

PARALEGAL STUDIES



2018-19 Program Review – Career Education

Program Overview

Please verify the mission statement for your program. If there is no mission statement listed, please add it here.

The Paralegal Studies Program offers a Paralegal Certificate or AA in Paralegal Studies. The Paralegal Studies Program, previously known as Legal Assisting, was first offered at Merritt College in 1974. The Paralegal performs various legal tasks and provides staff support for attorneys in a law office or legal environment, including conducting research, drafting legal documents, preparing attorneys for trial/depositions and other legal tasks. The mission of the Paralegal Studies program is to:

- **Provide students with the education, skills, knowledge and training to enable the students to perform as top level Paralegals in the legal community**
- **Educate and train students to draft legal documents, conduct legal research and perform other legal tasks**
- **Prepare students for the law office work environment and how to effectively communicate and interact with attorneys**
- **Provide students with a basic understanding of law and the legal profession, the state and federal court structures and the justice system**
- **Educate students in areas of substantive law, including Family Law, Criminal Law, Tort Law, Estate Planning and Probate Procedure, Legal Research and Business Law**

List your Faculty and/or Staff

Faculty:

- **Linnea N. Willis (Contract 1.0 Full Time)**
- **Jerry Skomer (Contract 0.6/9 unit load)**
- **Asha Wilkerson (Part Time)**

PARALEGAL STUDIES

The Program Goals below are from your most recent Program Review or APU. If none are listed, please add your most recent program goals. Then, indicate the status of this goal, and which College and District goal your program goal aligns to. If your goal has been completed, please answer the follow up question regarding how you measured the achievement of this goal.

See 2017-2018 APU for Alignment to College and District Goals, how to measure, etc. All goals are in progress:

- 1. Obtain ABA Approval/Accreditation for the Program**
- 2. Revitalize/Remodel P218 – the Largest SmartClassroom Computer Lab on Campus – new computers, rewiring and new furniture**
- 3. Obtain permanent funds to hire student assistants/tutors and Instructional Aid to assist students with their research and writing assignments and also as an instructional aid to faculty. And also to assist students with their online/hybrid courses now that courses are offered online.**
- 4. Curriculum Development – Create Transferable Legal Studies Degree, Courses to Align with ABA Approval/Accreditation, Courses for Pathway to Law School and Certificate for Alameda County Superior Court Partnership**
- 5. Marketing Materials –better market the program with better website, brochures and other marketing materials**
- 6. Provide monies for the Paralegal Professors to Attend Professional Development Conference – specifically the American Association for Paralegal Educators (aaFpe) national and/or regional conferences**
- 7. Purchase law office technology programs for the students – calendaring, billing, timekeeping and case management software**

Describe your current utilization of facilities, including labs and other space

We currently use mostly P218 computer lab/smart classroom. This is the largest computer lab and smart classroom on campus, but is in dire need of renovations and improvement.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Career Education

Using the [LaunchBoard](#) what are the job placement rates for your program for the past three years? (What % of your graduates have secured employment in the field within 3 months of leaving the program?). Note: you will need to establish a username and password for the LaunchBoard if you don't already have one.

2014-15 Job Placement %	% Employed in the field within 3 months	2015-16 Job Placement %	% Employed in the field within 3 months	2016-17 Job Placement %	% Employed in the field within 3 months
87	87	64	64	No data	No data

Using the [LaunchBoard](#), what are the projected job openings in your discipline for the next three years?

The Paralegal jobs are growing and continue to grow. We received an aWilkerson/gold stars in relation to our goals and in relation to our students obtaining jobs that pay well after leaving Merritt College.

How is your discipline or program responding with regard to changes in labor market demand?

We are up to date with changes in the market demand. This is why we are modifying certificates and creating partnerships such as the Alameda County Superior Court training program.

Do you have an industry advisory board in place?

Yes. There is an Advisory Board comprised of attorneys, judges and persons in the community.

Has your industry advisory board met regularly (at least once per quarter or semester)?

Yes. We meet once or twice per year.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Please list of your industry advisory board members.

The current persons are the updated Advisory Board members based on the Advisory Board makeup for the American Bar Association (ABA) Accreditation standards:

- 1. Honorable Judge Diana Becton, District Attorney of Contra Costa County and former Judge of Contra Costa County Superior Court**
- 2. Honorable Judge Trina Thompson, Alameda County Superior Court Judge**
- 3. Honorable Judge Jennifer Madden, Alameda County Superior Court Judge**
- 4. William Taylor, Attorney and Owner of Taylor & Associates, LLP**
- 5. Adante Pointer, Attorney of the Law Office of John L. Burris**
- 6. Fran Fabien, Paralegal and Former Student**
- 7. Anjanel Marion, Paralegal and Former Student**
- 8. Dr. Rick Ramos, Dean of Allied Health and Public Safety**
- 9. Michael Thompson, Attorney, Real Estate Broker and Treasurer of the National Bar Association**
- 10. Aileen Casanave, Attorney and President of Santa Clara Black Lawyers Association**
- 11. Rene Gamboa, Attorney and Partner at Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard and Smith**
- 12. Vernon Goins, Attorney and Owner of Goins Law Firm and Former Professor at Merritt College**
- 13. Ericka Cassady, Paralegal and Former Student**
- 14. Angela Morgan, Attorney and Owner of Morgan & Associates**
- 15. Rochelle Nadhiri, Senior Manager of Public Relations at Facebook**
- 16. Linnea N. Willis, Professor and Chair of Merritt College Paralegal Studies Department**
- 17. Jerry Skomer, Professor of Merritt College Paralegal Studies Dept and Owner of Alternative Technologies**
- 18. Asha Wilkerson, Professor at Merritt College Paralegal Studies Dept and Owner of Law Office of Asha Wilkerson**

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Please describe the number of activities and recommendations resulting from advisory committee meetings that have occurred in the past three years. What information was presented that required changes to be made to your program?

Advisory Board is the one that made a recommendation/Motion and expresses continued importance for ABA (American Bar Association) Approval. Advisory Board also encourages Alameda County Superior Court partnership, encouraged that we increase our marketing efforts, and influenced the other goals set forth in the first section.

Does your program require state or national licensing? If yes, please specify. What is your college's set standard passing rate for this exam or license? If yes, what is the name of the exam or License? State the set standard pass rate.

We require regional accreditation in order to comply with Cal. Business & Professions Code 6450 which states the parameters for being a certificated Paralegal in California. Approximately 40% of law firms also require that we be ABA approved, which is why this approval is important.

Do your students participate in other third party certifications? If so, please provide their success rates (include the % of completing students successfully getting certified). If yes, what is the third party certification? State the set standard pass rate

Not yet, other than having to have accreditation in order to become a certificated Paralegal in California.

Is your program working with a Deputy Sector Navigator?

Unknown.

If yes, briefly describe your program's work with the Deputy Sector Navigator.

Unknown.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

What programs similar to yours exist in the surrounding area or at nearby East bay colleges? (Micro region in [LaunchBoard](#))

**Cal State East Bay – has a Paralegal Program
SF State and/or SF City College.**

In which ways is your program collaborating with other community colleges in the region?

We coordinate at the national and state levels and through the American Association for Paralegal Educators (AAfPE).

Please list and briefly describe the grant name, granting agency, and the goals of each grant as it relates to you discipline/department/program

Strong Workforce Grant funds are being used.

How is your program using Strong Workforce Funds?

To accomplish each and every one of the goals listed. However, funds have not yet been identified for the revitalization of P218 needed. Also, permanent funds are needed for student assistants/instructional aids for the department.

Enrollment Trends



PARALEGAL STUDIES

[Enrollment Trends Power BI dashboard](#)

Note: Please consider the most recent 3 years when answering the questions below.

Set the filters above to your discipline, and discuss enrollment trends over the past three years

Set the filter above to consider whether the time of day each course is offered meets the needs of students.

We offered more online courses to meet the needs of the students.

Are courses scheduled in a manner that meets student needs and demands? How do you know?

Yes. We schedule courses at night time and online to meet student needs/demands.

Describe effective and innovative teaching strategies used by faculty to increase student learning and engagement.

We use effective online teaching methods. We also provide real life legal writing assignments and assist the students with feedback in doing better in these assignments.

How is technology used by the discipline, department?

We utilize Lexis Nexis Legal Research. We utilize P218, the largest computer lab SmartClassroom on campus. Students complete all of their writing assignments using technology and the internet, even for face to face classes.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

How does the discipline, department, or program maintain the integrity and consistency of academic standards with all methods of delivery, including face to face, hybrid, and Distance Education courses?

By conducting assessment, by continuously improving assignments and student learning.

Curriculum

Please review your course outlines of record in CurricUNet Meta to determine if they have been updated or deactivated in the past three years. Specify when your department will update each one, within the next three years.

Each course that needs updating will be updated within the next 3 years.

CurriQunet Meta

Please summarize the Discipline, Department or program of study plans for curriculum plans for improvement. Below, please provide details for individual course improvement. Add plans for new courses here.

We intend to modify the Department name from Paralegal Studies to Legal Studies – and to create a transferable degree/certificate. This will allow the students to transfer into Legal Studies major and to not waste time taking courses.

We also intend to add additional courses and modify courses for the ABA Approval/Accreditation Process and also for the Pathway to Law School and for the Alameda County Superior Court Certificate Program.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Assessment – Instructional

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

List your Student Learning Outcomes

- 1. Draft Various Legal Documents**
- 2. Conduct Legal Research**
- 3. Perform and Communicate Effective Legal Analysis**
- 4. Communicate Effectively**
- 5. Demonstrate Knowledge of Particular Areas of Law**

Were there any obstacles experienced during assessment? What worked well? (Mainly based on evidence in the report, attach other evidence as necessary)

Not really any obstacles.

The Paralegal Department faculty really enjoy getting together, analyzing student work and conducting assessment. It really helps improve our program as a whole and the classes.

What percent of your programs have been assessed? (mainly based on evidence in the report, attach other evidence as necessary; note: a complete program assessment means all Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) have been assessed for that program)

100% of courses have been assessed. Courses were due for assessment again and were assessed Fall 2018 and Spring 2019. Assessment results need to be entered into CurricuNet

How has your dept worked together on assessment (planning together)? Describe how your dept works well on assessment? Describe things that went well or obstacles. What aspects of assessment work went especially well in your department and what improvements are most needed?

Paralegal Studies Department works very well on assessment and loves the results it produces. We assessed SLO/PLO #3 to Communicate and Perform Effective Legal Analysis

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Collaboration

We get together at least once a year to conduct assessment and discuss improvement steps. We collaborate in our courses in terms of our assignments – so assignments in Parlg 8 and 11 align with each other. Same with assignments from Parlg 1 and 6. We ensure consistency across the board.

Leadership Roles

Linnea N. Willis is the Department Chair and Program Director. The other faculty assist.

Planning Process

We have meetings each semester to plan and discuss areas of improvement.

Dept meetings for Collaboration

Paralegal Department meets each semester to plan and discuss areas of improvement.

Data Analysis

Paralegal Department meets each semester to plan and discuss areas of improvement.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

What were the most important things your department learned from assessment? Did implementation of your action plans result in better student learning? In other words, how has your department used the results of assessment to improve student learning and/or curriculum? Please be as detailed as possible.

The new furniture and completion of the rewiring of P218 (computer lab) is an absolute necessity. All students use this classroom for 80% of all classes and it is important that the furniture and equipment be state of the art. It will cost in excess of \$50,000 for the new furniture and to complete the rewiring.

Each Paralegal Professor will continue to coordinate regarding the subject matter taught in each course, the assignments given, and making sure that instructions given for assignments are consistent throughout the classes, to optimize Paralegal Learning. Parlg 8 Professor (Linnea N. Willis) and Parlg 11 Professor (Asha Wilkerson) will continue to partner together regarding legal research, writing and analysis assignments so that the Motions and other legal analysis/research assignments assigned flow together as the students take each course together concurrently. Parlg 1 Professor (Jerry Skomer) and Parlg 6 Professor (Linnea N. Willis) will also coordinate regarding subject matter taught, assignments given etc. in these two courses as these students take the classes concurrently.

Additional Computer Software is needed to purchase for Parlg 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 16 (at least \$80,000)

The Department needs to obtain ABA Approval to increase number of student population to the Paralegal Department and the general education population, and also to increase the reputation of Merritt College in the legal community. Some employers will only hire Paralegals who attended/obtained a degree from an ABA Approved Institution. It is best to obtain ABA Approval. This is being worked on but additional funds are needed to complete the approval process, the Application for Approval and to bring the approval team here for a site visit (approximately \$20,000 needed).

In addition, Professors for Parlg 4, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16 will also coordinate consistently with Professors for Parlg 1, 6, 8, 11 to ensure that writing assignments etc. are given in the substantive courses and to ensure that students have opportunities to learn substantive areas of law within each course.

Does your department participate in the assessment of multidisciplinary programs? If Yes, Describe your department's participation and what you learned from the assessment of the program that was applicable to your own discipline.

Unknown.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Does your department participate in your college's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) assessment? If Yes, Please describe your departments participation in assessing Institutional Learning Outcomes.

Yes. Linnea N. Willis is part of College Council and the Budget Committee Chair and is part of this.

What support does your department need from administrators, assessment coordinators and/or your campus assessment committee to continue to make progress in assessment of outcomes and implementation of action plans?

N/A

Please verify the mission statement for your program. If there is no mission statement listed, please add it here.

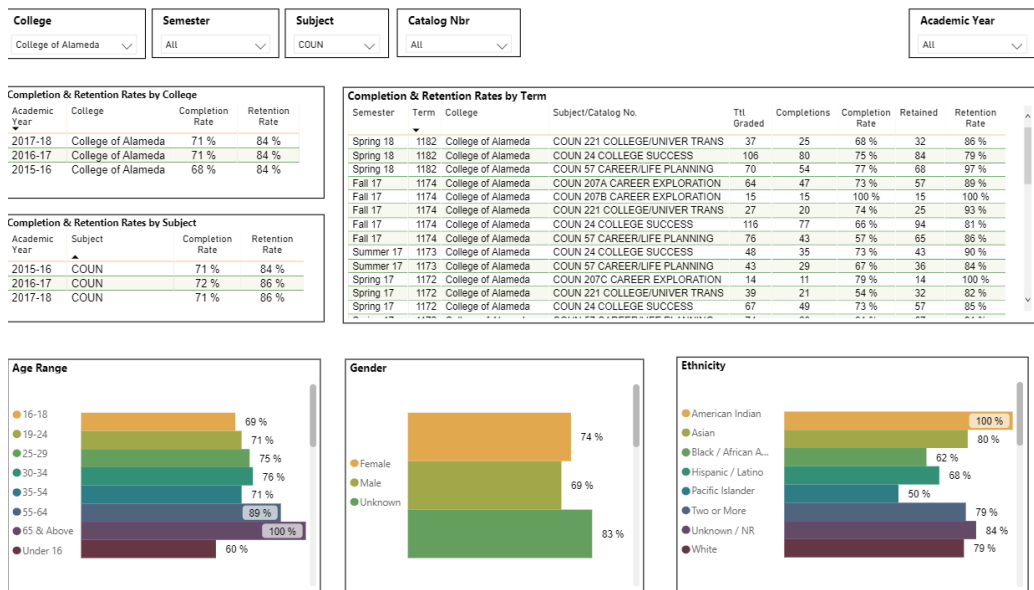
The Paralegal Studies Program offers a Paralegal Certificate or AA in Paralegal Studies. The Paralegal Studies Program, previously known as Legal Assisting, was first offered at Merritt College in 1974. The Paralegal performs various legal tasks and provides staff support for attorneys in a law office or legal environment, including conducting research, drafting legal documents, preparing attorneys for trial/depositions and other legal tasks.

The mission of the Paralegal Studies program is to:

- **Provide students with the education, skills, knowledge and training to enable the students to perform as top level Paralegals in the legal community**
- **Educate and train students to draft legal documents, conduct legal research and perform other legal tasks**
- **Prepare students for the law office work environment and how to effectively communicate and interact with attorneys**
- **Provide students with a basic understanding of law and the legal profession, the state and federal court structures and the justice system**
- **Educate students in areas of substantive law, including Family Law, Criminal Law, Tort Law, Estate Planning and Probate Procedure, Legal Research and Business Law**

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Course Completion



Course Completion Power BI Dashboard

Consider your course completion rates over the past three years (% of student who earned a grade of "C" or better).

Use the filters on the top and right of the graphs to disaggregate your program or discipline data. When disaggregated, are there any groups whose course completion rate falls more than 3% points below the discipline average? If so, indicate yes and explain what your department is doing to address the disproportionate impact for the group.

Age

Ethnicity

Gender

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Foster Youth Status

Disability Status

Low Income Status

Veteran Status

Consider your course completion rates over the past three years by mode of instruction. What do you observe?

Face-to-Face

Hybrid

100% Online

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Dual Enrollment

Day time

Evening

How do the course completion rates for your program or discipline compare to your college's Institution-Set Standard for course completion?

How do the department's Hybrid course completion rates compare to the college course completion standard?

Are there differences in course completion rates between face to face and Distance Education/hybrid courses? If so, how does the discipline, department or program deal with this situation? How do you assess the overall effectiveness of Distance Education/hybrid course?

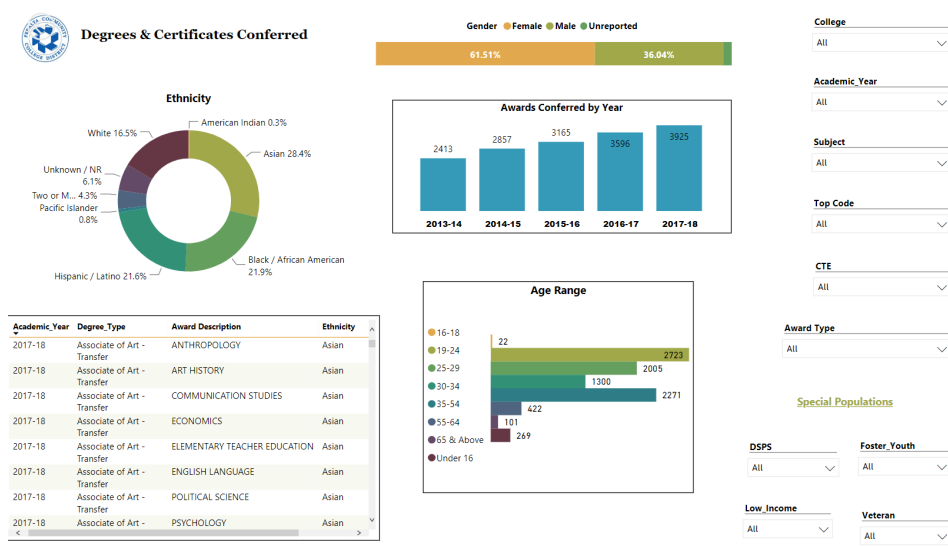
PARALEGAL STUDIES

Describe the course retention rates over the last three years. If your college has an Institution-Set Standard for course retention, how does your program or discipline course retention rates compare to the standard?

What has the discipline, department, or program done to improve course completion and retention rates?

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Degrees & Certificates Conferred



Degrees & Certificates Power BI dashboard

What has the discipline, department, or program done to improve the number of degrees and certificates awarded? Include the number of degrees and certificates awarded by year, for the past three years.

We have improved the number of sections and courses taken.

Over the next 3 years, will you be focusing on increasing the number of degrees and certificates awarded?

Yes and we will offer miniature certificates.

What is planned for the next 3 years to increase the number of certificates and degrees awarded?

PARALEGAL STUDIES

ABA Approval, Curriculum development, partnership with Alameda County Superior Court, Pathway to law School – this will increase enrollment and the number of certificates/degrees awarded.

Engagement

Discuss how faculty and staff have engaged in institutional efforts such as committees, presentations, and departmental activities. Please list the committees that full-time faculty participate in.

Professor Willis has chaired Budget Committee for over 4 years. She also chaired College Council for 2 years, participated in College Accreditation etc.

Discuss how faculty and staff have engaged in community activities, partnerships and/or collaborations.

Paralegal Studies recently acquired a partnership with Alameda County Superior Court to conduct their training for their Legal Processing Assistants and Courtroom Clerks and to provide a pathway for advancement and pipeline to the jobs.

Discuss how adjunct faculty members are included in departmental training, discussions, and decision-making.

All faculty are a part of the process of decision making. Additional training is needed as set forth in the resource requests and program goals.

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Prioritized Resource Requests Summary

In the boxes below, please add resource requests for your program. If there are no resource requested, leave the boxes blank.

Resource Category	Description/Justification	Estimated Annual Salary Costs	Estimated Annual Benefits Costs	Total Estimated Cost
Personnel: Classified Staff	Instructional Assistant needed to assist faculty. This directly contributes to student success by providing all of the students with the support and assistance they need in order to be successful, complete their assignments, complete their courses and complete their certificates etc.	\$35,000		\$35,000 (need this built into the regular budget)
Personnel: Student Worker	Student Assistants needed to assist faculty. This directly contributes to student success by providing all of the students with the support and assistance they need in order to be successful, complete their assignments, complete their courses and complete their certificates etc.	\$25,000		\$25,000 (next year can be funded with SWF, but need future funds continuously set aside)
Personnel: Part Time Faculty	Part Time Faculty	\$30,000		\$30,000
Personnel: Full Time Faculty	Full Time Faculty (3 Total Needed, So far Have 1.6)	\$300,000	\$100,000	\$400,000

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Resource Category	Description/Justification	Total Estimated Cost
Professional Development: Department wide PD needed		
Professional Development: Personal/Individual PD needed	Provide funds for all faculty (including adjuncts) to attend the American Association for Paralegal Educators (AAfPE) – National and Regional Conferences each year. This is specific training for Paralegal Educators on specific courses in Paralegal Studies. Taking this training at the AAfPE Conference directly contributes to better Paralegal educators, improves teaching skills and keeps the Paralegal faculty up to date with the most recent developments in Paralegal Studies.	\$6000/year

Prioritized Resource Requests Summary - Continued

Resource Category	Description/Justification	Total Estimated Cost
Supplies: Software	Paralegal Software Needed for the Students – Billing, Timekeeping, Calendaring and Case Management Software, to teach the students up to date techniques and skills in these 3 essential areas (Billing, Timekeeping, Calendaring). Law office technology is so the students can learn up to date practices regarding these 3 essential areas and ensure the Paralegal students are successful in the law office environment and competitive in obtaining jobs. In addition, Lexis Nexis needed for the students to conduct legal research.	\$7,000.00 \$1500/year (Fund 1)
Supplies: Books, Magazines, and/or Periodicals		
Supplies: Instructional Supplies	Instructional Supplies Needed Including But Not Limited to – paper, pens, file folders, highlighters, etc.	\$1000//year (Fund 1)

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Supplies: Non-Instructional Supplies		
Supplies: Library Collections		

Prioritized Resource Requests Summary - Continued

Resource Category	Description/Justification	Total Estimated Cost
Technology & Equipment: New	Website – Reinstate/recreate the former website under the old platform that the Paralegal Program had once before. This website will contribute to student success because it will be a website platform specifically for the existing and new Paralegal students to gain information about the Paralegal Department, to access resources specific to Paralegal students, to access their assignments and to gain other information.	\$3500
Technology & Equipment: Replacement	<p>New Computers Needed for P218. Computers are Outdated and Have Not Been Replaced in Over 10 Years. P218 is the main classroom and computer lab utilized by the Paralegal students and the Paralegal Program. It is also a key classroom utilized by Business/CIS, Math, Assessment, Cybersecurity and other departments. It is the largest Smartclassroom on campus. Revitalizing P218 will directly assist in student success and create student hearing</p> <p>New laptops also needed for Paralegal Instructional Faculty – Laptops are Outdated and Have Not Been Replaced in Over 10 Years.</p>	<p>\$4500 for laptops</p> <p>\$50,000 for new computers in P218</p>

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Prioritized Resource Requests Summary - Continued

Resource Category	Description/Justification	Total Estimated Cost
Facilities: Classrooms		
Facilities: Offices		
Facilities: Labs	Computer Classroom P218 – the Largest SmartClassroom On Campus Is STILL in need of new furniture and computer rewiring – this has been requested by Paralegal, Business, CIS, Math, Assessment and various other departments that use P218. This was approved over 10 years ago when Linda Berry was Vice President. The rewiring work was begun and not completed. The furniture was chosen but never replaced. Facilities and Technology Committees, in addition to Tony Hampton/Patricia Rom have all identified this as a priority every year. It has not yet been completed and needs to be completed	\$50,000 - NO FUNDS YET IDENTIFIED FOR THIS URGENT REQUEST
Facilities: Other		

Prioritized Resource Requests Summary - Continued

Resource Category	Description/Justification	Total Estimated Cost
Library: Library materials		
Library: Library collections		

PARALEGAL STUDIES

Prioritized Resource Requests Summary - Continued

Resource Category	Description/Justification	Total Estimated Cost
<p>OTHER</p> <p>Marketing – Marketing dollars needed for brochures, website etc.</p>	<p>Marketing dollars needed for brochures, website etc. The website, brochures and other marketing materials are needed to promote the Paralegal Program, to attract new students and to assist current students.</p>	<p>\$5,000 (SWF)</p>
<p>OTHER</p> <p>Curriculum Development funds: to create an AA Transfer degree, change and articulate to Legal Studies</p> <p>Also new courses needed to develop Pathway to Law School – Argumentation, Street Law, Service learning component, Business Law Paralegal Course etc.</p> <p>Also, Court Certificate needs to be created for the partnership with the Alameda County Superior Court</p>	<p>These curriculum development funds will result in additional students, increased FTES in the Paralegal Program and in general education classes, because it will allow students to earn a transferable degree that articulates to a major at the collegiate level and to ensure that the students do not waste time taking courses they will have to re-take at a higher level.</p>	<p>\$20,000 (SWF)</p>
<p>OTHER</p> <p>Complete ABA Approval/Accreditation Application, Host the Approval Site Visit Team (travel, accommodations etc.)</p>	<p>Students will be more successful in the legal industry and better able to obtain jobs if they obtain a degree from an ABA approved institution rather than a new ABA approved institution. They will be able to obtain more jobs and have greater credibility.</p>	<p>\$15,000 (SWF)</p>