

LEGAL ASSISTANT STUDIES

PROGRAM REVIEW 2002-2003

A. Introduction

The Bachelor of Arts in Legal Assistant Studies is a degree offered within the Political Science department. Valdosta State University is the only institution in the University System of Georgia that offers baccalaureate degree in Legal Assistant Studies. The degree program is designed to prepare students to work in the legal environment of our region, state and nation. The basic skills of critical reasoning, independent thinking, communication, and collaborative and creative thinking are emphasized in the curriculum in order to prepare students to enter the workplace with confidence. The program fulfills the mission of Valdosta State University by providing a professional program at the baccalaureate level. The mission of Valdosta State University is further fulfilled by meeting this region's need for outstanding members of the legal community. The unique nature of this program within the University system of Georgia has a magnet effect beyond the region. Graduates of this program find employment in this region and beyond.

Other departments involved in the delivery of the program include Criminal Justice, English, Adult and Continuing Education, and Philosophy. In addition, all Legal Assistant Studies majors are required to complete a concentration in a related discipline which often leads to a minor in the related area.

B. Students

The number of majors and graduates for the three-year reporting period exceeds the trigger points for the program review. The students who choose Legal Assistant Studies as a major come from diverse backgrounds. Many traditional students choose the major in order to enhance their entry into the legal environment. Many students already employed in the legal community choose Legal Assistant Studies in order to enhance their skills and opportunities for advancement in their chosen profession. Many non-traditional students seek this degree. Students who have already attained a baccalaureate degree in another discipline return to Valdosta State University to seek the Legal Assistant Studies degree in order to enhance their employment opportunities.

There is currently no professional or qualifying examination required for legal assistants to be able to practice in the United States. However, the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) does offer a voluntary national certification program to legal assistants. Upon successful completion of the examination, a qualified individual may use the designation—Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) as statement to the legal profession and to the public that the person has met the high levels of knowledge and professionalism required by NALA. Graduates of Valdosta State University's Legal Assistant Studies program are eligible to take this examination because the degree program meets the NALA standards. Data has not been maintained on the rates of passage for graduates of this program, nor is that data available from NALA.

c. **Faculty and Staff**

One faculty member is devoted full time to the maintenance and development of this program. Her teaching time is divided between Legal Assistant Studies and Political Science in approximately a 3:1 ratio. Various members of the local bar association have lent their expertise and time to the program as adjunct faculty. A diverse list of professionals is maintained in order to assure a good match between expertise in a specific area of the law and course requirements. The student faculty ratio for Legal Assistant Studies courses is 1/57, 1/33 and 1/29 for the reporting period. Average class sizes for the reporting period are 19, 18 and 13.

D. **Curriculum**

Core Curriculum Areas A-E

Core Curriculum Area F

LEAS 1100 Introduction to Legal Assistant Studies

CRJU 3200 Judicial Process

PHIL 2020 Logic and Critical Thinking

MFL Foreign Language and Culture

Senior College Curriculum

Supporting Courses

ACED 2400 Computer Technology for the Workplace

ENGL 3030 Writing for the Legal and Social Science Professions

Courses Required For The Major

LEAS 3200 Legal Research I

LEAS 3201 Legal Research II

LEAS 4900 Internship

Five Required From The Following Upper Division LEAS Courses

LEAS 3210 Pre-Trial Preparations and Procedures

LEAS 3220 Business Entities

LEAS 3230 Criminal Law for the Paralegal

LEAS 3240 Civil and Criminal Procedure

LEAS 4200 Family Law
LEAS 4210 Consumer Law
LEAS 4220 Administrative Law
LEAS 4230 The Law of Real Property Transactions
LEAS 4250 Trial Advocacy

Area of Concentration and/or Elective Courses

Must include 9 hours in a related field outside of LEAS

The Arts and Sciences core curriculum is required of all Legal Assistant Studies students in order to prepare them to succeed in the senior college curriculum and in their future employment. Area F, Courses Appropriate to the Major, includes an introduction to the discipline which specifically addresses the particular needs of the legal environment and ethical issues. Judicial Process, offered by the Criminal Justice department exposes the student to another discipline's approach to legal issues. Logic and Critical Thinking, offered by the Philosophy department, emphasizes those skills necessary to succeed in the legal environment. Legal Assistant Studies students are encouraged to choose Latin to fulfill their Foreign Language requirement because of its particular relevance to the legal area.

The senior college curriculum is narrowly tailored to meet the needs of students who anticipate employment in the legal environment. Computer Technology for the Workplace ensures the development of workplace skills. The Legal Writing course, offered by the English department, focuses on strategies used to write clear and effective legal communications. Two semesters of Legal Research gives the students the necessary skills to complete complex legal research agendas. The first semester teaches the system of legal research used in the United States today The second semester consists of individual instruction and completion of individual research projects by each student. The requirement of an internship experience places the student in a setting that allows them to experience the workplace. Students then choose five specific courses that each cover a legal topic. The role of the paralegal in each of these practice areas is emphasized. An Area of Concentration outside of Legal Assistant Studies is required in order to expose the students to upper division work in another discipline that relates to their major.

The nine upper division Legal Assistant Studies courses have been offered in the following rotation for the reporting period:

Fall 1999-Consumer Law and Trial Advocacy
Spring 2000- Pre-Trial Preparation and Administrative Law
Summer 2000- Family Law
Fall 2000- Business Entities and Trial Advocacy
Spring 2001- Criminal Law for the Paralegal and Civil and Criminal Procedure
Summer 2001- The Law of Real Property Transactions
Fall 2001-Trial Advocacy and Consumer Law

Spring 2002-Administrative Law and Pre-Trial Preparation and Procedures

Summer 2002-Family Law

Fall 2002-Trial Advocacy and Business Entities

Legal Research I is offered every fall semester and is a prerequisite for Legal Research II which is offered every spring semester. Internships are available every semester. Introduction to Legal Assistant Studies is a prerequisite for all upper division Legal Assistant Studies course and is offered fall and spring semesters. Many Legal Assistant Studies students are employed during the day, so all upper division courses are offered in the evening. Students express concern about the availability of core course in the evening. The required courses taught by the English, Criminal Justice and Philosophy departments also need to be offered during the evening at least once a year.

E. Other Learning and Service Activities

All Legal Assistant Studies majors are carefully advised every semester. Over the three years reporting period all existing seniors evaluated both the availability and helpfulness of the academic advisor to be either good or excellent.

All Legal Assistant Studies major are required to complete a supervised internship experience, each student is interviewed regarding their expectations and particular interests and then recommendations are made for internship opportunities. Over the three years reporting period all existing seniors evaluated their internship experience are either good or excellent. The faculty supervisor frequently visits and evaluates.

F. Facilities Budget and Resources

Table 1
Classroom Space

	West Hall 250	West Hall 256	West Hall 305	West Hall 140 (Lab)
Seats	80	40	40	22
Computer*	0	1 for Instructor	0	21 + 1 for Instructor

*Rooms 250 and 305 should have computers by the end of the semester

All three of the classrooms have adequate space for teaching and learning and are in good condition. The computer in West Hall 256 is loaded with the software necessary for instructional presentations such as PowerPoint and is also connected to the internet. This computer can then be projected onto a screen in front of the room for classroom presentations. When rooms 250 and 305 are equipped with computers they will also be loaded with the software necessary for instruction.

Our lab, West Hall 140, has a sufficient number (21) of computers for a classroom, and the instructor's computer at the front of the room can be projected onto a screen. This enables the instructor to not only make presentations to the class, but to also lead students through computer exercises. The lab also has a scanner, printer, copier and a VCR/TV cart. The drawback to WH 140 is that the computers ring the outer perimeter of the classroom and face the walls. This arrangement is not conducive to effective instruction as the students must turn away from their computers in order to watch and listen to the instructor.

We have also reached an agreement with the Chemistry (department) to schedule classes in Science Building, Room 3910. This lab has 24 new computers arranged in rows facing the front of the class which is more suitable for instruction. The

drawback to this lab is that it does not have a projector which would enable the instructor to project his or her work on a screen for instruction. The estimated cost for installing a projector is \$3,000. It would also cost additional dollars to have SPSS (statistics software) installed on these computers.

Office Space and Computer Resources

Our full-time faculty member has an office space equipped with a Pentium II computer with a printer. Our departmental secretary has a computer, and we also have one computer to be shared by a 3 student assistants. The department has an up-to-date Xerox copier, two Hewlett-Packard black and white Laser Jet Printers and a Hewlett-Packard color Laser Jet Printer.

Library Resources

The VSU library contains adequate material to perform legal research on Georgia issues. The Federal legal materials are adequate. VSU students have access to Lexis-Nexis, allowing this to perform CALR (computer-assisted legal research) while they are on campus. Other books and reference texts relating to law are maintained by our library.

In addition to hard copy holdings of professional journals, students and faculty have access to full-text online sources of professional journals (many of which we do not own locally) through GALILEO, the virtual library of the University System of Georgia. A World Wide Web-based virtual library, GALILEO provides access to multiple information resources, including secured access to licensed products. Faculty and students at participating institutions may access over 100 databases indexing thousands of periodicals and scholarly journals. Over 2000 journal titles are provided in full text. GALILEO can be accessed from faculty office, student labs, the library, or remote access from home.

The library also has *Georgia Law on Disc*, which is the collection of Georgia statutes on CD-Rom. Finally, the library is Government Document Repository, which means the library has extensive holdings of documents produced by the federal government.

In terms of physical resources available to faculty and students, the computer has 150 computer terminals (including a lab) for research within the physical space of the library.

G. Conclusions

- 1) Centrality of program to VSU mission
- 2) Productivity of program
- 3) Quality of program outcomes
- 4) Viability of program

APPENDIX

Table B.1. Number of degrees conferred each year

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	2000	2001	2002	Average Number of Degrees Awarded Annually for the Three Year Period
Baccalaureate Degrees Earned	9	9	14	10.66

Table B.2. Number of declared full-time and part-time majors each fall semester

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	Average Enrollment for the Three Year Period
Total full time students enrolled	25	26	22	24.33
Total part time students enrolled	6	15	12	11
Total Enrollment in the major	31	41	34	35.33

Table B.4. Credit hours generated in the major

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	Average
Credit hours in major (1000 and 2000) courses	75	66	33	
Credit hours in major (3000 level) courses	144	213	78	
Credit hours in major (4000 level) courses	258	144	225	
Total credit hours in major courses	477	423	336	

Table B.5. Credit hours generated outside the major

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	Average
Credit hours in service (1000 and 2000) courses				
Credit hours in service (3000 level) courses				
Credit hours in service (4000 level) courses				
Total credit hours in service courses				

Table B.9. Enrollment Summary Table

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	Average
Total credit hours (major plus service)				
Total Enrollment in the major	52	55	43	50
Total Degrees conferred in the program*	9	9	14	10.66

Table B.10. Student Academic Selectivity and Success

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Average SAT of majors each fall semester	1090	970	0
Percent of applications accepted each fall semester	71.4	61.5	71.4
Average GPA of majors each fall semester	3.48	2.30	3.42

Table B.11. Student Diversity

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Total Bachelors	52	55	43
Number of Male Students	2	5	6
Number of Female Students	50	50	37
Percent of Male Students	3.8	9.1	14.0
Percent of Female Students	96.2	90.9	96.0
Number of African American Students	16	18	14
Number of Asian/Pacific Islander Students	1	1	0
Number of Caucasian Students	34	35	28
Number of Multiracial Students	1	1	1
Percent of African American Students	30.8	32.7	32.6
Percent of Asian/Pacific Islander Students	1.9	1.8	0
Percent of Caucasian Students	65.4	63.6	65.1
Percent of Multiracial Students	1.9	1.8	2.3

Part C. Faculty and Staff

Table C.1. Faculty Ratios

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Number Full time Faculty	2	1	1
Number Part Time Faculty	1	4	3
Percent Full time Faculty	66.7%	20%	25%
Percent Part Time Faculty	33.3%	80%	75%
Student/Faculty Ratio	57/1	33/1	29/1
Average Class Size	19	18	13

Table C.2 Faculty Positions Earned Report

Program : Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000		2000-2001			2001-2002	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring
Faculty positions earned	.218	.218	.216	.203	.067	.158	.153

Note: * As reported in the Semester Enrollment Analysis

Part E.

Table E.1 Advising

Program: Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000		2000-2001		2001-2002	
	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Availability of Academic Advising		100%	25%	75%		100%
Helpfulness of Academic Advising	50%	50%	13%	88%	25%	75%

Table E.2 Internship Experience

Program: Legal Assistant Studies	1999-2000		2000-2001		2001-2002	
	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent
	63%	38%	43%	57%	60%	40%

VII. Appendix: Determining Actual and “Earned” EFT Faculty and Staff

The reporting period for a given Fiscal Year includes Fall Semester and the following Spring Semester and Summer terms I, II, III, and IV.

Date to be collected from Departments and Programs by September 1 ANNUALLY for preceding academic year:

1. Number of 12-month faculty (0)
2. Number of 10-month faculty (tenured or tenure-track) (1)
3. Number of non-tenure track (including full-time temps and lab coordinators) (0)
4. Number of credit hours taught in the summer terms by regular faculty, excluding that taught by 12-month faculty.(0)
5. Number of credit hours of coursed taught by part-timers for all reporting periods (222)
6. Total credit hours taught by faculty in courses with prefixes outside the departments (i.e., AFAM, HONS, INTL, PERS, SCI, WS. etc.) (141)
7. Total fraction of faculty positions bought out by external grants (0)
8. Total number (and fraction) of staff positions (secretary, computer coordinator, etc., but not student assistants) (0)
9. Number and associated credit hours of courses taught off campus. (Do not include Kings Bay courses taught at the Core level unless one of your on-campus faculty taught the course.) (0)

- Actual EFT (see XI Determining Actual and Earned EFT Faculty and Staff)
- Earned EFT (see XI Determining Actual and Earned EFT Faculty and Staff)

Calculating Actual EFT – Formula

$$\begin{aligned} & [\# \text{ of 12-month faculty} \times 1.0] + \\ & [\# \text{ of 10-month faculty} \times 0.75] + \\ & [\# \text{ of credit hours taught by part-time faculty} / 36] + \\ & [\# \text{ of credit hours taught in summer by non 12-month dept. faculty} / 36] - \\ & [\text{fraction of EFT funded by external grants}] = \underline{\# \text{ of actual EFT faculty}} \end{aligned}$$

For the Earned EFT Faculty, See Faculty Positions Earned Formula in the VSU Fact Book. Use the data on detailed credit hour production given in the VSU Fact Book for the preceding fiscal year. However, credit hours generated by interdisciplinary courses needed to be allocated to the departments of the instructor(s) of record.

For Earned EFT Staff, the ratios of EFT Faculty Positions Earned to EFT Staff Positions Earned are as follows:

Group 1	3.7
Group 2	3.4
Group 3	2.8
Group 4	3.7
Group 5	1.9