

August 28, 2017

To: Academic committees and officers, University of Louisville  
From: Rodger A. Payne, Department Chair  
Re: Proposed closure of Paralegal Studies Program

The Department of Political Science voted in its April 2017 faculty meeting to recommend closure of the Paralegal Studies program. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Kimberly Kempf-Leonard, has recommended this action. As explained below, the specific recommendation is to end the Associates of Arts degree program and to stop teaching all Paralegal Studies courses by the end of calendar year 2018.

For several decades, the Paralegal Studies program has been part of the Political Science department, but the training is not generally included in a political science curriculum. This is true at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Indeed, Paralegal programs are often headquartered in Business Schools, Criminal Justice programs, Legal Studies programs, and even Law Schools.

The program and Associates degree are approved by the American Bar Association. Years ago, Paralegal was a fast-growing field and the program attracted many more students than it currently does. Indeed, to help retain those students at the University, the Department developed a BS with a Track in Paralegal Studies, which requires 30 hours in Political Science. The BS is not ABA approved, it is a regular Political Science degree accredited by SACS.

The full-time Paralegal Studies program director position has been vacant for about one year as the previous administrator departed for a doctoral studies program in August 2016. The department conducted a national search to fill this position. However, the top candidate declined the UofL job offer just prior to the hiring freeze implemented in spring 2017. There are no current plans to fill the position. It is the Department's understanding that the line has been removed by the College from the Paralegal budget.

However, ABA standards require that the program be directed by a full-time University employee who "must possess appropriate education, knowledge, and experience." Political Science has historically employed a specialized staff director of the program. Over the past 25 years, the program has either been directed by a person with a master's degree in Business or someone with a Law degree. No current Political Science faculty or staff member has expertise or experience in Paralegal Studies. Assistant Professor Michael Losavio of Criminal Justice, who has a J.D. and previously taught Paralegal courses, has been serving as Acting Director for the past year. He is apparently not interested in directing the program over the long-haul.

The Paralegal program minimally costs about \$100,000 per year to operate in a manner consistent with ABA standards. About half of that (which does not include benefits) is the amount allocated to a full-time director. About \$24,000 in state funds remain in the current Paralegal budget, which is sufficient to pay the annual Lexis-Nexis cost (about \$5000), plus hire

about six part-time lecturers (PTLs). A few courses are offered online (the ABA precludes an on-line degree) and these classes have generated sufficient revenue to finance the other necessary courses. Even though the program course costs may seem self-sustaining, the program needs a full-time director to monitor developments in the field and manage the program. Instructors must be hired, evaluated, and sometimes fired. Studies must be recruited, advised, and matched with required intern opportunities. The current arrangement that the program has with the ABA virtually precludes offering the introductory courses online, though these classes have the largest enrollments and could potentially recruit remote students.

The ABA requires payment of annual dues and conducts university-funded site visits every seven years. There are other ABA costs as well, including fees collected to change program directors, add new courses, or even to close the program. The Political Science department has typically picked up these costs in the past, but budget cuts have made that prohibitive.

Beyond the director staffing and budgetary problems, there are additional good reasons to close the program:

- Paralegal Studies offers the only Associates degree at the University of Louisville. As UofL transformed into a major research University, it dropped all other AA degree programs. Moreover, none of the University's ACC peers offer an undergraduate degree in Paralegal studies, though Syracuse's University College program offers a Legal Studies degree. Five other ACC schools offer Continuing Education Paralegal programs. None of those programs are ABA approved and some of them are conducted mostly online. Put differently, these peer institutions provide programs that are not readily comparable to the existing UofL program – likely at reduced costs because of the lack of ABA approval and greater use of distance education.
- Enrollments in Paralegal Studies have been declining for some years. Since the 2012-13 academic year, the number of students in all courses has declined from 412, to 382 (2013-14), to 340 (2014-15), to 275 (2015-16), to 184 (2016-17). During the five academic years from fall 2010 through spring 2015, the program averaged about 375 students enrolled annually in all courses. The past two academic years, the average has plummeted to 230, about a 37% decline. Fall 2017 enrollments are not strong.
- The awarding of AA degrees is declining. The decline in enrollment likely explains this reality. In the four years starting with AY 2012-2013, the average number of AA degrees granted annually was almost 25. In 2016-17, the program graduated 15 students, a 40% reduction. We anticipate a similar number of graduates in 2017-18.
- The program is entirely dependent upon part-time lecturers, a form of instruction that the College and University are trying to reduce. None of the Paralegal classes are taught by tenure track faculty in the University. This is largely because Political Science faculty are not trained in Paralegal Studies; again, it is not part of the curriculum in graduate schools. Historically, virtually all Paralegal instructors have been lawyers hired to teach part-time in the evenings. Current University President Greg Postel has signaled his intention to revisit Phi Beta Kappa, which dinged the University in the prior evaluation for its over-reliance upon contingent faculty.

Working with A&S advisors, Michael Losavio, program coordinator Amanda LeDuke, and I have developed a teach out strategy for the Paralegal Studies program. All students who entered the program in Fall 2017 will be able to complete their Paralegal courses by the end of the fall 2018 term. Many will still need various general education courses to complete their degrees, but the program of Paralegal instruction could close effective January 1, 2019.

Paralegal Studies does not plan to offer introductory courses during the calendar year 2018, which will effectively stop the inflow of new students to the program. Transfers who have sufficient credits to complete the specialized courses by December 2018 would be accepted on a case-by-case basis.

There is no reason to end the Political Science BS degree with a Track in Paralegal Studies. It should still be available to AA degree students seeking a bachelor's degree, whether past or current UofL students, as well as possible future transfer students.