100%. The 10% decrease is troubling and the program will ramp up its efforts to bring more ethical discussions into the classroom.

Annual Report Section Responses

Program Summary

The paralegal program has continued its efforts to recruit, retain, and engage our students. The program is continuing to increase its presence in the high schools of south Mississippi through career day events and discussions with high school guidance counselors to educate them about the paralegal field. The Paralegal Society had an active year with various social events throughout the year as well as guest speakers at its meetings. Among the speakers this year was Judge Deborah Gambrell, the first African American female Chancellor in Forrest and Perry County, as well as University General Counsel for former Forrest/Perry County District Attorney Jon Mark Weathers. This organization also facilitated a visit to the Mississippi Supreme Court in Jackson to view an oral appellate argument.

The faculty has encouraged students to participate in the paralegal internship course in order to actively engage the students in working in law offices and other legal environments. The internship is invaluable in providing students with some actual work experience which could assist them in finding employment after graduation. In many instances, the employer hosting the intern will ultimately offer the student work upon graduation. To that end, the Director has met with local attorneys to discuss the benefits of having a student intern and has several firms who are committed to accepting our paralegal student interns. Likewise, former paralegal graduates have returned to campus to speak to students and have encouraged students to consider the internship course. As a result of these concerted efforts, enrollment in the internship courses has seen a marked increase.

For example, during 2009-2010, only 5 students participated in internships. During 2010-2011, that number more than doubled to 12. During 2011-2012 alone, we had 19 students participating in internships; 10 were enrolled in spring alone. The program would like to continue this trend; it is vital to our graduates finding work upon graduation.

The program had another USM student to place in the Mississippi Paralegal Association Essay Contest for 2011 - Rachel Lowery won third place and was given a cash prize and recognized at a luncheon hosted by the Mississippi Paralegal Association. This is the fourth year in a row that students from our paralegal program have placed in this essay contest.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The faculty have been working on a number of plans to improve student learning generally including encouraging legal research assignments in most paralegal classes, encouraging students to enroll in the paralegal internship course, and emphasizing legal ethics across the curriculum. The faculty have also been working on student recruitment of high school and community college transfer students. Indeed, the faculty have continued the Director's plan (developed in 2009) to increase enrollment in the program through a three-pronged approach: 1) distributing USM paralegal program brochures to area high schools and persons inquiring about our program; 2) speaking at local high schools on career days; and 3) working with local junior colleges to attract more transfer students.

Closing the Loop

The faculty has been working on a number of plans to improve student learning generally, including encouraging legal research assignments in most paralegal classes, reassessing the legal research exit exam, encouraging students to enroll in the paralegal internship course, and emphasizing legal ethics across the

curriculum. The faculty has also been working on student recruitment of high school and community college transfer students.

The paralegal program has continued to emphasize legal research assignments in most paralegal classes. This emphasis has worked as one of the strengths of the paralegal program is the students' ability to compose legal documents, specifically legal memorandums. However, there was a slight decrease from 2010-2011. For 2011-2012, 89% (17/19) of the Hattiesburg students received a score of 70 or better on the grading rubric for the legal memorandum which is turned in as a part of their senior portfolio during the senior capstone class, PLS 490 Advanced Paralegalism. While this was slightly down from the 100% of Hattiesburg students doing such in 2010-2011, the Gulf Coast students did not meet the goal with only 50% of the students receiving a score of 70 or better. This number is actually deceiving, however, due to the fact that only two students completed the PLS 490 class and one student just simply did not turn in the legal memorandum so no grade could be given on the memorandum. Despite the decrease, students continue to consistently report on exit surveys that they feel their paralegal education at Southern Miss has prepared them to draft basic legal documents, the ability of which is the cornerstone of a good paralegal.

While the legal drafting skills of our students are unquestioned, in years past, our students did not fare well when it came to the legal research exit exam. The exam itself is one that was developed many years ago by the American Association for Paralegal Educators (AAfPE). One of the action plans completed in a previous cycle was a thorough examination of the exit exam in legal research. Indeed, the test was changed to more closely correspond to the concepts and skills learned in legal research classes here at USM. This review was performed in the Fall of 2010 and what was once a 15 question legal research exit exam is now 24 questions. Despite the changes, it appeared that improvement was slow in coming. This year, however, our students have turned a corner and have improved over the previous years. In 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, the program did not meet its goal of having 80% of graduating seniors scoring 70% or better on the legal research exit examination. In fact, for 2009-2010, only 55% (6 of 11) of Hattiesburg students and 40% of Gulf Coast students scored 70% or better. For 2010-2011, the students improved slightly with 63% (12/19) of Hattiesburg students and 100% of Gulf Coast students scoring 70% or better. This academic year 2011-2012, 79% (15/19) of Hattiesburg students scored 70% while only 50% (1/2) of the Gulf Coast students scored 70%. The program's continual emphasis on legal research and drafting is paying off.

The faculty has encouraged students to participate in the paralegal internship course in order to actively engage the students in working in law offices and other legal environments. The internship is invaluable in providing students with some actual work experience which could assist them in finding employment after graduation. In many instances, the employer hosting the intern will ultimately offer the student work upon graduation. To that end, the Director has met with local attorneys to discuss the benefits of having a student intern and has several firms who are committed to accepting our paralegal student interns. Likewise, former paralegal graduates have returned to campus to speak to students and have encouraged students to consider the internship course. As a result of these concerted efforts, enrollment in the internship courses has seen a marked increase. For example, during 2009-2010, only 5 students participated in internships. During 2010-2011, that number more than doubled to 12. During 2011-2012 alone, we had 19 students participating in internships; 10 were enrolled in spring alone. The program would like to continue this trend; it is vital to our graduates finding work upon graduation.

The faculty's emphasis on job interviewing skills and perfecting the resume and cover letter has shown some benefits. Previously, the job market outlook was bleak for paralegal graduates with only 38% of responding alumni (class of calendar year 2009) reporting on an alumni survey that they were employed within the legal profession as a working paralegal or in another legal capacity within six months of graduation. However, 75% of responding alumni (class of calendar year 2010 - 12 of 22 graduates responded) reported that they were employed within the legal profession. Additionally, 8% worked in another field and 17% were continuing their education. The increased emphasis on paralegal internships to provide our students with work experience and emphasis on job interviewing skills could account for this increase.