

# CAN Discipline - Paralegal

2022 - 2023

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## Program Context

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### 1. Mission

Share how your program contributes to the College or fits into the College's Mission. For example, what other academic programs and student/academic services does your program engage with? Examples of student/academic services include the Learning Center, Library, STEM Center, SharePoint, Dream Center, etc. Another example, how does your program fit into any of the College's plans (such as Equity, Technology, Strategic Enrollment, etc.)? If your program has a mission statement, you may include it here.

Over 40 years ago, the Paralegal Program (LEGL) at Cañada College was developed with the San Mateo County Bar Association to train personnel to assist attorneys in civil and criminal matters. Instruction focuses on preparing students to interview clients and witnesses, conduct legal research, investigate case information, draft legal documents, prepare cases for trial, analyze issues for appeal, and master industry technology tools.

In 2000, in response to the growing demand for properly trained paralegals, California became the first state to regulate who can be called a paralegal. California Business & Professions Code §6450 et seq. requires that anyone using the job title "paralegal" or "legal assistant" must complete specific education requirements. Both the Paralegal Certificate and the A.S. degree satisfy these mandated educational requirements, and graduates of Cañada College's Paralegal Program are entitled to be called paralegals under California law.

Students who want to continue their legal education can transfer to a four-year college or university. The Paralegal Program encourages students to complete a baccalaureate degree because this improves employment opportunities. The Paralegal Program is also excellent preparation for students planning to attend law school or for foreign attorneys who are preparing for a Masters in Law (LLM) Program, which is required to take the California Bar Exam.

The substantive, procedural, and practical legal courses and practical experience prepare paralegals for employment in Silicon Valley law firms, corporate legal departments, non-profit organizations, federal and state courts, and government agencies.

### New Program

In 2018, in response to declining enrollment, the Paralegal Program began the transition to a completely online program. The Paralegal Program revamped its curriculum, switched courses to an online, asynchronous format, and created and launched a strong Advisory Committee. A Paralegal Program Coordinator was hired to facilitate the expansion and strengthening of the Program.

### Program Strengths:

The Paralegal program contributes to the mission of the College and District by:

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1. Providing a quality Paralegal Program that leads to a Career Technical Education (CTE) career as a Paralegal and cooperates with legal, business, industry, labor, and public service agencies.
2. Providing a supportive faculty/student teaching and learning relationship that contributes to personal and professional growth and success for students.
3. Providing a lower division program that enables students to transfer to baccalaureate institutions and prepares them for law school.
4. Celebrating the community's rich cultural diversity.

Our faculty members are our best asset. The Paralegal (LEGL) program consists of four adjunct faculty members who work full-time in the legal profession as lawyers or paralegals. Our faculty are high-caliber professors, teaching the most up-to-date information about their subjects and incorporating technology into classroom lectures.

### **Equity Plan**

The Paralegal Program fits into the College's Equity Plan because we not only serve under-represented communities of students, but we also teach them the legal skills necessary to achieve equity on behalf of others.

The Paralegal Program associates with the San Mateo County Bar Association, the San Mateo County Law Library, San Mateo County Legal Aid, the Transgender Law Center, the AIDS Legal Referral Panel, and the San Mateo County Law Library Foundation to provide legal representation to underserved communities in San Mateo County through legal clinics organized by these entities. Under the supervision of licensed California attorneys, Paralegal Program students volunteer at these clinics serving low-income, marginalized, and/or underrepresented persons. However, due to COVID-19, the momentum we have generated has dissipated because of restrictions on meeting in person and closure and/or limited access to law libraries and courts.

The Paralegal Program full-time faculty member has completed the Course Design for Racial Equity Certificate, and the adjunct faculty will complete this training in the future.

### **Mission**

The mission of the Cañada College Paralegal Program is to ensure that students from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to achieve their educational goals by providing quality instruction in paralegal studies and activities that foster students' personal development and academic success. The Cañada College Paralegal Program places a high priority on supportive faculty/staff/student teaching and learning relationships, responsive student support services, and an environment that contributes to personal growth and professional success for students. The Paralegal Program is committed to the students and community to fulfill this mission.

### **Vision**

The Cañada College Paralegal Program ensures student success through personalized, flexible, and innovative instruction. The faculty and staff of the Paralegal Program infuse essential skills and competencies throughout the curriculum and assess student learning and institutional effectiveness to make continuous improvements. The faculty and staff of the Paralegal Program respond to the changing needs of the people it serves by being involved in and responsive to the

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community, developing new programs and partnerships, and incorporating new technologies and methodologies into its programs and services.

### 2. Articulation

**Are there changes in curriculum or degree requirements at high schools or 4-year institutions that may impact your program? If so, describe the changes and your efforts to accommodate them. If no changes have occurred, please write "no known changes."**

Currently, the Paralegal (LEGL) courses are not part of the "A" through "G" requirements at our local high schools, and we do not have an articulation agreement with the high schools for any of the LEGL courses. The College has programs allowing high school students to take courses, including LEGL courses, while they are still in high school. Any changes in the LEGL program and the course outlines will not impact high school enrollment since the course are degree applicable and transferrable to CSU campuses.

Paralegal Programs are offered at nearby community colleges: City College of San Francisco, Skyline College, De Anza College, and West Valley College.

Paralegal Programs are at the following colleges and universities: U.C. Berkeley, Cal State East Bay, and San Francisco State University.

The Paralegal Program at the City College of San Francisco is experiencing financial challenges resulting in fewer courses being offered and canceling courses being offered. The Cañada College Paralegal Program has offered courses to these students.

Except for U.C. Berkeley's Paralegal Certificate Program, all the Paralegal Program courses had to be offered as "in person" courses as a requirement of the ABA's "approval" of those paralegal programs. Paralegal Programs offering an ABA "approved" curriculum cannot offer asynchronous online courses or be completely online.

With the advent of COVID-19 and the cancellation of in-person courses in early 2020, those other bay area paralegal programs suffered reduced enrollment because they had few, if any, online courses. However, the Cañada College Paralegal Program has been completely online since 2019, which enabled us to offer students a better online course experience since our courses were taught by faculty who were already trained to teach effectively online. Paralegal faculty have achieved online teaching certifications from a variety of source, including ACUE, CALI, @ONE, and CSU East Bay, and Harvard Business Publishing Education.

The Paralegal Program is also working with Lincoln Law School in San Jose so that our students can have access to academic resources that will teach them how to draft and prosecute patents and prepare them to take the Patent Bar Exam, learn trademark prosecution, as well as become versed in copyrights and IP litigation. Students would also be able to participate in the Lincoln IP Clinic, the only pro bono intellectual property clinic in Silicon Valley.

We are also communicating with the estate planning bar associations (Peninsula Estate Planning Council, Silicon Valley Bar Association, San Francisco Estate Planning Council, San Mateo County Superior Court Probate Division) to create an employment pipeline with individual estate planning law firms. Research indicates that the Cañada College Paralegal Program is not meeting community needs because we do not offer courses in this subject.

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The Cañada College Paralegal Program is not an ABA-approved program, so we are not required to comply with the ABA's archaic administrative requirements. This enables us to meet the needs of the local community better than the other bay area paralegal programs.

The Cañada College Paralegal Program is a boutique program offering unique, cutting-edge courses that meet the needs of our entire community. For example, Baby Boomers are interested in taking our Elder Law course, and these students are different than the student demographic taking Animal Law or Intellectual Property Law. Each of these subjects is affiliated with a unique niche in the legal community, and there is high demand for graduates knowledgeable about each of these areas of law.

### **3. Community & Labor Needs**

**Are there changes in community needs, employment needs, technology, licensing, or accreditation that may affect your program? If so, describe these changes and your efforts to accommodate them. If no changes have occurred, please write "no known changes". CTE programs: identify the dates of your most recent advisory group meeting and describe your advisory group's recommendations for your program.**

#### **Demand for Paralegals is expected to grow 14% over the next 10 years**

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook shows that employment of paralegals and legal assistants is projected to grow 14% from 2021 to 2031, much faster than the average for all occupations.

About 45,800 employment openings for paralegals and legal assistants are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as retiring.

See: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal/paralegals-and-legal-assistants.htm#tab-6>

#### **Increased Employment**

The retirement age for lawyers is higher than most other occupations, so the increase in employment opportunities is artificially lower because the current market is saturated.

As law firms try to increase the efficiency of legal services and reduce their costs, they are expected to hire more paralegals and legal assistants. In these firms, paralegals and legal assistants may take on a "hybrid" role, performing not only traditional paralegal duties but also some of the tasks previously assigned to attorneys, legal secretaries, and/or other legal support workers.

Given the ongoing competition for legal services in the United States and abroad, law firms are attempting to reduce billing costs in response to client pushback and demand for less expensive legal services. Law firms can bill clients for a paralegal's time. Because the hourly rate for a paralegal is less than that of an attorney (even an entry-level attorney), many law firm clients, prefer that paralegals complete tasks that they are allowed to do rather than have lawyers complete those tasks. This transition of tasks will increase the demand for paralegals and legal assistants in the future.

See: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal/paralegals-and-legal-assistants.htm#tab-6>

Although law firms will continue to be the largest employers of paralegals, many large corporations are increasing their in-house legal departments to cut costs. This is especially true in the technology sector. Many bay area-based technology and venture capital companies have large in-

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house legal departments to handle legal issues related to intellectual property assignment agreements, Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) and End User License Agreements (EULAs). The needs of these local technology companies and venture capital companies will lead to an increase in the demand for legal professionals in a variety of settings.

### **Impact of COVID-19**

COVID-19 has affected the economic trends regarding the employment of paralegals. With the complete closure of many courts, loss of court personnel, and lack of resources, legal matters were not being litigated. This meant that revenue was down for many law firms. To increase revenues, rather than employing more paralegals, whose billable rates are far less than an entry-level attorney, law firms were hiring recent law school graduates so that they could bill at a higher rate. Lawyer employment increased to 1.15 million in the Q1 of 2022, up from 1.09 million in Q4 of 2021. As a result, "paralegal employment took a 31,000-job tumble," falling from 483,000 in Q4 of 2021 to 452,000 in Q1 of 2022.

See: <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/bloomberg-law-analysis/analysis-lawyer-and-legal-employment-hit-pandemic-highs-in-q1>

### **Local Demand**

In 2018, the Cañada College Paralegal Program surveyed attorneys and law firms in San Mateo County. The results indicated that there is a need for paralegals with practical skills related to law practice management software, legal trial technology, e-discovery, electronic litigation, and electronic investigation and forensics.

Additionally, in 2021 and 2022, members of the San Mateo County Bar Association and San Mateo County Superior Court have advocated for the expansion of the Cañada College Paralegal Program because of the ability of attorneys to now request that the court pay paralegal costs in probate, trust, personal injury, breach of contract, and other matters.

Another local demand that the Cañada College Paralegal Program can satisfy is in preparing students for law school and preparing foreign attorneys for enrollment in a Masters in Law program, a prerequisite for foreign attorneys taking the California Bar Exam.

### **High Wage Employment and Careers**

Paralegals in the San Francisco Bay Area are paid well. In the area of high concentration of technology companies, including San Jose, Sunnyvale, and Santa Clara, the annual mean wage is **\$90,640**. In San Francisco, Oakland, and Hayward, the annual mean wage is **\$75,640**. The high annual mean wage for San Jose and surrounding areas may be attributed to the many global technology companies, venture capital, and law firms in this area, with business operations that are highly focused on legal matters. See <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes232011.htm#st>

California overall is the third-highest employer of paralegals in the country, with a statewide annual mean wage of \$70,290.

See: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes232011.htm#st>

The data contained in the table and chart below list the low, median, and high wages for paralegals in the bay area. However, this information does not consider the hyper-local market for paralegal employment. In San Mateo and Redwood City, according to surveys of hiring attorneys, the

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average hourly rate for an entry-level paralegal with no legal experience is closer to \$30 an hour, and \$40 per hour in San Francisco. These hourly rates are higher for paralegals with legal experience and/or technology skills.

### Wages for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in SAN MATEO, CA

[View National Data](#)

[View State Data](#)

| Location                                     | Pay Period | Low      |
|--|------------|----------|
| United States                                | Hourly     | \$17.51  |
|  | Yearly     | \$36,410 |
| California                                   | Hourly     | \$18.90  |
|  | Yearly     | \$39,310 |
| San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA Metro Area | Hourly     | \$22.34  |
|  | Yearly     | \$46,470 |

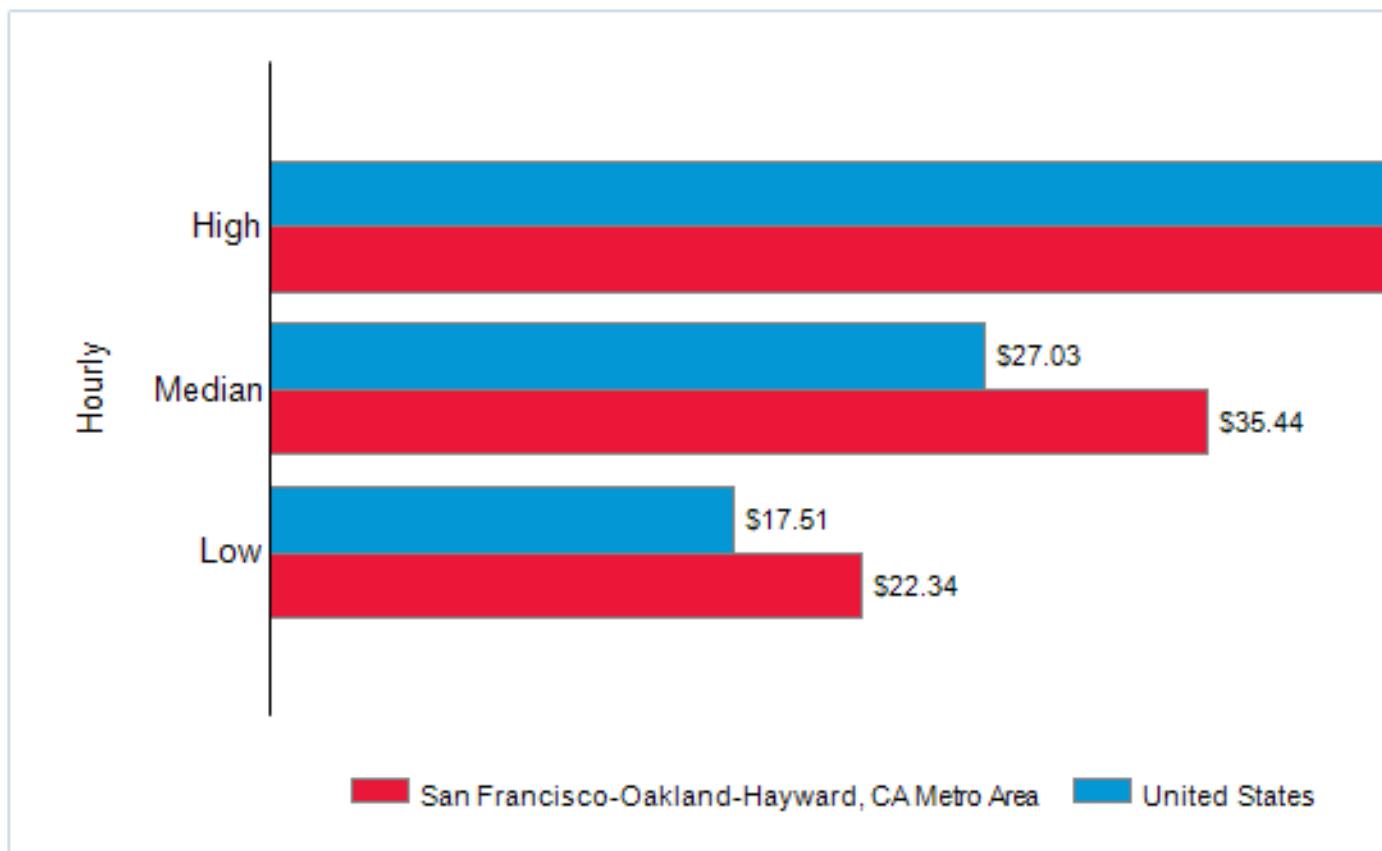
See: <https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Wages/find-salary.aspx?keyword=Paralegals%20and%20Legal%20Assistants&soccode=232011&onet=&location=San%20Mateo,%20CA&dataview=table&hourly=True&national=False>

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### Wages for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in SAN MATEO, CA

[View Yearly Wages](#)

[View](#)



See: <https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Wages/find-salary.aspx?keyword=Paralegals%20and%20Legal%20Assistants&soccode=232011&onet=&location=San%20Mateo,%20CA&dataview=&hourly=true&national=False>

#### **Focus on Technology and Legal Specialty Practice Areas**

Hiring adjunct faculty with different specialty practice areas will enable the Cañada College Paralegal Program to offer classes that will better target the legal community's hiring needs. Paralegals with technology skills will earn higher wages. According to the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, "E-discovery and litigation support are growth areas. The most marketable professionals will stay current with developments in e-discovery and litigation support, in particular — two areas that are in strong demand and command higher hourly rates. Knowledge of case management software, litigation and e-discovery programs, such as Concordance, Summation, and Trial Director, also is highly valued."

See: "*The Impact of Technology on Paralegal Jobs and Other Legal Support Roles*" by Charles A. Volkert, Esq.; <https://mcca.com/mcca-article/impact-of-technology-on-paralegal-jobs/>

Moreover, the paralegal salaries indicate that individuals can support themselves in the San Francisco Bay Area and have access to greater employment opportunities because of the added value of unique legal specialty courses.

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## Looking Back

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### 4. Curricular changes

List any significant changes that have occurred over the prior years in your program's curricular offerings, scheduling, or mode of delivery. For decisions made by your department, explain the rationale for these changes. If applicable, how have state policy changes affected your curricular offerings?

#### The Past

We noticed that the difficulty working adults had in taking Paralegal Program courses were the barriers to enrollment that they experienced when only in-person courses were offered.

In 2018, the Cañada College Paralegal Program made the most significant change to the Paralegal Program since its creation. The was a change from in-person courses to a format that was completely online. The curriculum was updated, with relevant, new courses created that targeted the needs of the business and legal community. New courses included Intellectual Property, Elder Law, and Animal Law. Existing courses were modified to add relevant components employers desired in our graduates. Also added was a new stackable Paralegal Certificate in Litigation because paralegals with litigation skills are in high demand by law firms and businesses.

In 2019 the Paralegal Program became completely online. Courses are now only offered asynchronously, and all courses (except for the Legal Internship) start the third week of the semester. There is a regular two-year schedule of when courses are offered so that students and academic advisors have predictability, allowing them to better plan their schedules. Students can now complete the Paralegal Certificate in one year.

The College (and most of the world) shut down due to COVID-19 in early 2020. This had a significant impact on our newly launched program and negatively affected marketing efforts, enrollment, student internships, and the hiring of Paralegal Program graduates.

In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we lost the momentum we generated in launching our new Paralegal Program. **We need to get the momentum back.**

#### The Future

Possible curriculum changes would be to offer courses that contain information employers want our graduates to know, are not offered by other paralegal programs, and will provide specialized skills training to our students. These courses may include Patent Law, Artificial Intelligence (AI) Law, Licensing, Venture Capital, Estate, Probate, and Trust Law, E-discovery, Employment Law, Forensic Science and the Law, Tax Law, Real Estate Law, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and International Law.

The highest paying paralegals are those who are skilled at using the specialized legal technology that law firms use, including e-discovery and litigation support software.

See: *"The Impact of Technology on Paralegal Jobs and Other Legal Support Roles"* by Charles A. Volkert, Esq.; <https://mcca.com/mcca-article/impact-of-technology-on-paralegal-jobs/>

Unfortunately, the Cañada College Paralegal Program provides no access to the legal technology that students need to know how to use in order to work in the higher paid areas. The future success of the students in our Paralegal Program depends on them having access to the

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technology resources that will enable them to earn the highest wages. As a matter of equity, we must provide each paralegal student with access to training on e-discovery, litigation support, and other specialty practice areas and technology so that they can be successful.

We also need industry experts teaching in these areas of law to share their experiences, make the classes more dynamic and engaging for the students, and generate enthusiasm and passion for these specialized subjects.

The Paralegal Certificate is the core Certificate of the Program and the requirements for this Certificate are outlined in the California Business & Professions Code §6450 et seq. The added stackable Litigation Certificate enables students to get specialized litigation training but also satisfies California's paralegal continuing education requirements, enabling graduates to return to Cañada to take additional courses to maintain their status as paralegals.

### **5A. Progress Report - IPC Feedback**

Provide your responses to all recommendations received in your last program review cycle.

#### ***“Community and Labor Needs: Explain labor needs for students without ABA certificates - or rate of employment for students without ABA certification.”***

Being an American Bar Association (ABA)-approved paralegal program has no impact on employment rates for Paralegal Program graduates because the California Legislature, not the ABA, determines the qualifications of who is legally entitled to be a "Paralegal" under California law.

All employers comply with California law and require that anyone hired as a "Paralegal" meet the requirements set forth by the California Legislature in the California Business and Professions Code Sections 6450-6456, et seq.

Graduates who have earned their Paralegal Certificate from the Cañada College Paralegal Program are legally entitled to call themselves "Paralegals" under California Business and Professions Code Sections 6450-6456, et seq.

Some paralegal programs may be "approved" by the American Bar Association. The Cañada College Paralegal Program is not approved by the ABA. However, having ABA approval for a paralegal program is completely optional and voluntary, and not required by law. Even the ABA states this on its own website that

*"Seeking approval from the American Bar Association is a voluntary process initiated by the institution offering the program. Therefore, the lack of approval does not necessarily mean a paralegal program is not of good quality and reputable."*

See: <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/profession-information/educational-information-for-paralegals/>

The American Bar Association (ABA) cannot "certify" or "accredit" a paralegal certificate program. Instead, the ABA, for a significant fee, will "approve" a paralegal certificate program that meets certain standards relating to how a certificate is administered. Approximately 25% of the paralegal programs in the country opt to pay for ABA approval.

The process of having a paralegal program approved by the ABA is expensive. Given the limited resources of Cañada College and our Paralegal Program, the Paralegal Program Advisory Board

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decided that the Cañada College Paralegal Program should not spend the significant amount of money needed to obtain ABA approval. This question has come up many times over the years. After engaging in detailed analysis each time the question was brought up, it was determined that ABA approval would not benefit the Program in terms of resources, student support, and/or employment opportunities.

While there may be a one-off employer that wants to hire only people who have received their paralegal certificate from an ABA-approved paralegal program, this is not the norm. Employers who must hire paralegals hire people who meet the California Business and Professions Code legal definition of a "Paralegal," and graduates of our Paralegal Program satisfy that requirement.

***“Progress Report: Provide course by course numerical data, i.e. average enrollment numbers per class.”***

Data and information regarding this requested is addressed within this Program Review and those responses are incorporated by reference herein.

In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and shut down, we lost the momentum we generated in launching our new Paralegal Program. We need to get the momentum back. Some of the data contained in the information packets may not accurately reflect the progress the Paralegal Program has made.

***Enrollment Trends: Cite quantitative data. Specifically, refer to the numbers in the data packet regarding headcount, FTE, enrollments, and load.***

Data and information regarding this requested is addressed within this Program Review and those responses are incorporated by reference herein.

In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and shut down, we lost the momentum we generated in launching our new Paralegal Program. We need to get the momentum back. Some of the data contained in the information packets may not accurately reflect the progress the Paralegal Program has made.

***Access & Completion: Cite quantitative data. Specifically refer to the numbers in the data packet.***

Data and information regarding this requested is addressed within this Program Review and those responses are incorporated by reference herein.

In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and shut down, we lost the momentum we generated in launching our new Paralegal Program. We need to get the momentum back. Some of the data contained in the information packets may not accurately reflect the progress the Paralegal Program has made.

**5B. Progress Report - Prior Program Goals**

Provide a summary of the progress you have made on the program goals identified in your last program review.

**Prior Program Goal: Online Classes**

The Cañada College Paralegal Program is completely online. Five new adjunct faculty members were hired who are industry experts (practicing attorneys or paralegals) in their field. All have completed extensive online

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training including Cañada's online training program, courses available at @ONE, CSU online teacher training, POCR, Cañada's Faculty Learning Program POCR, one-year ACUE online teaching credential, CALI Online Teaching Certificate, and online teaching courses offered by Harvard University.

### **Prior Program Goal: Marketing**

A prior Paralegal Program goal was to increase marketing of the Paralegal Program by creating new brochures, videos, banner ads, doing outreach at legal conventions, and sponsoring the law libraries in San Mateo County and San Francisco.

While the Paralegal Program has been a sponsor at the Bar Association of San Francisco Paralegal Conference, now provides students with access to the San Mateo County Law Library, and has two one-minute animated videos, no new marketing resources have been provided since Prior to the change in leadership of the Director of Workforce Development. The Paralegal Program does not have any brochures any kind of marketing materials whatsoever.

In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and shut down, we lost the momentum we generated in launching our new Paralegal Program. We need to get the momentum back.

To do this, the Paralegal Program requires marketing support. This request for additional marketing support aligns with EMP initiative 3.3, which states that the College "utilize(s) relevant social media and other marketing platforms to reach community members in the formats and virtual environments in which they exist. Ensure College websites are up-to-date, accurate, informative, and speak to community members in language that is welcoming and inclusive."

### **6A. Impact of Resource Applications**

**Describe the impact to date of previously requested new resources (assignment, equipment, facilities, research, funding) including both resource requests that were approved and not approved. What impact have these resources had on your program and measures of student success? What have you been unable to accomplish due to resource requests that were not approved?**

Prior to the change in leadership of the Director of Workforce Development, the Paralegal Program received funds for classroom and laboratory space for students at the San Mateo County Law Library. We also sponsor the Bar Association of San Francisco's annual Paralegal Conference so that our Paralegal Program students are allowed to attend for free and to access all of the educational materials. We have also maintained membership in CALI (Computer Assisted Legal Instruction) to get interactive online training, open-source textbooks, and other teaching resources.

- San Mateo County Law Library lab and classroom space is \$4,000 per year (\$2,000 per semester.)
- CALI (Computer Assisted Legal Instruction) for all students and faculty access is \$250 per year.

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- Bar Association of San Francisco Paralegal Program annual sponsorship for Paralegal Program students to attend educational programs and access educational resources is \$1,500 per year.

The Paralegal Program has also requested technology resources, including:

- Individual faculty and student memberships in the National Society for Legal Technology, which licenses software simulations that train students to use specialized legal software, which are the technical skills that are needed for higher-paying paralegal positions. The Legal Technology and E-Discovery Software is \$300 per year for each student and faculty member.
- Individual faculty and student accounts for the attorney/law firm version of Lexis is \$600 per year (\$300 per semester) for each student and faculty member.
- Individual faculty and student accounts for the attorney/law firm version of Westlaw is \$600 per year (\$300 per semester) for each student and faculty member.

The Paralegal Program has not received any additional resources since the change in leadership of the Director of Workforce Development. The marketing and outreach for our Paralegal Program are nonexistent. There are no brochures, flyers, or promotional materials for the Paralegal Program. The lack of support from Strong Workforce funds has had a significant detrimental impact on marketing, outreach, hiring of adjunct faculty, and enrollment.

### **6B. Impact of Staffing Changes**

**Describe the impact on your program of any changes within the last program review cycle in staffing levels (for example, the addition, loss or reassignment of faculty/staff). If no changes have occurred please write "not applicable."**

The Paralegal Program does not have a full-time faculty member.

With the transition of the Paralegal Program from an in-person Program to an online Program, five out of the six adjunct faculty members quit because they did not want to teach online Paralegal Program courses.

Beginning in 2018, we have had six new adjunct faculty members to teach in the Paralegal Program. To improve the quality of the Paralegal Program and the education that students receive, all new adjunct faculty hired to teach in the Paralegal Program are industry experts--attorneys or paralegals experienced in the specific area of law in which they teach. This has significantly improved student interest and engagement because of the practical examples and experiences integrated into the course content by the expert faculty member.

In 2021, we lost one adjunct faculty member. This adjunct faculty member was not replaced because of budget constraints.

The Paralegal Program now has a Paralegal Program Coordinator and we hope to continue to keep the Paralegal Program Coordinator in place. The Paralegal Program Coordinator position is necessary to build the Paralegal Program up, improve access to potential students, and to market the Paralegal Program to the legal and business community.

Due to COVID-19, we could not hire anyone, including an adjunct faculty member, to replace the one that was lost in 2021.

In the past, support from the Executive Administration has been minimal.

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The Paralegal Program has not received any additional financial support or resources since the change in leadership of the Director of Workforce Development.

### Current State of the Program

#### 7A. Enrollment Trends

Use the data provided by PRIE to examine your enrollments by department or courses. Describe trends in headcount, FTEs, and load. If applicable, describe any other enrollment data that is relevant to your program.

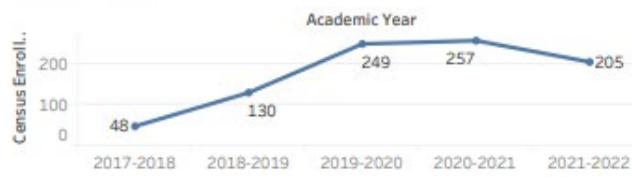
#### Since 2017-2018, enrollment is showing a strong upward trend.

In 2017-2018, there were 48 students enrolled in the Paralegal Program. In 2020-2021, enrollment increased more than five times the level of 2017. Enrollment dropped a little in 2021-2022 but remains more than four times as high as 2017-2018. Given the demand for staffing in the legal profession, a continued increase in enrollment in the Paralegal Program is reasonable.

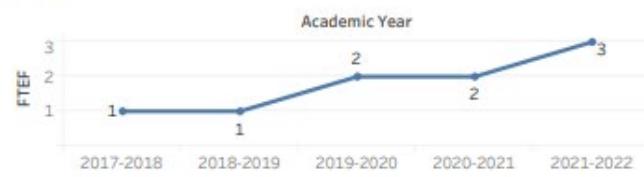
The Paralegal Program is operating more efficiently because of enrollment increased by four to five times, yet staffing has increased three times.

Section Count has increased from 6 to a high of 15, and is now 14.

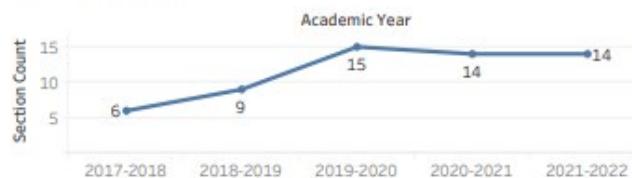
Enrollments



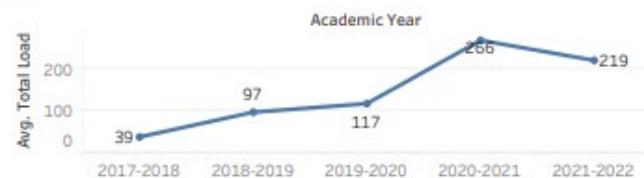
FTEF



Section Count



LOAD



#### 7B. Significant Changes in Your Program

Have there been any significant changes in enrollment trends or course offerings? For example, has there been a significant increase or drop in FTEs or Load? If applicable, consider trends in class cancellation rates and how it might have affected your course offerings. If needed, consider how the pattern of course offerings (times/days/duration/delivery mode/number of sections) affected your enrollment?

There have been significant enrollment trends given the impact of COVID-19, which had a negative effect on enrollment in the Paralegal Program, as it did on enrollment at other schools, colleges, and universities.

Additionally, the online Paralegal Program was new when COVID-19 struck, so the marketing plans and events that were set in place had to be canceled. Most courthouses are still not open for in-person hearings, and the law libraries have limited access. The closure of these resources has negatively impacted the students in the Paralegal Program because attending court hearings and

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using the resources in the law library are needed to help the students better understand the work paralegals do.

Because of the impact of COVID-19, law firms did not hire entry-level paralegals because of in-person restrictions in law firms and the buildings in which the law firms were located. While there are remote paralegal positions available, these are not typically entry-level positions. All of these factors negatively impacted students enrolling in the Paralegal Program. Students did not enroll in courses because they knew that COVID-19 negatively affected law firm hiring. The repeated shutdowns also negatively affected enrollment and employment.

### **Students Prefer Late-Start, Asynchronous, Online Courses**

Based on student survey data, Paralegal Program students prefer late-start, asynchronous, online courses. The Paralegal Program currently offers third-week start courses, but Paralegal Program students have indicated they prefer fifth-week start courses. Paralegal Program students are typically employed full-time, want to complete classes in a shorter time frame, and prefer the flexibility online courses offer.

When the Paralegal Program offered hybrid courses, students did not sign up for them, the courses did not meet the minimum number of required students, and they were canceled. Late-start, synchronous, online courses have enabled the Paralegal Program to expand to students located in all areas in the State of California, as well as to students located in other states and abroad.

### **Negative Impact of Early Class Cancellations**

The Paralegal Program has suffered significantly from early class cancellations by the administration. Our students traditionally enroll in the Paralegal Program closer to the start date of courses, which in the Paralegal Program is three weeks after the semester begins. However, the administration continues to cancel classes in an inequitable manner across the Division and within the Paralegal Program. Classes would be canceled for lack of enrollment two weeks before the start of the semester, which was five weeks before Paralegal Program courses started. Typically, Paralegal Program courses have low enrollment at the start of the semester, but often have 20 or more students by the third week of the semester when the class begins.

### **Demand for Specialized Courses**

Another trend observed is that some students are enrolling in the Paralegal Program courses to learn more about a particular subject area, such as Animal Law, Elder Law, or Intellectual Property. These students do not necessarily want to earn a Paralegal Certificate.

A common misconception is that students enroll in the Paralegal Program after high school while attending community college to earn their AA or AS degree. **This is not true. According to the PRIE data, the highest groups for enrollment and headcount are people aged 29-39 followed by people aged 23-28.**

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The majority of the students in the Paralegal Program are over the age of 30 and are coming into the Program to begin a new career in the legal field or to prepare for law school. Another segment of the Paralegal Program students includes people who have retired and are taking classes because they want to continue their learning. These students have busy lives and other obligations, which is why they enjoy the flexibility of late-start, asynchronous online paralegal courses.

### **Lack of Access to Legal Technology**

Our Paralegal Program students do not have access to the technology they must learn to access higher-paying paralegal positions. That puts our Paralegal Program students at a serious disadvantage when they are looking for employment because all of the other Paralegal Programs provide these technology resources to their students, including the Paralegal Program at Skyline College, which is also in the San Mateo County Community College District.

This lack of access to legal technology is inequitable and significantly negatively impacts the Program students, especially those in underrepresented groups.

### **7C. Planning for Your Program**

**What changes could be implemented, including changes to course scheduling (times/days/duration/delivery mode/number of sections), curriculum, marketing, and articulation of pathways that might improve these trends? If applicable, include plans for faculty recruitment and faculty training. NOTE: If other sources of data are used, please upload these documents or provide URLs.**

To continue to attract students and provide them with the necessary preparation to enter the legal field, we need to be more flexible in our course offerings. Focus group research conducted in 2018-2021 indicates that the students enrolled in the Paralegal Program for different reasons:

1. Recent college graduates who were planning to attend law school in the future enrolled in the Paralegal Program to prepare themselves academically for law school.
2. Attorneys in foreign countries who were planning to enroll in a law school LLM program enrolled in the Paralegal Program to better prepare themselves academically for the LLM program and California State Bar Exam.
3. Working professionals enrolled in the Paralegal Program to change professional careers or change positions with their current employer (for example, moving from finance to legal.)

*\*\*\*Note: Original data cannot be shared in this document because that data contains confidential student information, and there is no way to remove the information without removing the data.*

Focus group research also indicated that students preferred asynchronous online courses. Many shared that they could not enroll in school unless the courses were offered asynchronously online, given their other employment and family obligations.

Members of the San Mateo County Bar Association, Silicon Valley Bar Association, and San Mateo County Superior Court staff have shared that there is a significant need for paralegals in probate,

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trust, and conservatorship law and that this should be an area to expand paralegal program courses.

Other sources cite the need for more asynchronous online courses. Students employed full-time, raising children, or caring for aging parents can complete their coursework when it is convenient for them.

*“The demand for virtual classes represents a dramatic shift in how instruction is delivered in one of the nation’s largest systems of public higher education and stands as an unexpected legacy of the pandemic.”*

See: Overwhelming demand for online classes is reshaping California’s community colleges, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-10-10/huge-online-demand-reshapes-california-community-colleges>

### **Increased and Sustained Need for Marketing Support**

The Paralegal Program continues to advocate for marketing support, since it has not received any marketing support whatsoever. This request for additional marketing support aligns with EMP initiative 3.3, which states that the college “utilize(s) relevant social media and other marketing platforms to reach community members in the formats and virtual environments in which they exist. Ensure College websites are up-to-date, accurate, informative, and speak to community members in language that is welcoming and inclusive.”

Specifically, our program requests marketing support for the following:

1. The marketing of Paralegal Program courses to new, returning, and future students.
2. The marketing of the Paralegal Program through an integrated marketing campaign consisting of multiple digital marketing mediums, such as a dynamic webpage, targeted seasonal emails to current and past students, and promotions to the larger community, including business professionals, foreign attorneys preparing to enroll in an LLM Program, current and recent college graduates preparing to enroll in law school, and to law firms and corporate legal departments located in Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco counties.
3. Support updating our department website to show relevant and impactful information to our community about the value and utility of the Paralegal Program courses.

### **8A. Access & Completion**

**Describe the student completion and success rate in your courses and/or program using the data provided by PRIE. Look at your course offerings, in the last program review cycle was it possible for a student to complete your certificates or degrees while only completing courses at Cañada College? How can the college help you improve student completion and success? What changes could be made?**

With the advent of COVID-19 in the Spring of 2020 and the resulting shutdown, not only of our College but of the entire world, the enrollment trends data reflect the significant impact of COVID-19 and are not accurate or relevant. The data in the information packets may not accurately reflect the progress the Paralegal Program has made.

Since the last program review cycle, the COVID-19 pandemic has skewed much, if not all, of the Paralegal Program review data. Taking that into consideration, we continue to review our Paralegal Program for student completion and success. Paralegal Program courses are completely online

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and strategically scheduled to start the third week of the semester. Paralegal Program courses are offered during Fall, Spring, and Summer so that all students have access to these courses.

Since Fall 2019, students can complete the Paralegal Program Certificate and Degree while only completing courses at Cañada College. The required courses and selectives are published and offered on a regular, ongoing two-year cycle, so students and academic advisors know when all courses will be offered.

The College can support student completion and success by providing regular and high-quality online and in-person pedagogical training for faculty. Student feedback has also included that students could use a primer on how to use Canvas during the college orientation, such as how to organize course tiles, how to use the Canvas calendar feature, and how to communicate with other students in Canvas.

The College can also support our online completion pathway by providing marketing support to communicate that the Paralegal Program Certificate and Litigation Certificate can be completed completely online. This would include an initial design of the marketing campaign and then recurring messaging to our students and surrounding business and legal community about the online completion opportunities available through the Paralegal Program.

Cañada College could help improve student completion and success by providing access to more writing tutors, and providing students with functioning technology, such as laptops, Chromebooks, hot spots, etc., so that students will have the tools they need to succeed.

The College should also pay for additional materials and resources, including access to critical legal databases (Lexis and Westlaw) used in law firms, government, and legal departments of corporations.

The College should also pay the costs for each student to have the a software license for the training courses and certification available from the National Society for Legal Technology, [www.legaltechsociety.org](http://www.legaltechsociety.org), so that our students can learn the technology that will make them competitive employment candidates. As a matter of equity, we should provide these resources to our Paralegal Program students.

The College should continue to pay for and provide private classroom space and lab access at the San Mateo County Law Library so that students can have the time to access the resources that they need to know how to use in a supportive learning environment.

Future programs formed in conjunction with the Paralegal Program and the San Mateo County Law Library, the San Mateo County Law Library Foundation, the San Mateo County Bar Association, and San Mateo County Legal Aid are being formed so that Cañada College Paralegal Program students will staff various legal clinics and help clients under attorney supervision. The College should also financially support this partnership since it benefits our students.

### **8B. Student Equity**

**One of the goals of the College's Student Equity plan is to close the performance gaps for disproportionately impacted students. Use the data provided by PRIE that indicates which groups are experiencing a disproportionate impact in your program. Which gaps are most important for**

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**improving outcomes in your program? How can the college help you address these gaps? What changes could be made?**

With the advent of COVID-19 in the Spring of 2020 and the resulting shutdown, not only of our College but of the entire world, the enrollment trends data reflect the significant impact of COVID-19 and are not accurate or relevant. The data in the information packets does not accurately reflect the progress the Paralegal Program has made.

The College lacks equity in allocating technology resources to students in the Paralegal Program. Access to technology and legal software is critical since employers expect paralegals to know how to use these resources. Additionally, the highest-paid paralegals are those who know how to use this technology. However, our Paralegal Program students do not have access to these technology resources, yet these technology resources are available to students at other colleges within the SMCCD, as well Paralegal Programs at other colleges and universities.

To increase equity, the Paralegal Program is communicating with the Asian American Bar Association to increase enrollment in the Paralegal Program while also supporting the legally underserved Asian community. The Paralegal Program is also working with local immigration law firms and legal clinics to recruit potential students and to provide Paralegal Program graduates with specialized legal training and employment opportunities. We hope to expand our role with these organizations by having our students and graduates work at the pro bono legal clinics and having the legal organizations offer continuing education courses and mentorship programs to our students.

**While the sample sizes are small, the PRIE data indicates that there is no disproportionate impact found.**

### 8C. Completion – Success Online

**The college has a goal of improving success in online courses. Using the data provided by PRIE, what significant gaps do you see in success between online/hybrid and non-online courses? What changes could be made to reduce these gaps? If your program does not offer online/hybrid courses, please write "not applicable".**

Since 2019, the Paralegal Program has been completely online. In 2019-2020, the success rate dropped, but this is not surprising given the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns that negatively affected student performance for a variety of reasons.

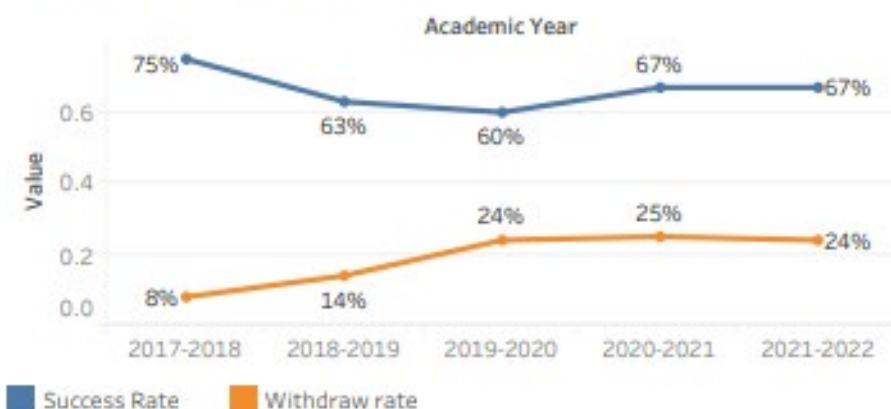
The success rate has ranged from 62.3% in 2018-2019 to a high of 70.8% in 2017 and 2020, roughly equivalent within the margin of error.

As enrollment increased fivefold from 2017 to 2020, the withdraw rate increased. This is not surprising given the impact of COVID-19 and the pandemic issues, as well as the systemwide increased incidence of "ghost students" that enrolled in courses. Also, the increased withdraw rate over the last few years is within the margin of error.

Our Paralegal Program faculty are industry experts (practicing attorneys) and continue to innovative their online course delivery methods and focus on effective pedagogical models for online student-to-student engagement and completion. The Paralegal Program faculty continue to improve their online teaching skills through professional development and educational courses.

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### Success and Withdraw Rate



#### 9A. SLO Assessment - Compliance

Are all active courses being systematically assessed over a three-year cycle? Refer to the Program's /Department's Three-Year Assessment Plan and describe how the plan is completed across sections and over time.

All SLOs are systematically assessed. Focusing on one SLO per course has resulted in a more in-depth examination of course goals and outcomes by faculty. However, when courses are canceled we are unable to conduct the SLO assessment. We will reevaluate our 3-year SLO assessment plan to address course scheduling challenges more efficiently.

#### 9B. SLO Assessment - Impact

Summarize the dialogue that has resulted from these course SLO assessments. What specific strategies have you implemented, or plan to implement, based upon the results of your SLO assessment?

The faculty discuss the SLOs and SLO assessments each spring to evaluate the process and the assessment outcomes. As a result, the SLOs are more specific and more helpful with our program evaluation. The Paralegal Program hired a coordinator to coordinate with SLO assessments. However, with the advent of COVID-19 in the Spring of 2020 and the resulting shutdown, not only of our College but of the entire world, the SLO assessment process has been difficult to achieve. Unfortunately, faculty have not experienced a return on investment from the SLO assessment requirement. We do not support the continual requirement to assess course SLOs and recommend the College provide an alternative assessment strategy to support the effectiveness of this process.

#### 10 PLO Assessment

Describe your program's Program Learning Outcomes assessment plan using your Program/Department's **Three Year Assessment Plan**. Summarize the major findings of your PLO assessments. What are some improvements that have been, or can be, implemented as a result of PLO assessment?

Unfortunately, faculty have not experienced a return on investment from the PLO assessment requirement. We do not support the continual requirement to assess program/department PLOs and recommend the college provide an alternative assessment strategy to support the effectiveness of this process.

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## Looking Ahead

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**Next Step: After completing the fields above, click on STEP 2: Goals & Resource Requests, in the Main Menu, enter your goals (Required) and resource requests (If Applicable).**

## Supporting Information

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