

**PROGRAM REVIEW**  
**OF THE**  
***LEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM***

**College of Professional Studies**



January 2006

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## INTRODUCTION

This report organizes evaluative information and data for the elements of the review of the Legal Studies (LS) Program as required by Florida State Statute, the Florida Board of Governors, and the Planning and Institutional Performance Department of Florida Gulf Coast University.

This program review is based on criteria outlined in the Goals/ Objectives Summary as identified by FL Senate Bill 2502, Section 54 and included in Appendix A. The program has not undergone a specific accreditation review nor have we applied for American Bar Association (ABA) approval. This review is intended to follow the state mandated evaluation criteria as well as American Bar Association and other related organizational standards. These additional criteria measure teaching/ learning, research, and service. Some criteria identified by the state are not applicable to FGCU's Legal Studies Program (due to the newness of FGCU and/or the LS Program as well as the nature of the LS Program).

This process produced a broad range of measures of teaching/ learning, research, and service. Some of the current teaching/ learning criteria are measures outlined by the legislature. Teaching/ learning goals include measures of program efficiency (e.g. AA/AS retention rates, rates of completion, percentage of graduates earning at least \$25,000 after one year) as well as measures of program quality (e.g., percentage of seniors who successfully complete capstone project, and proportion of courses taught by ranked faculty). All goals were met or exceeded. The program's research measure reflects our

community-oriented mission, focusing on both traditional scholarship and research with area law firms, local agencies, etc. This goal was exceeded. Service goals included traditional measures of service (e.g. service to the profession and service to the University) as well as measures of service to the local law community, also a reflection of our mission.

Overall, we have met or exceeded all goals for teaching/learning, research, and service. Some goals were not met initially, but were met or exceeded afterward. In addition, we have met all applicable goals set by the legislature. This overreaching success speaks to the dedication of the LS full-time and adjunct faculty and the receptivity by the legal and general communities to our goals and mission.

In addition to evaluating performance on these criteria since its inception in 2002, the LS Program review has begun a process of evaluation within the program. Faculty are working diligently to expand these criteria (as well as to maintain current data on all criteria) for future program evaluation. One primary goal is to supplement current teaching/ learning measures with additional measures of program quality that specifically reflect legally-related fields.

This review includes sections on Mission and Program Description; Goals and Objectives; Data Collection; Strengths, Opportunities, Challenges and Threats; and Continuous Improvement. The mission and program description identify our close partnership with local law firms and agencies; the data collection section details each criterion and how it was measured; the strengths,

challenges, opportunities, and threats (SCOT) section identifies the program's strengths, and the challenges we face; and the continuous improvement section discusses plans for addressing those challenges.

One of our biggest challenges is competition from other Florida four-year LS programs. These range from colleges to universities both public and private. This competition affects our ability to retain AA/AS transfer students (discussed in more detail in the data collection section). This challenge was identified during our first year. Steps were implemented to address it, and our retention as well as growth rates have increased. Even though a statewide articulation agreement exists we sought out and signed eleven (11) institutions to articulation agreements, which will be discussed in detail later in this report.

Our assets are based on the strength of our program and our ties to the legal and public communities. We have demonstrated those strengths by meeting an overwhelming proportion of our evaluation goals. The Program has worked diligently to maintain a quality with maximum accessibility and flexibility for our students.

The continuous improvement section outlines strategies to address our challenges and to increase program visibility while maintaining quality.

## **1) FGCU MISSION**

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), located in rapidly developing Southwest Florida, is the tenth university in the Florida State University System (SUS). It was established in 1991 and opened for classes in 1997. FGCU accepts the leadership challenge and obligation to meet the educational needs of

a diverse and rapidly growing region. As a public institution FGCU pursues regional and community based public service activities and projects.

Area citizens began the initiative to bring a state university to this part of Florida as the only region of Florida without a state university. The former Florida Board of Regents recommended the development of the tenth university in 1991 and Governor Chiles and the legislature authorized the university in May 1991. The vision for the university was one that would address emerging higher education needs for the twenty-first Century, including the use of technology in the learning/teaching process and multi-year contracts as an alternative to faculty tenure. A new campus was built on donated, undeveloped land near Interstate 75 approximately midway between Fort Myers and Naples, Florida. (FGCU 2005-2006 Catalog, p. 9).

The University's primary service area consists of Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties. Charlotte, Collier, and Lee Counties are on the Gulf of Mexico while Glades and Hendry Counties are interior counties bordering Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. On-campus offerings, distance education, and public and private organizational partnerships enable the university to collaborate with its various constituencies, build on the intellectual heritage of the past and plan its evolution systematically. Each academic unit develops technological, environmental and international perspectives. Excellence is expected in teaching, scholarship, community and professional service.

FGCU is the only state university in a 120 mile radius. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredits FGCU. In the SUS, FGCU is considered a “comprehensive university” offering primarily undergraduate degrees, but with an expanding number of bachelors and professional programs. Doctoral programs are available as joint programs with other state universities. There is one state community college operating in the region and a private university is building a campus in a neighboring county. The regional population grows about 12% per year primarily from in-migration and is now over one million. Lee County has over 70,000 students in public schools. Combined with regional public and private schools, there are over 150,000 students in the K-12 system that is struggling to expand to meet the demand. Florida awards a comparatively low number of bachelor’s degrees per capita of the college age population. Hence, the great interest in expanding bachelor’s degree programs.

FGCU has a current enrollment of over 7,200 students. Enrollment is projected to reach 10,000 by 2010. The 200+ faculty members share a commitment to the university’s teaching mission. Three quarters of the faculty have doctorates in their fields. Although they spend the majority of their time in the classroom, faculty members also advance the knowledge in their fields through research and scholarly work. Included in a multi-year faculty contract system is a new formulation of faculty productivity, which emphasizes teaching and puts equal weight on service and scholarship.

The University integrates technology into every aspect of the institution: All students are given an e-mail account, providing direct communication with

faculty and classmates. All classes have a web page with course description, syllabus, assignments and other information. Most classrooms feature a multimedia-teaching podium that enables instructors to integrate computer presentations, access the Internet, view videotapes and CD's, and utilize other forms of interactive technology. Students become proficient in utilizing this technology in their own presentations, in accessing the online library resources, and doing course research. FGCU provides many courses via distance learning, which offers maximum flexibility for students (FGCU Catalog, 2005-2006, p. 10).

Florida Gulf Coast University is dedicated to providing a learning-centered environment that delivers the highest quality educational opportunities for the development of the knowledge, insights, competencies, and skills necessary for success in life and work. To maintain this learning-centered environment, the university as a whole, its units and individuals actively practice continuous planning and assessment leading to improvement and renewal.

Again, the University offers a broad range of undergraduate and graduate areas of study including arts and sciences, business, technology, education, environmental science, nursing/allied health, public and social services. Professional development and continuing education programs are offered based on need and availability of resources. On-campus offerings along with distance education and partnerships enable the university to extend a rich diversity of higher education opportunities to Southwest Florida and beyond.

Florida Gulf Coast University promotes an institutional culture that:

- Fosters the pursuit of truth and knowledge
- Affirms academic freedom as the foundation for the transmission and advancement of knowledge.
- Seeks excellence in both educational offerings and services.
- Asserts that learner needs, rather than institutional preference, should guide decisions concerning academic planning, policies and programs.
- Provides academic, student, and administrative support services designed to meet the needs of the university community.
- Recognizes, encourages and rewards quality teaching.
- Enhances the growth of faculty by supporting teaching, scholarships, service and professional development.
- Encourages collaboration in learning, governance, operations, and planning.
- Establishes mentor/advisor programs, particularly programs for undergraduates that include senior capstone projects or papers.
- Recognizes that informed and engaged citizens are essential to the creation of a civil and sustainable society.
- Affirms that diversity is a source of renewal and vitality.

Florida Gulf Coast University infuses the strengths of the traditional public university with innovation and learning-centered spirit, its chief aim being to fulfill the academic, cultural, social, and career expectations of its constituents.

Outstanding faculty upholds challenging academic standards and balance research, scholarly activities, and service expectations with their central responsibilities of teaching and mentoring. Through these efforts, the faculty and University transform students' lives and the southwest Florida region.

Florida Gulf Coast University continuously pursues academic excellence, practices and promotes environmental sustainability, embraces diversity, nurtures community partnerships, values public service, encourages civic responsibility, cultivates habits of lifelong learning, and keeps the advancement of knowledge and pursuit of truth as noble ideals at the heart of the university's purpose. The Guiding Principles of FGCU include:

- Student success is the focus of all University endeavors.
- Academic freedom is the foundation for the transmission and advancement of knowledge.
- Diversity is a source of renewal and vitality.
- Informed and engaged citizens are essential to the creation of a civil and sustainable society.
- Service to Southwest Florida, including access to the University, is a public trust.
- Technology is a fundamental tool in achieving educational quality, efficiency, and distribution.

- Connected knowing and collaborative learning are basic to being well educated.
- Assessment of all functions is necessary for improvement and continual renewal.

See <http://www.fgcu.edu/info/mission.asp>.

The Legal Studies Program strives to apply the FGCU mission to its content areas.

## **2) THE COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (CPS) and JUSTICE STUDIES**

The College of Professional Studies (CPS) at FGCU is one of five (5) colleges. CPS is comprised of four (4) academic divisions and seven (7) programs with approximately two (2) dozen faculty and one (1) dozen staff members. According to its mission statement, “The College of Professional Studies is committed to developing students’ abilities to successfully address social, political, and economic problems, as well as to educating and training broad-based service professionals in the public and private sectors. Recognizing the rapidly changing environments in which such efforts must be carried out, the College’s curricula are oriented toward lifelong approaches to professional and personal development integrating theory, practice, and technology. All programs in the College link students’ learning experiences to the needs of communities and their members.”

CPS adheres to and strives toward the following goals:

- Prepare students to respond in innovative ways to the evolving social, political, economic, and natural environments in which policy-making and service delivery are carried out.
- Cultivate an ethic of public integrity and civic engagement in professional, political, and community activities.
- Develop an understanding of the multi-cultural and increasingly global contexts within which public problems emerge, as well as an ability to formulate interdisciplinary strategies for their identification and resolution.
- Cultivate the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes required for life-long growth and development.
- Integrate multiple, state-of-the-art technologies into the learning environment and develop students' abilities to use technology creatively in their work.
- Develop comprehensive field-based experiences linked to individual and community development. See FGCU 2005-2006 catalog, p.185, as well as <http://itech.fgcu.edu/sacs/documents/catalog%20p171.pdf>.

Among the programs in the College of Professional Studies are Political Science, Human Services, Resort and Hospitality Management, and Social Work. Also included in CPS is Justice Studies. "The Division of Justice Studies is dedicated to meeting the needs of students and helping them succeed. To this end, we provide quality education by ensuring that

qualified faculty are involved with community organizations.” See FGCU catalog, 2005-2006, p. 131. Justice Studies houses Criminal Justice, Criminal Forensics Studies and Legal Studies.

### **3. THE LEGAL STUDIES (LS) PROGRAM**

The region’s need for program in legal studies was identified in the late 1990’s after meetings between the present LS Program Coordinator, Dr. Robert Diotalevi, and the former Chair of Justice Studies as well as subsequent focus groups by those affiliated with the legal and general communities such as bar associations, judges, courts and attorneys in Lee County and the surrounding four (4) counties. The FGCU Justice Studies Advisory Board was also consulted and gave its approval.

The University of West Florida and the University of Central Florida were the only Florida state universities with Bachelor of Science/Arts degrees in Legal Studies. But, for the most part, these programs are designed for those students beginning college as freshmen or entering with an Associate of Arts degree. Private institutions such as The University of Miami and International College also exist in the marketplace. It was agreed that with a fast-growing population it was inevitable that an additional source of trained, legal professionals was needed

FGCU has been the leader attempting to educate two-year institutions about the statewide articulation agreement. It was determined that a new LS program could serve as a capstone to associate degree students in Legal Assisting/Paralegal Studies, as well as those wishing to earn a baccalaureate and then continue to law school or enter a

masters program. Based upon the determination of a need for a legal studies program to serve the immediate area and beyond the state legislature approved The LS Program in 2001 and the program was implemented shortly thereafter.

The Bachelor of Science Degrees in Legal Studies requires completion of 120 credit hours with 48 upper division credit hours. The Legal Studies BS degree may be completed on campus or through distance learning, or in a combination of both. Currently there are two (2) full-time faculty who teach in Legal Studies as well as one (1) full-time Criminal Justice faculty member who occasionally teaches, along with adjunct instructors.

a) MISSION

**Benchmark 1**

*The Legal Studies Program's mission is appropriate to professional legal education and its attainment is based on a partnership with law firms, public and private law-related agencies, and other academic institutions.*

Recognizing the demanding role of Legal Studies in a complex society, the Legal Studies Program is committed to the preparation of students for careers in legal studies, related professions, and for graduate education. Within the scope of this mission, we acknowledge two (2) critical components:

- i) Students come with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and academic interest, and
- ii) Student success is at the center of its endeavors.

The Legal Studies Program's mission is to have a program that is designed to produce well-rounded members of the legal community who can immediately function upon graduation in a broad array of legally-related careers. It also serves as a vehicle for possible graduate studies in legal studies masters programs and law school doctoral programs. In general, see FGCU 2005-2006 catalog, pp. 135-136.

The LS Program is charged with producing quality undergraduates who possess a core liberal education, along with their technical expertise in law. It adheres to the fundamental principles of CPS and Justice Studies, which center on community-based, lifelong learning. It is located within an accredited university with several campuses/ distance learning avenues and staffed by a strong faculty with diverse research interests. The LS Program has also been strengthened by continued national and statewide growth in the paralegal industry, the support of local legal and general communities, and the respect from Florida two-year colleges which is evidenced by many signed articulation agreements with FGCU.

#### b) PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Legal Studies Program provides students with an in-depth understanding of the legal system as it relates to the laws, the courts, clients and lawyers. Many graduates work as paralegals. The LS curriculum encompasses both generalist and specialist courses as recommended by the American Bar Association. The American Bar Association defines a paralegal or legal assistant as "a person qualified by education, training, or experience who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation,

governmental agency, or other entity, and who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which a lawyer is responsible."

<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/paralegals/def98.html>

The LS Program also focuses on essential competencies identified by several national organizations in the field. It prepares students for several professional paralegal/legal assisting certification exams, including the Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) Examination sponsored by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) and the Paralegal Advanced Competency Examination (PACE) by the National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA).

Students do not have to have had any prerequisite legal courses in order to enter the program or take any of the upper level Legal Studies offerings. They do have to meet all state and institutional requirements for admission and graduation including but not limited to College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), foreign language, and the Gordon Rule writing and computation, General Education requirements, service learning, university colloquium, etc. See FGCU 2005-2006 catalog, page 132, as well as 3d below.

Students may begin the LS Program as freshmen or after completion of a related associate degree. The baccalaureate degree in Legal Studies can be earned by taking courses via distance and traditional means. Students need to take 48 hours of upper division coursework to complete the BS degree, plus any additional general education courses needed to meet the 36-hour state requirement. The 48 hours consist of 27 credits of core courses, 15 credits of elective courses and 6 credits of university-required courses.

The Articulation Agreement between the State University System and the Division of Community Colleges govern the transfer of students who have earned the associate degree. The Articulation Agreement guarantees, within certain limitations, priority for graduates of a Florida community college. It also facilitates the transfer of students from the associate level at statewide colleges to baccalaureate degree programs such as Legal Studies at FGCU.

Presently, the Legal Studies Program at FGCU has eleven (11) formally signed articulation/partnership agreements with the following institutions:

- ❖ Broward Community College (BCC)  
Fort Lauderdale
  
- ❖ California University of Pennsylvania (CUP) (Master's of Legal Studies Program)
  
- ❖ Edison College (EC) (Paralegal and Criminal Justice Technology Programs)  
Fort Myers
  
- ❖ Florida Community College (FCC)  
Jacksonville
  
- ❖ Florida Keys Community College (FKCC)  
Key West
  
- ❖ Hillsborough Community College (HCC)  
Tampa

❖ Palm Beach Community College (PBCC)

Lake Worth

❖ Pensacola Junior College (PJC)

Pensacola

❖ Saint Petersburg College (SPC) (partnership)

Saint Petersburg

❖ Sante Fe Community College (SFCC)

Gainesville

❖ Tallahassee Community College (TCC)

Tallahassee

Each of the above agreements can be found in Appendix **B**.

## **Benchmark 2**

*The Legal Studies Program's student body represents a diverse group with many talents.*

In 2001 The LS Program began with three (3) declared majors and presently has about one hundred and sixty (160) majors. Regarding the makeup of our students, for the majority, they attend full time and are comprised of female Caucasians who are less than 20 years old and reside in Lee County, Florida. See Appendix **D**. The following Full-Time-Equivalent student (FTE) data, derived from student-credit hour productivity, was reported to the state by FGCU for Legal Studies/PLA courses in

terms of on campus, off campus, and distance learning, according to FGCU 's

Institutional Research and Analysis:

Term	LOC	SUM(SCH_FND)	Fundable FTE	Headcount	Sections
200108	01	9	0.23	3	1
200201	01	24	0.60	8	1
200205	DL	66	1.65	22	1
200208	01	159	3.98	55	2
200208	DL	117	2.93	39	2
200301	01	87	2.18	29	2
200301	20	18	0.45	6	1
200301	DL	195	4.88	65	4
200305	DL	75	1.88	25	1
200308	01	180	4.50	61	2
200308	DL	255	6.38	85	4
200401	01	117	2.93	39	2
200401	20	24	0.60	8	1
200401	DL	204	5.10	68	3
200405	01	45	1.13	15	1
200405	20	51	1.28	17	2
200405	DL	153	3.83	51	2
200408	01	231	5.78	77	2
200408	20	12	0.30	4	1
200408	DL	321	8.03	107	5
200501	01	123	3.08	41	1
200501	20	30	0.75	12	3
200501	DL	624	15.60	208	8
200505	01	24	0.60	8	1
200505	20	6	0.15	2	2
200505	DL	150	3.75	50	2

10= On campus

20= Off campus

DL=Distance  
Learning

The following from Institutional Research and Analysis represents Legal Studies students from 2002 to 2005 regarding new applicants accepted, transfer applicants accepted, freshmen retention rates, and transfer retention rates:

Number of New Applicants accepted

2002 19  
2003 25  
2004 25  
2005 42

Number of New Transfer Applicants accepted

2002 19  
2003 36  
2004 23  
2005 52

Freshmen retention rates

2003 86  
2004 56  
2005 53 (preliminary figure)

Transfer Retention rates

2003 42.86%  
2004 63.64%  
2006 43.75%

Almost from the onset Legal Studies students started to stand out. On April 25, 2003 at FGCU's annual Research Day thirty-three (33) student entries vied for *Best Student Submission*. A team of five (5) Legal Studies majors captured the award. Jim Beatty, Beatrice Clausen, Margie Gladstone, Sonia Rodriguez and Maria Sotomayor won for their poster and PowerPoint submission entitled "Legal Studies Online at FGCU: A Study of Current Student Motivation."

The team conducted its research study from March 23<sup>rd</sup> through April 4<sup>th</sup> 2003. Distance students were polled as to why they chose FGCU's distance learning courses to achieve their baccalaureate. Participants received a questionnaire of twenty (20) queries.

Ninety-seven (97) students were surveyed by e-mail. Eleven (11) responded (11.3% return). Forty-five per cent (45%) of those responding indicated they studied in a combination of traditional and distance means. Another forty-five per cent (45%) indicated they were being educated totally by distance learning. The following categories scored the highest responses:

Age range 20-24	36.3%
Female:	90%
Single:	55%
Full-time student:	73%
Florida resident:	73%

The LS Team explored four areas of motivation: Personal Gain, Gain Knowledge, Social Reasons and Community Goals. The majority of those replying to the survey indicated that becoming better informed, advancing in their current job and obtaining the LS degree were factors that motivated them to be in the program. The Director of FGCU's Research and Sponsored Programs presented the LS team an award at the Celebration of Excellence Night, which concluded the Research Day festivities. The students' survey can be found in Appendix E. Legal Studies students have served internships at the Washington Institute, been named to *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities* and FGCU Dean's List, worked on service learning projects, and passed national proficiency exams such as the Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) Exam. See "Opportunities," section 5c4, below. Furthermore, many are employed in their professions. See Section 4 below.

c) GOALS/ OBJECTIVES

**Benchmark 3**

*The Legal Studies Program has goals derived from its mission, and its objectives from its goals, both of which are consistent with state and national standards.*

Among the LS Program objectives are for students to develop the following

(Note: FGCU Learning Outcome Goals are in **bold** language, and applicable LS course work is referred thereto):

1. a working knowledge of the law and its impact on the legal system and society; (*objective accomplished through all coursework*)

2. mastery of those technical skills required for legal document drafting (supports University Learning Outcome Goals: **Effective Communication, Information Literacy and Technological Literacy**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework; specific drafting courses include PLA 4116 and PLA 4850)*
  
3. written and verbal communication skills, with particular emphasis on the development of effective and persuasive oral and written arguments in the legal arena (supports University Learning Outcome Goal: **Effective Communication**); *(objective accomplished through PLA 3700, PLA 3763, PLA 3433, PLA 4940, PLA 3236, PLA 4565, and PLA 4850)*
  
4. business, professional, and office management skills required to succeed in the legal profession; (supports University Learning Outcome Goal: **Technological Literacy**); *(objective accomplished through PLA 3763, PLA 3433, PLA 4940, PLA 4565, and PLA 4850)*
  
5. mastery of those skills required to pass national certification examinations such as The National Association of Legal Assistant's (NALA) Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) Examination and/or The National Federation of Paralegal Association's (NFPA) Paralegal Advanced Competency Examination (PACE). *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through PLA 4565)*

6. mastery of computational, computer and organizational skills required of legal assistants/paralegals in the legal profession (supports University Learning Outcome Goal : **Technological Literacy**); *(objective accomplished through PLA 3763, PLA 3433, PLA 4940, and PLA 4850)*
  
7. competency to effectively handle ethical issues through an understanding of those conflicts between components and individuals involved in the legal environment (supports University Learning Outcome Goal: **Ethical Responsibility**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through PLA 3700)*
  
8. an understanding of environmental, economic and ecological issues as each relates to law making and law enforcement through interdisciplinary learning experiences (supports University Learning Outcome Goal: **Ecological Perspective**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through IDS 3920)*
  
9. a working knowledge and understanding of the relationships between individuals and their communities; individuals and the legal system; the community and the legal system, and the role diversity plays in the system (supports University Learning Outcome Goals: **Community Awareness and Involvement** and **Cultural Diverse Perspective**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through PLA 4850, PLA 4940 and PLA 4933)*

10. an understanding of how the access, control and dissemination of information determines and shapes law and policy making (supports University Learning Outcome Goal: **Information Literacy**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through PLA 4116 and PLA 4850)*
11. the ability to appreciate diversity among cultures and different legal systems (supports University Learning Outcome: **Cultural Diverse Perspective**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through PLA 4850 and PLA 4940)*
12. techniques for problem solving through fictional and factually based scenarios (supports University Learning Outcome: **Problem-Solving Abilities**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through PLA 3700)*
13. the ability to locate and interpret data through both text-based and electronic based sources of information (support University Learning Outcome Goals: **Information Literacy** and **Technological Literacy**); *(objective accomplished through all coursework but most specifically through PLA 4116 and PLA 4850)*
14. an appreciation of life-long learning, professional excellence and community service (objective accomplished through student internships, participation in service learning/volunteer opportunities, employment and/or attendance at graduate/law school).
- See also FGCU 2005-2006 catalog, pp. 9-11.

i) EXPECTED OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES, RESOURCES/ SUPPORT SERVICES

The LS Program has adopted specific, measurable criteria (expected outputs and outcomes) to support goals and objectives. These criteria include measures assessing outcomes related to teaching/ learning, research, and service as well as goals related to resources and support services as follows:

(1) TEACHING/ LEARNING

- Number of Bachelor's degrees granted: meet or exceed goal of 105% of previous year's count
- Meet or exceed University goals for AA/AS retention rate
- Meet or exceed University goals for AA/AS graduation rate
- Meet or exceed University goals with regard to graduates with less than or equal to 115% of credit hours
- Meet or exceed departmental goal for percentage of seniors who successfully complete capstone course
- Meet or exceed University goals for percentage of graduates enrolling in graduate or professional school
- Meet or exceed SUS percentages of graduates who remain in Florida
- Meet or exceed SUS percentages of graduates who remain in Florida and who earn at least \$25,000
- Maintain a highly qualified, committed faculty demonstrated by proportion of classes taught by state-funded ranked faculty
- Provide focus areas in Legal Studies that are in demand in the profession

(2) RESEARCH

- Meet or exceed School goal for active community research projects and/or publications

(3) SERVICE

- Faculty actively involved with Legal Studies related agencies in the community (average one agency per faculty member)
- Meet or exceed average distance learning (DL) seat count for past three years
- Provide entire upper division portion of bachelor's degree through distance
- Increase access to University programs by establishing articulation agreements with other institutions
- Faculty actively involved with University service (average one School or University level committee per full-time faculty member, including student advising and participation in student-based organizations)
- Faculty participation in service to the profession (average one professional association or agency per member, including local, regional and national professional organizations)

Discussion of the fulfillment of said criteria appears in Section 4a, "ACTUAL OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES," to follow.

In 2004 The Florida State Legislature introduced a bill requiring all state universities to develop exit exams for every major to document achievement of learning outcomes. In a compromise measure, the SUS Board of Governors implemented a policy requiring the development of Academic Learning Compacts (ALCs) for each baccalaureate program. The ALC should describe the expected student outcomes with regard to effective communication, critical thinking, and discipline-specific content knowledge. The Compact should detail the assessment methods for outcomes and make them available to students. To meet this requirement and as part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmation process, FGCU is developing a comprehensive assessment process that establishes outcome measures at all levels of the institution and provides feedback loops to programs, Divisions, Colleges, and the University. Under this Quality Enhancement Plan, each year University level goals will be selected for integration and performance outcomes throughout the institution. The initial study is examining the University goals to develop an ecological perspective and fostering community involvement. The LS Program participates in the University level assessment process and its own program level assessment process.

The outcome measures for SACS/ALC for Legal Studies consist of a formal capstone midterm portfolio and informal, informational student survey. They were used to evaluate achievement of goals. Data collection is done throughout the semester and at the end of each academic year. Results are shared and discussed with faculty, students, and administrators at the levels of individual courses and instructors, program, Division, College, and University. Outcomes are used to adjust content, delivery methods, scheduling, and

administrative structure. Instruments to measure learning are continually being developed.

Course audits, reviews of syllabi, an assessment of student proposals in legal learning, questionnaires, interviews with graduates, and discussions with students and faculty are utilized to determine success in meeting LS Program goals. Appendix C contains past and present instruments used.

(4) RESOURCES (to be discussed later in this report)

a. Faculty

The faculty members have diversified research agendas and legal experiences. These reinforce the relationship with the community. The faculty actively participates on a regular basis in community activities, and we encourage students to become more active community members. This is accomplished by internships, service learning, membership in local organizations, and regular participation at local, state, regional, and national events and conferences such as the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE), National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), and so on.

b. Offices and Equipment

c. Library (including SUS interlibrary services)

d. Internship funds (manuals, travel, mileage, etc.)

e. Professional memberships (such as state bar fees, membership to national organizations such as The American Association for

Paralegal Education (AAfPE), National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), etc.

(5) SUPPORT SERVICES

- Provide in-service training for faculty on use of appropriate DL and campus instructional delivery tools, including:
  - a. technical support
  - b. articulation agreement support
  - c. clerical support
  - d. instructional technology-support, workshops and audio-visual equipment
  - e. off-campus support
  - f. departmental adjunct support

**Benchmark 4**

*The LS Program curriculum is developed and organized as a coherent and integrated whole consistent with program goals and objectives. Education is grounded in fundamental concepts and contains a coherent, integrated professional foundation in legal principles from which the advanced curriculum has been built.*

d) PROGRAM COMPONENTS/COURSES/REQUIREMENTS

The LS Program is comprised of the following LS core, LS elective and University courses. Again, the LS curriculum encompasses both generalist and specialist courses as recommended by the American Bar Association (ABA)

**REQUIRED COURSES IN THE DEGREE PROGRAM CORE (27 hours):**

CJL 4064 Constitutional Criminal Law (3)

PLA 3203 Courtroom Techniques (3)

PLA 3700 Ethics for Legal Assistants (3)

PLA 3763 Law Office Management (3)

PLA 3803 Family Law Issues (3)

PLA 4116 Research & Document Drafting (3)

PLA 4603 Florida Trusts, Estates & Probate (3)

PLA 4612 Commercial & Residential Real Estate Transactions (3)

Plus three upper division hours in communication selected in consultation with advisor.

**ELECTIVE COURSES IN THE DEGREE PROGRAM (select 15 hours):**

PLA 3236 Alternative Dispute Resolution (3)

PLA 3273 Negligence & Tort Litigation (3)-recommended

PLA 3433 Business Organizations (3)- recommended

PLA 3572 Travel Law (3)

PLA 3586 Condominium & Association Law (3)

PLA 3634 Land Use and Ownership (3)

PLA 3733 Legal Technology (3)

PLA 4530 Elder Law (3)

PLA 4556 Real Estate Litigation (3)

PLA 4565 Certified Legal Assistant Review (3)

PLA 4570 Globalization and the Rule of Law (3)

PLA 4604 Probate Litigation (3)

PLA 4913 Independent Research (varies)

PLA 4933 Special Topics (3)

PLA 4940 Internship (1-6)

Other upper division electives approved in advance by the advisor include criminal justice, political science, law, business, or other related fields.

**UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS (6 hours):**

IDS 3920	University Colloquium	3
PLA 4850	American Jurisprudence Seminar	3
GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS (state)		(36 hours)
UNIVERSITY ELECTIVES		(36 hours)

Service Learning is a non-credit requirement for FGCU undergraduate degrees, which involves 40 to 80 hours of community service, depending on a student's previous number of transfer credits achieved and applicable.

**Note:** PLA 1003, *Introduction to Law*, is also offered to those who do not have a related associate's degree and who desire an overview of the US legal system, including courts, lawyers and related professionals in the criminal and civil systems.

Appendix F contains LS course descriptions.

**4) DATA COLLECTION**

The Legal Studies faculty developed and implemented procedures to evaluate the extent to which expected outputs/outcomes and resources/support services have

been achieved since the inception of the program in January 2002. Data collection guidelines, as well as expected and actual outputs/ outcomes and resources/ support services are summarized in Appendix A and discussed in detail below. Data were collected from the FETPIP database, University records, Division records, faculty records, and a survey of Legal Studies graduates. University records were obtained from several departments; specific data sources are identified below.

See Appendix C for data collection and reporting-related documents.

As part of the efforts an informal survey of students was conducted in the core course *American Jurisprudence Seminar, PLA 4850*, between April 18 and 29, 2005. The course description for *PLA 4850* is as follows: *Ability to understand, identify, analyze and assess theoretical foundations and practical applications of current topics in the legal environment.* The midterm project consists of preparation of a formal resume and portfolio. A portfolio is a set of works representing performance. It represents best pieces and evaluations as well as the strengths/ weaknesses of the pieces. Portfolios also have one or more works in progress to illustrate how a work, such as an essay, moves through various stages.

The following program student learning outcomes were assessed: *Written and verbal communications skills, with particular emphasis on the development of effective and persuasive oral and written arguments in the legal profession.*

The midterm portfolio survey response rate was low, twenty-seven (27) per cent with six (6) received out of twenty-two (22) sent via e-mail and regular mail.

Reponses to the following questions, lettered A to E, were as follows:

A. *To describe beliefs regarding this course in relationship to being successfully taught the following:*

*Written and verbal communications skills, with particular emphasis on the development of effective and persuasive oral and written arguments in the legal profession*

I would:	Responses
1. strongly agree	2
2. moderately agree	2
3. somewhat agree	1
4. moderately disagree	0
5. strongly disagree	5

B. The capstone portfolio project aided in the learning process and achievement of goals in “A” above.

I would:	Responses
1. strongly agree	4
2. moderately agree	1
3. somewhat agree	0
4. moderately disagree	1
5. strongly disagree	0

C. State where you live: City, county and state

Responses:

City: Fort Myers (2) Cape Coral (1) Saint Petersburg (2)  
Bonita Springs (1)

County: Lee (4) Pinellas (2)

State: Florida (6)

D. In what age range are you?

Responses:

16-24\_\_ 1

25-33\_\_ 1

34-42\_\_ 1

43-50 \_\_ 2

over 50 \_\_ 1

E. What is your gender?

Responses: Gender: Male: 0 Female: 6

During the week of May 5 2005, a copy of the PLA 4850 midterm capstone project along with a copy of the student survey and survey results were sent to eight adjuncts (8) and one (1) full-time Legal Studies employee.

Use of Assessment Data to Improve Student Learning:

Legal Studies faculty agreed to begin program assessment with communication skills. Students in a spring 2005 Legal Studies core capstone course, *American Jurisprudence, PLA 4850*, were scored on a direct measure of communication skills based upon submission of a midterm portfolio. A class passage rate of 70% or better was determined to be indicative of favorable results. The median grade was 93.32. All 22 students (100%) met the criterion; this goal was achieved.

There were responses from 6 out of 22 students (27%). Students were also queried about whether or not the capstone portfolio project aided in the learning process and achievement of said goals. Out of students responding 2/3 strongly or moderately agreed that such skills were taught in the course. There were 83% who agreed that the midterm portfolio aided in the learning process of achievement of goals previously mentioned. Finally, students were also asked background questions concerning their geographic location, age range and gender.

The Program Coordinator of Legal Studies analyzed survey assessment data and faculty comments; again results were passed along to full time faculty members and adjuncts with no further responses. Due to the surveys and subsequent analysis thereof the following will be implemented in *PLA 4850*:

1. More web sites and up-to-date information will be provided regarding the preparation of resumes and related materials for the midterm capstone project,
2. Additional class time will be afforded in the course to resume preparation,
3. Additional time will be afforded in the course for the teaching of and discussion related to oral and written communication skills, and
4. Future input from faculty and students will be requested and studied concerning these issues.

We concluded that the Legal Studies Program will revise goals, objectives and outcomes of *PLA 4850* on a continuing basis, especially in regard to the midterm capstone project based upon student and faculty input as well as future studies.

In December 2005 a survey was sent via regular mail to the twenty-seven (27) LS Program graduates. We received 7/28 responses (25%). Among the issues raised of LS graduates in the survey were:

- Current job title and location
- Legal areas in which they have worked
- Current salary and benefits
- How employment was obtained
- Whether or not graduate study was sought
- Legally-related memberships
- The effectiveness of the LS Program, instructors, advising, library, internship,

and curriculum

-Which legal courses at FGCU were most beneficial, need improvement, should be eliminated or were not helpful, etc.

-Any suggestions to improve the LS Program

The graduate survey along with responses can be found in Appendix **G** and is referred to below.

a) ACTUAL OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

**Benchmark 5**

*The Legal Studies Program's efforts and outcomes are consistent with its mission, goals and industry standards.*

i) TEACHING/ LEARNING

- **Number of Bachelor's degrees granted: meet or exceed goal of 105% of previous year's count.**

Number of Bachelor's degrees granted (this is measure 2.a. of Senate Bill 2502). Data provided by Institutional Research and Analysis and college advisor. See 2B preceding. The following represents number of graduates to date from the program:

Academic Year	Number of BA Degrees Granted	Source of Data	Goal Met?
2003	1	Enrollment	N/A
2004	10 (10 times) previous year	Academic Advisor	Yes
2005	16 (1.6 times) previous year	Academic Advisor	Yes

*This goal was exceeded.*

- **Meet or exceed University goals for AA/AS retention rate.**

Retention rate for AA/AS transfers after 2 years (this is an adaptation of measure 1.d. of Senate Bill 2502. Data provided by Institutional Research and Analysis.

TRANSFER	RETENTION	RATES	
2003	42.86%	--	
2004	63.64%	Up 20.78% from first year	
2005	43.75%	Up .89% from first year	

Source: FGCU Institutional Research and Analysis

We have addressed this in several ways. Since starting the LS Program we have established articulation agreements with eleven (11) community colleges and one (1) masters degree program, which should improve retention rates. We have also greatly increased support for our DL offerings since the first year, which should significantly and steadily improved DL retention. *This goal was exceeded.*

- **Meet or exceed University goals for AA/AS graduation rate.**

The LS Program has graduated twenty-eight (28) students in four (4) years. Many students possess AA and/or AS degrees. Data provided by Institutional Research and Analysis, as follows:

SPRING 02	4
SUMMER 02	2
FALL 02	8
SPRING 03	5
SUMMER 03	3
FALL 03	15
SPRING 04	10
SUMMER 04	6
FALL 04	8
SPRING 05	6
SUMMER 05	8
FALL 05	22

TOTAL: 75

This is in line with current projections.

- **Meet or exceed Legislature set goal of 61% of graduates with less than or equal to 115% of credit hours.**

Percent of graduates with less than or equal to 115% of credit hours (this is measure 1.e. of Senate Bill 2502 based on only 3 years of available data since opening). Data provided by Student Services. *This goal was not applicable.*

- **Meet or exceed departmental goal of 75% of seniors who successfully complete capstone project.**

Percent of students enrolled in *American Jurisprudence Seminar*, PLA 4850, who complete course with grade of D or better. This is an approximate equivalent of measure 1.f. of Senate Bill 2502, as there are no LS licensure examinations. Data provided by Program Coordinator. Out of thirty-eight (38) students enrolled in spring 04 and spring 05, thirty-

seven (37) passed the course, representing 97%. The grades were as follows:

A- 26

B- 8

C- 3

W- 1

*This goal was exceeded.*

See also Appendix C.

- **Meet or exceed Legislature set goal of 16% for percentage of graduates enrolling in graduate or professional school.**

Percent of graduates enrolled in graduate school upon completion of baccalaureate. This is measure 1.j. of Senate Bill 2502. Data provided by survey of LS graduates and Institutional Research and Analysis.

Some students attend law school while several have been accepted into California University's Legal Studies Masters Program. *This goal was met.* See Appendix G.

- **Meet or exceed SUS percentages of graduates who remain in Florida.**

Percent of graduates who remain in Florida after 1 year. This is measure 1.g. of Senate Bill 2502. Data provided by survey of LS graduates and

Institutional Research and Analysis. The majority of LS students remain in Florida after 1 year.

- **Meet or exceed Legislature set goal of 45% of graduates who remain in Florida and who earn at least \$25,000.**

Percent of remaining graduates employed at \$25,000 or more after 1 year. This is measure 1.h. of Senate Bill 2502. Data provided by survey of LS graduates. See Appendix G.

100% of graduates contacted who responded to this question remain in Florida and several earn \$25,000 or more. This goal was met.

- **Maintain a highly qualified, committed faculty demonstrated by at least 75%\* of classes taught by state-funded ranked faculty.**

This is measure 2.b. of Senate Bill 2502. Data provided by FGCU online course information database (Gulflink). *This goal was met.*

- **Provide focus areas in Legal Studies that are in demand in the profession.**

We have developed several career tracks in key areas of Legal Studies according to current professional demand, need and trends. See descriptions of LS tracks in Appendix H. *This goal was met.*

ii) RESEARCH

- **Meet or exceed School goal for active community research projects and/or publications: average one per state-funded ranked faculty per year.**

Faculty Self-Report, documented. Data provided by faculty members.

Valid data based on faculty members reporting as seen below:

Academic Year	Active community research projects or publications
2002-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Paralegal Educator</i>, The American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) (2)</li> <li>• <i>The Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration</i>, University System of West Georgia (1)</li> <li>• <i>Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship (E-JASL)</i>, The International Consortium for the Advancement of Academic Publication (ICAAP) (1)</li> <li>• <i>Academic Exchange-Extra (AEE)</i> (1)</li> <li>• <i>LIBRES: The Library and Information Science Electronic Journal</i> (1)</li> <li>• <i>Library, Philosophy and Practice</i> (1)</li> <li>• <i>The Michigan Association for Computer-related Users in Technology (MACUL) Journal</i> (4)</li> <li>• <i>FGCU Annual Research Day</i> (2)</li> <li>• <i>FGCU Renaissance Academy</i> (4)</li> <li>• <i>National Law Day Ceremonies</i> (1)</li> <li>• <i>FGCU Justice Studies Advisory Board</i></li> <li>• <i>General Education Committee</i></li> <li>• <i>FGCU Legal Studies Advisory Subcommittee</i></li> <li>• <i>Honorary Degree Award Committee</i></li> <li>• <i>Faculty Equity Study Committee</i></li> <li>• <i>Professional Development Oversight Committee</i></li> <li>• <i>Program Review Committee</i></li> <li>• <i>FGCU Faculty Senate Rep (CPS)</i></li> <li>• <i>Edison Community College Advisory Board</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision 7 Communications and Education Advisory Group of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit Court for Lee County</li> <li>• Editor, <i>The OnLine Journal of Distance Learning Administration</i>, State University of West Georgia</li> <li>• Editor, Technology in Paralegal Practice and <i>Education</i>, American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE)</li> <li>• Reviewer, <i>Journal of Paralegal Education and Practice</i>, American Association for Paralegal Education, (AAfPE)</li> <li>• Reviewer, Pearson/Prentice Hall Publications Co.</li> <li>• Reviewer, Aspen Publishing Co.</li> <li>• Judge, Naples Moot Court Competition</li> <li>• Presenter, The National Service Learning Conference</li> <li>• Presenter, International Online Conference on Teaching Online in Higher Education, (TOHE), Indiana University-Purdue University</li> <li>• Presenter, Annual Teaching in the Community Colleges: Hybrid Dreams, The Next Leap For Internet Learning Online Conference, Kapiolani Community College</li> </ul>
<p>2004-2005</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book chapter-Marcel-Dekker Publishing (1)</li> <li>• <i>The Paralegal Educator</i>, The American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) (2)</li> <li>• FGCU Renaissance Academy (5)</li> <li>• FGCU Justice Studies Advisory Board</li> <li>• FGCU Legal Studies Advisory Subcommittee</li> <li>• Edison Community College Advisory Board</li> <li>• Editor, <i>The OnLine Journal of Distance Learning Administration</i>, State University of West Georgia</li> <li>• Editor, Technology in Paralegal Practice and <i>Education</i>, American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE)</li> <li>• Reviewer, <i>Journal of Paralegal Education and Practice</i>, American Association for Paralegal Education, (AAfPE)</li> <li>• Reviewer, Pearson/Prentice Hall Publications Co.</li> <li>• Reviewer, Aspen Publishing Co.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewer, <i>The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business</i>, The Christian Business Faculty Association, Cedarville University</li> <li>• Presenter, The National Society of the Colonial, Dames of America</li> <li>• Presenter, Entrepreneur’s Law School, FGCU’s Small Business Development Center</li> <li>• Presenter, Charlotte County Bar Meeting</li> </ul>
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Note: Number of times indicated in parentheses

*This goal was exceeded.*

iii) SERVICE

- **Faculty actively involved with Legal Studies related agencies in the community (average one agency per faculty member).**

Faculty Self-Report, documented. Data provided by faculty members.

Valid data based on faculty members reporting. *This goal was met.*

- **Meet or exceed average DL seat count for past two years.**

DL seat counts by semester. Data provided by Institutional Research and Analysis. Each year’s enrollment has exceeded the previous year’s average.

Academic Year	Semester	DL Seat Count	Goal Met?
2002	Overall	<b>61</b>	N/A
	Fall	39	
	Spring	0	
	Summer	22	
2003	Overall	<b>164</b>	Yes
	Summer	25	

	Fall	82	
	Spring	57	
2004	Overall	<b>226</b>	Yes
	Summer	51	
	Fall	107	
	Spring	68	
2005	Overall	<b>340</b>	Yes
	Summer	58	
	Fall	143	
	Spring	139	

*This goal was exceeded.*

- **Provide entire upper division portion of bachelor's degree through distance.**

During the first year two (2) years of operation all of the core and several electives of the LS bachelor's degree were provided via distance; *this goal has been met.* The course schedule is routinely reviewed to ensure that students have the opportunity to complete their degree in a timely fashion, i.e., usually two (2) years or less for those possessing the AA or AS degree.

- **Increase access to University programs by establishing articulation agreements with other institutions.**

Eleven (11) current Articulation Agreements as well as the Statewide Articulation Agreement provide transition for the paralegal/legal assisting student, far exceeding most programs at FGCU. *This goal has been met.*

- **Faculty actively involved with University service (average one School or University level committee per faculty member).**

Faculty Self-Report and documented. Data provided by faculty members.

Valid data based on faculty members reporting as seen below:

Academic Year	University, School, or Division level committees
2002-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FGCU Justice Studies Advisory Board</li> <li>• General Education Committee</li> <li>• FGCU Legal Studies Advisory Subcommittee</li> <li>• Edison Community College Advisory Board</li> <li>• Revision 7 Communications and Education Advisory Group of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit Court for Lee County</li> </ul>
2004-2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FGCU Justice Studies Advisory Board</li> <li>• FGCU Legal Studies Advisory Subcommittee</li> <li>• Edison Community College Advisory Board</li> <li>• Honorary Degree Award Committee</li> <li>• Faculty Equity Study Committee</li> <li>• Professional Development Oversight Committee</li> <li>• Program Review Committee</li> <li>• FGCU Faculty Senate Rep (CPS)</li> <li>• Intellectual Property Committee</li> <li>• Forensics Admission Committee</li> </ul>

*This goal has been exceeded.*

- **Faculty participation in service to the profession (average one professional association or agency per member).**

Faculty Self-Report and documented. Data provided by faculty members.

Valid data based on faculty members reporting as seen below:

LS FACULTY	Professional memberships or agency relationships
	Massachusetts Bar  Florida Bar  New York Bar  Federal First Circuit District and Appeals Bars  Federal Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals Bar  American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE)
<u>Note:</u>	Either one or more LS faculty are members of the above organizations.

*This goal has been met.*

iv) RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Provide Internship opportunities in Legal Studies**

This has been achieved through elective internships supervised by the present Justice Studies Chair as well as recent faculty efforts in Legal Studies.

Along with law firms, The State Attorney’s Office of the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and legal non-profit organizations, criminal justice and legal studies students have been placed with the following, including but not limited to:

- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of S.W. Florida, Inc.
- Cape Coral P.D. – Do The Right Thing
- Cape Coral Police Dept.
- Charlotte Cnty. Sheriff’s Office
- Collier Cnty. Sheriff’s Office
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice – Charlotte Cnty.
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice – Lee Cnty.

DeSoto Correctional Institution  
Federal Law Enforcement Training Ctr.  
Florida Dept. of Children and Families  
Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection, Div. Of Law Enforcement  
Florida Dept. of Law Enforcement  
Florida Marine Patrol  
Fort Myers Police Dept.  
Hendry Correctional Institution  
Hendry Cnty. Sheriff's Office  
Lee Cnty. Clerk of Circuit Courts  
Lee Cnty. Port Authority Police Dept.  
Lee Cnty. Sheriff's Office  
Naples Police Dept.  
Punta Gorda Police Dept.  
Royal Palm Exceptional School  
Ruth Cooper Ctr. For Behavioral Mental Health  
Salvation Army  
Sanibel Police Dept.  
SW Florida Addiction Services, Inc.  
SW Florida Criminal Justice Academy  
SW Florida Marine Institute  
U.S. Marshal's Service  
U.S. Secret Service  
Wackenhut  
Workforce Council of SW Florida, Inc.

*This goal has been met. See also 4c2 below.*

- **Provide LS related service learning activities (at least one per year).**

Service learning opportunities have been offered in LS since 2003

(several courses provide SL opportunities as extra credit projects; future evaluations will contain reflective data). *This goal has been met.*

#### v) SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Provide in-service training for faculty on use of appropriate DL and campus instructional delivery tools.**

FGCU offers several opportunities each semester. LS Faculty have taken advantage of same as well as local, state and national conferences, bar continuing legal education seminars, etc., related to same. *This goal has been met.*

b) ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES /AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT  
SERVICES

**Benchmark 6**

*The Legal Studies Program has sufficient resources and qualified faculty to provide quality service to students in accordance with goals and objectives.*

Overall, resources and support for the Legal Studies Program appear to be adequate, as the program has met the majority of its goals. The success of this program is strongly tied to that support, and there is general consensus among faculty in the program that it is vital to maintain that support.

i) Personnel

(1) Faculty

(a) The Division has two (2) full-time ranked faculty:

- LS Program Coordinator and Associate Professor Robert N. Diotalevi, J.D., 1984, New England School of Law
- Instructor Jeffrey Kleeger, J.D., 1989, Georgetown University Law Center

It is vital to maintain and attempt to increase the current number of ranked faculty especially due to the rapidly continuing growth of the program.

(b) Coordinator of Distance Learning Programs/ Director of Extension Services

Ms. Peggy Bradley, M. Ed., currently fills this position. Ms. Bradley coordinates distance learning in the school. A detailed description of Ms. Bradley's duties is included as Appendix I.

(2) Staff

(a) Division Executive Secretary (OPS position)

(b) Computer Support Specialist, College of Professional Studies (USPS position)

The College has (1) one full time computer support specialist who is primarily responsible for and serves as first contact person for all distance learning related technology, Ms. Andrea Benscoter. A detailed description of her duties is included as Appendix J.

(3) Personnel External to SPSS

Some additional external support is provided to faculty and students. Faculty relies heavily on the Computer Support Specialist and Coordinator of Distance Learning Programs/ Director of Extension

Services for developing and maintaining course materials. External personnel support the computer equipment, printers, software, etc. used in faculty and staff work.

(a) Instructional Technology

IT staff facilitate faculty use of technology for both campus and distance learning by providing support maintaining computer equipment, printers, and software in the classrooms and student labs. IT staff are also responsible for maintaining course related technology such as listservs, message boards, and servers. While this office has a very high workload, the computer support specialist assumes many of these duties, which appropriately facilitates and supports the high level of technology usage and distance delivery.

(b) Academic Computing

AC staff facilitates faculty use of technology for research, teaching, and service by providing support maintaining faculty and staff computer equipment, printers, and software. AC staff is also responsible for maintaining the network and share drives.

ii) Physical Resources

(1) Space

Faculty members have individual offices, and there are sufficient offices in the same area of the building for each current faculty member to have offices.

(2) Computer equipment

Each full time faculty member is provided with a desktop or portable computer. Networked laser printers are available on the same floor as faculty offices. Some heavy users have personal ink-jet printers.

(3) Office Equipment

Members of The College of Professional Studies share a workroom with faculty mailboxes, fax machine, photocopier, and assorted office equipment (staplers, electric hole puncher, etc.). Office supplies appear adequate. See *also 5a14* below.

(4) Library resources

The University library has hard bound and electronic materials available. Of special note are the extensive electronic resources, which facilitate delivery to distance students. Hard copies (and microfiche) of academic journals are provided on a limited basis at departmental request. SUS interlibrary loan services are also available.

iii) Other Resources

(1) Legal Studies SubCommittee

Faculty in the LS Program has made some use of the opportunity to consult the local community through live and e-mail contacts of the Legal Studies Subcommittee of the Justice Studies Advisory Board. This subcommittee serves as both an information conduit and a resource for program content and demand. We hope to make even more use of it in the future.

(2) Training

Training in computer applications and teaching/ learning pedagogy are made available to FGCU on a regular basis. This formal training is greatly enhanced by the availability of the computer support specialist to faculty.

(3) Travel Funds

Faculty members are provided with funds for professional development and travel to professional conferences, and local vicinity mileage reimbursement is available. These financial incentives encourage faculty to remain active scholars and to remain active in the community.

#### **4) STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS (SCOT)**

a) Strengths

There are a number of strengths within Legal Studies that make the program unique and promising.

1. **Faculty and Research Capacity.**

Professors in the program are experienced professionals with extensive backgrounds and teaching experiences. The very nature of the faculty being diversified and well rounded has produced many compliments from students. Students tend to enjoy theory accompanied with personal experiences. There is an excellent balance of academic and practical experience. And, former LS students who responded in our graduate survey regarding the effectiveness of their educational experience gave mostly high, positive scores in a wide variety of areas. See Appendix G.

2. **Cost.**

In regard to cost, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Legal Studies from FGCU is less expensive than our immediate competition. Cost is a major consideration when one decides upon when and where to pursue a degree.

3. **Growth potential and industry interest.**

The Legal Studies Program began with three (3) students in 2002 and now has one hundred and sixty (160). This represents a 5,233 per cent increase over four (4) years. There is great interest in the program as well as the paralegal/legal assistant industry itself. Several years ago the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Statistics indicated that the state could expect a sixty-seven (67) per cent increase in the profession

by 2008. In Florida under the category “Paralegals and Legal Assistants” there is reported a 3.18% annual growth rate. See Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation- Labor Market Statistics, Occupational Projection Data 2004-2012, at [http://www.whatpeopleareasking.com/jobs\\_grow.asp?currentPage=3](http://www.whatpeopleareasking.com/jobs_grow.asp?currentPage=3) Nationally, the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Industry-Occupation Employment 2004-2005 matrix reports the following encouraging numbers:

Occupation	2002 employment		Projected 2012 employment		Change, 2002-2012	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent
Total, all occupations	1,111,800	100.00	1,329,900	100.00	218,100	19.6
Paralegals and legal assistants	141,595	12.74	186,372	14.01	44,777	31.6

[http://data.bls.gov/oep/servlet/oep.nioem.servlet.ActionServlet?Action=empior&MultipleSelect=2320110249&Sort=ws\\_emp\\_b&StartItem=0&Resort=No&ResortButton=No&Base=2002&Proj=2012&SingleSelect=541100&Type=Industry&Number=10](http://data.bls.gov/oep/servlet/oep.nioem.servlet.ActionServlet?Action=empior&MultipleSelect=2320110249&Sort=ws_emp_b&StartItem=0&Resort=No&ResortButton=No&Base=2002&Proj=2012&SingleSelect=541100&Type=Industry&Number=10)

4. **Accreditation.**

The Southern Association of College and Schools accredits Florida Gulf Coast University. In fall 2005 SACS granted FGCU reaccreditation for ten (10) years. The Legal Studies Program has not sought American Bar Association (ABA) approval. See 4b below.

**5. Location.**

FGCU is located in the heart of Southwest Florida, Fort Myers, a growing and diverse area of the country. Housing opportunities and values continue to rise to all-time national highs. FGCU has several on campus sites as well as Internet-based learning opportunities.

**6. Partnerships/Articulation agreements.**

There is in place a statewide articulation agreement in order to facilitate the transfer of AA and AS students into our LS Program. The Articulation Agreement between the Florida State University System (SUS) and the Division of Community Colleges governs the transfer of students who have earned the associate degree. See State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.024, F.A.C. Articulation Agreement, as well as Title XVI, Chapter 240 of the 2001 Florida Statutes and [http://www.facts.org/pdf\\_sw/statwidearticulationmanual.pdf](http://www.facts.org/pdf_sw/statwidearticulationmanual.pdf). It provides the means for AA and AS students to transfer without red tape. The statewide agreement guarantees, within certain limitations, priority for graduates of a Florida community college. In essence it facilitates the transfer of students from the associate level at statewide colleges to baccalaureate degree programs. A student enrolled in a two-year Florida college who has obtained an AA or AS degree in a Legal Assisting, Paralegal Studies, etc., is eligible to enroll at FGCU in Legal Studies with upper level status as a junior. Dual enrollment and double majoring options are also possible at FGCU.

We have taken steps to ensure a smooth transition in cooperation with ten (10) community colleges and one (1) masters program regarding having signed articulation agreements. In our opinion FGCU LS articulation agreements:

- Avoid duplication of instruction and repetition of previously-taken classes;
- Afford new opportunities for higher learning with upper-level courses including live and/or Internet-based offerings;
- Improve career readiness with the acquisition of new skills;
- Provide a way to earn an advanced degree in a more streamlined fashion;
- Give overall confidence to the student regarding future schooling and/or job placement; and
- Show the community that there is strength in scholastic unity.

See Appendix **B** which includes all of the LS articulation agreements.

## 7 **Faculty.**

The LS Program Coordinator, Dr. Robert Diotalevi, has been a Florida attorney since 2002 and a Massachusetts attorney since 1985. He has twelve (12) years experience as a chair/director. He has taught over one hundred and sixty (160) courses. He was a professional broadcaster for eight (8) years with managerial experience. He is internationally published with over fifty (50) manuscripts in print including co-authorship of a

textbook.

Dr. Jeffrey Kleeger is a full-time faculty member within the Justice Studies Division of the College of Professional Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University. Professor Kleeger has been a member of the New York Bar since 1990, and practiced law in the State of New York in the areas of tax and real estate law for twelve (12) years. He has seven (7) years of experience in teaching legal studies classes, and he successfully passed the Florida Bar in 2005. Professor Kleeger is currently working on two (2) scholarly works intended for publication in both the areas of criminal procedure and real property law.

See Appendix K.

#### 8. **Distance Learning.**

Another exciting aspect of Legal Studies is the opportunity for students to complete the entire program at a distance. It is offered over the Internet and a student can actually complete the program without ever coming onto campus. However, we encourage students to come and at least tour FGCU's beautiful campus. The distance capabilities allow the program to attract students from afar as well as allow the students to work higher education within their busy personal and family lives.

9. **Study Tours Abroad.**

Since opening The Division of Justice Studies, where Legal Studies is housed, has offered annual study tours to China and Brazil. Study tours to other countries are currently in development. The study tours that are done by the division allow for more well rounded students as the students get an opportunity to employ what we like to refer to as “comparative justice.” Students travel abroad and get an opportunity to see other justice systems in operation as well as get the opportunity to get a different perspective of how justice systems affect the lives of citizens. The students are very excited about these opportunities as they continue to speak about the experiences long after the physical trips are over.

10. **Legal Studies Web site.**

During the first year of the LS Program a web site was established to educate and inform about the program. It contains information about the program including curriculum, coursework requirements, articulation agreement web sites, career opportunities, transfer of credits, etc. See Appendix L.

11. **Presence in Charlotte County.**

See #5 above. Legal Studies is one (1) of only two (2) programs at FGCU which has firmly established a base in the Charlotte County community by offering traditional and distance-based courses through that campus.

12. **Legal Studies Poster and Brochure.**

In January 2002 Legal Studies developed a colorful and informative poster and brochure to market the program. See Appendix **M**. We have received many compliments on them from peers and students.

13. **Legal Studies Fact Sheet.**

Every program in the Division of Justice Studies has a fact sheet available for marketing and distribution. It is updated annually. See Appendix **N**.

14. **Legal Library Resources.**

There is a vast amount of legally related resources via the FGCU Library including LexisNexis, Westlaw and the Internet. A complete list can be found in Appendix **O**.

As was stated earlier, the above list of perceived strengths is not all encompassing, but it serves as a good representation of some of the exciting things that are taking place within Legal Studies. The aforementioned strengths along with a cohesive and committed faculty have created a program that is excited about the prospects for the future. The cohesiveness has transcended into a very productive environment that is producing top-notch students. This claim can be supported by some of the feedback the program has gotten from recent employers of our Legal Studies graduates.

## b) Challenges

In general, there is a consensus that the LS Program has to meet the needs of its students and the community as we move forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current structure of the program is more than adequate but at the same time, it is a bit new. The LS Program has a growing reputation but as with most entities, it takes time to build a solid reputation. As the program grows, it continues to compete with programs with long-standing arrangements with local law firms and agencies. Other perceived challenges include the following: lack of full-time recruiters (specific to the program), confusing and time-consuming enrollment processes, insufficient marketing and promotion materials, and lack of a policy for issuing life credits.

The greatest challenge perceived is the competition from other Florida colleges and universities that are offering the Legal Studies/Paralegal Studies degrees. Students perceive some of the policies of these competitors as attractive, but we do not see all of them as contributing to a quality program. Some schools allow for life credit. Several of the programs provide college credit for life experience. We have not implemented a “flex credit” program to date. This is an area that should be examined. We should not compromise quality, but creativity is vital.

Other characteristics of competing programs include accelerated programs, a larger number of off campus locations, memberships in more national associations, a Legal Studies club, and major marketing strategies. These characteristics speak to program flexibility and are currently being addressed. Although the cost is less here at FGCU, some students choose fast, accelerated programs offered by other institutions. In turn, we are hindered by lack of funding for several of the aforementioned items.

It may be argued that American Bar Association (ABA) approval would be beneficial to our LS students. The ABA has been involved in promoting the paralegal career since 1968 and has been approving paralegal education programs since 1975. The approval process is voluntary since it is not required by any governmental agency. To be approved, a program must be offered by an institution that is accredited by an accrediting agency on an approved list and must meet standards relating to administration, resources, curriculum and academic policies, faculty and program direction, admissions standards and practices, student services including placement and counseling, library, and facilities. Programs seeking approval must submit a detailed self-evaluation reports with supporting documents and are visited by an evaluation team. Briefly, the guidelines for approval require a college-level program which:

- is part of an accredited educational institution.
- offers *at least* 60 semester or 90 quarter units (or the equivalent) of classroom work. These units must include general education and at least 18 semester (or 27 quarter) units of legal specialty courses.
- has an advisory committee with attorneys and legal assistants from the public and private sectors.
- has qualified, experienced instructors.
- has adequate financial support from the institution in which it is situated.
- is accredited by, or eligible for accreditation by, an accrediting agency recognized by the Council on Post-Secondary Accreditation.
- has adequate student services including counseling and placement.
- has an adequate legal library available.
- has appropriate facilities and equipment.

See American Bar Association Standing Committee on Paralegals at <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/paralegals/process.html> as well as National Federation of Paralegal Associations at <http://www.paralegals.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=117>.

Furthermore, The ABA requires ten (10) credit hours per year of traditional classes. See G-302J of *The ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs* posted on the Standing Committee's website at: <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/paralegals/downloads/2003guidelines.pdf>. If the Legal Studies Program got ABA approval (our program substantially meets the requirements) we would literally have to drop most of our distance base from all around the state and beyond. In April 2005 we conducted a survey of students enrolled in spring 05 distance courses.

Here are the results from forty (40) students responding by location and their use of our distance learning program:

CITIES

Fort Myers	13
Bonita Springs	3
Bradenton	3
Arcadia	2
Cape Coral	2
Naples	2
Jacksonville	1
Miami	1
Palm Beach Gardens	1
Saint Petersburg	1
Tampa	1
Lehigh Acres	1
Vero Beach	1
Fernandina Beach	1
Seminole	1
Punta Gorda	1
Palm Harbor	1
Perry	1
West Palm Bach	1

Clearwater	1
Port Charlotte	1

ARE YOU A DISTANCE LEARNER?

<u>YES</u>	30
<u>NO</u>	10

Also, in our opinion, the ABA approval process is costly in time and money. And, only 42% of American schools are ABA-approved. “Formal paralegal training programs are offered by an estimated 600 colleges and universities law schools, and proprietary schools. Approximately 250 paralegal programs are approved by the American Bar Association (ABA)...” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Handbook, 2004-2005, at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm>.

In the ABA’s own words, “...(t)he lack of approval does not necessarily mean a paralegal program is not of good quality and reputable.”  
 -American Bar Association Standing Committee on Paralegals at  
<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/paralegals/career.html>.

Since 1981, the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) has represented paralegal education programs and has approximately 350 institutional members. Its primary mission is to promote high standards in paralegal education. In its Statement of Academic Quality, AAfPE acknowledges that the education of a paralegal requires a unique curriculum that covers both substantive legal knowledge and practical skills. FGCU’s Program

Coordinator of Legal Studies is a member of AAFPE, presents at its national conferences on a regular basis, and, according to AAFPE's present president, will be asked to serve on a national articulation committee in the near future.

AAFPE recognizes seven (7) essential components of a quality paralegal education program: curriculum development, facilities, faculty, marketing and promotion, paralegal instruction, student services and related competencies.

See [http://www.aafpe.org/pdfs/academic\\_quality.pdf](http://www.aafpe.org/pdfs/academic_quality.pdf).

As with the ABA standards we believe that we meet or exceed AAFPE's criteria.

### c) Opportunities

#### 1. Career Tracks.

Over the past two (2) years we have studied the implementation of career tracks in Legal Studies. These can be found in Appendix H.

It is felt that such career tracks will better equip graduates to specialize as attorneys do in legal areas. Tracks were developed to best suit current trends and needs in the industry.

#### 2. Internships.

For the past several years Dr. Tony Barringer, the present Chair of Justice Studies, has handled all Justice Studies-related internships. During Fall, 2005, we undertook a process to create a Legal Studies Internship Program, designed ultimately to

advance our community-based mission, so as to:

- (i) create student internships at area law firms, as well as State Attorney, Legal Aid and Public Defender offices,
- (ii) develop a group of 'sponsoring agencies' loyal to and supportive of the LS Program and its students,
- (iii) create community-based mentors for our LS students to assist them in employment and higher education opportunities,
- (iv) create a pool of part time, paying positions to assist students to find meaningful employment, as necessary, and
- (v) enable LS faculty to learn about local economic trends, job openings, and community concerns and needs, so as to support LS Program-related activities (such as job fairs, guest speaker programs, etc.).

Phase I --Meetings with Community Organizations, Associations and Potential Sponsors

Our main concern in creating the LS Internship Program is to ensure that LS interns will get meaningful and professional experience. Thus, in meeting with the persons and groups as defined below, we stress that our interns should not be assigned to perform general office work, such as filing, photocopying, etc., but must be assigned to a "legal team," as well as be supervised as legal tasks are learned and assignments completed. As further assurance that our LS interns will have an educationally and professionally experience, we determined to create the following safeguards:

- An LS faculty advisor will approve the sponsor's internship assignments,
- The faculty advisor will remain closely involved throughout the internship semester,
- The sponsor will sign an agreement confirming its adherence to our LS Internship guidelines,
- The intern will submit three (3) papers during the semester ( to be graded by the sponsor supervisor and faculty advisor), and
- The internships will remain as a graded, for-credit course.

Given FGCU's broad, multi-county "catchment area," we designed the LS Internship Program to ensure a student's geographic distance from an FGCU campus would not be an impediment. We therefore developed a sponsor pool in Charlotte, Lee and Collier Counties. The organizations below have agreed to support our LS Internship Program:

- State Attorney's Office (operations in Lee, Charlotte and Collier Counties)—Prosecution of Criminal Cases.
- Public Defender's Office (as above)-- Defense of Criminal Cases
- Legal Aid Services-- Immigration Law, Domestic Relations, Domestic Violence
- Law Firms-- Given the number of firms in our geographic area, we met with the President and/or Executive Director of the Lee County Bar Association, Charlotte County Bar Association and Collier County Bar Association. Each has endorsed our Internship Program. LS Faculty are scheduled to speak at the

respective county bar meetings from February to March 2006 to recruit law firm sponsors; the bar associations will also publicize the Internship Program in their respective newsletters and mailings.

Phase II-- Program Obtains College Approval

As we conducted the foregoing preparatory activities, we drafted and finalized our LS Internship Handbook and related materials (see Appendix **P**), and submitted them for appropriate review and approval, which we received in December, 2005.

Phase III-- Rollout of Program and Related Support Activities

All forms and materials have been made ready. Attorney David Steckler, an adjunct instructor, serves as LS Internship Program Coordinator. We expect to announce the program to the student body in January, then have student interns in place starting with both 2006 summer sessions.

**3. Certification Examination Review and Testing Center.**

The CLA and PACE examinations are professional certificate qualifying examinations in the field of legal assisting/paralegal practice. Those professionals who assist attorneys must develop a sophisticated level of knowledge, skills, and abilities to efficiently and effectively assist the attorney in the practice of law. The CLA and PACE examinations seek to measure those skills and abilities, and to quantify that level or degree of applied knowledge.

Students who successfully earn recognition through certification in a nationally established paralegal association will enhance the value of their Legal Studies degree. The LS Program is based upon the theory behind Paralegal Practice. Two nationally recognized certificates exist for students of legal studies. The earning of either will enable one to claim the title “Registered” or “Certified Paralegal.” For students who plan to continue their study of law with a Masters degree in law, or perhaps even a law school degree, paralegal certification will serve as a capstone review, and will attest to achievement of a recognized level of competency. For many students of legal studies this level of achievement is the equivalent of a license to practice within a professional field. Certification benefits those who seek employment in law firms or governmental agencies in which a legal background is a prerequisite because billing rates and professional status are enhanced by membership within a nationally recognized certification. The fact that continuing legal education or CLE is required to maintain certification within either of the two paralegal associations only serves to reinforce the prestige of high standards for quality and excellence that have long been associated with so widely recognized and comprehensive a professional achievement.

The Certified Legal Assistant Examination (CLA) is the most well known and popular of the paralegal certifications. The other well-known certification is the Paralegal Advanced Competency

Examination (PACE). The CLA Examination is offered by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA); and the PACE Examination is affiliated with the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA). Attainment of either level of certification or of course achievement of both certificates may result in greater compensation and responsibility for the paralegal in the workplace.

There are significant differences between the two sponsoring organizations, and their qualifying examinations do focus upon different areas of paralegal practice. The examinations test different skills and the examinations measure different competency levels and qualifications. Moreover, the eligibility requirements to sit for each exam are varied. In general terms, one might consider the CLA to be a more popular and well-known “entry-level” measure of competence, although the CLA has developed advanced certifications for specialist achievement. And in general terms one might consider the PACE to be more of an “advanced competency” examination. But because the CLA designation seems to be the better known and the more popular of the two, this especially so in Florida, it may be the more appropriate choice for our focus in the short-term. An important consideration in this regard is that CLA applicants are not required to have had work experience in paralegal practice for eligibility to sit for the examination, whereas PACE applicants must have such experience. But by no means however, should one be misled into

the belief that because it is the more popular of the two examinations that the CLA is less difficult or less rigorous or less prestigious an examination or any less distinguished an honor or achievement.

**CLA**

Incorporated in 1975 and composed of over 18,000 members, NALA is the most well known continuing education and professional development organization for paralegals in the United States. Established in 1976, the CLA designation is the most popular national professional standard for paralegals. Over 12,000 practicing professionals currently use this title, and the program is recognized as a means for identifying competent paralegals. The mark "CP" is registered for those who prefer to use the label of certified paralegal, following an established trend of movement away from the label of Legal Assistant.

As of June 1, 2005 there are nearly 13,000 classified current CLA designees and over 1100 have earned the classification of CLA Specialist. As of that date, a full 26% of those designees are from Florida. Only Texas comes close to Florida for numbers of CLA designees with 20% of the total in the United States. Note that CLA designation is not a requirement for employment in the law as an assistant to a lawyer. However, CLA designation does provide an objective measure of competence in that field, and thereby promotes employment stability and potential for advancement in that career.

In order to pass the examination, the candidate must successfully complete all 5 sections. The examination is a two-day examination and is quite difficult, this evidenced in that there is a 40% pass rate for first time test takers, and a 60% pass rate for 4 or more sections on a first attempt. Thus, the CLA is a competitive and credible and dependable measure of ability representing a high level of professional achievement or capability. To be eligible to sit for the examination, a candidate must meet one of the following general prerequisites, (each of these components is further divided into sub-sets therefore for more specific information it is recommended that interested parties see the official NALA provided literature):

- Graduation from a qualified legal assistant program.
- Possession of a bachelor's degree in any field combined with one year of experience as a legal assistant.
- Possession of a high school degree or equivalent combined with 7 years of experience as a legal assistant, plus 20 hours of continuing legal education credits within 2 years of sitting for the examination.

The CLA Examination is a two-day comprehensive examination based on federal law and procedure. The major subject areas tested include: Communications/ Human Relations & Interviewing Techniques, Ethics, Legal Research, Judgment & Analytical Ability, and Substantive Legal Areas of 5 mini-examinations which include Legal Terminology and the American Legal System and

additionally consist of 4 of the following sub-topics: Administrative Law, Bankruptcy, Business Organizations/Corporations, Contracts, Family Law, Criminal Law & Procedure, Litigation, Probate & Estate Planning, and Real Estate.

The CLA Examination is offered 3 times per year in March, July and December. Applications to sit for the exam normally must be filed within 8 weeks of the actual test date for the examination. The fee to sit for the examination is \$250 for NALA non-members. Many schools, universities, and junior colleges serve as testing centers. NALA Campus Self Study Courses are available for CLA Examination preparation. The registration fee for NALA non-members is \$100.

### ***PACE***

First organized in 1974, NFPA was created to provide a communications network for practicing paralegals. Membership today includes 52 associations with the number of individual members in excess of 11,000 in the United States and Canada. This international association prides itself on the independence of its qualifying criteria based upon knowledge, skills, and competence in the field of paralegal practice. NFPA does not manage its own qualifying testing system. Instead, it contracts out the examination process to an independent test development firm. But the focus of the qualification is experience in paralegal practice as the acronym of PACE clearly illustrates: PACE is the Paralegal Advanced Competency Examination.

PACE offers a 7-week review course for the cost of \$350. The course offers substantive review in each of the 5 tested areas, which include: administration of client legal matters, development of client legal matters, factual and legal research, factual and legal writing, and office administration. Ethics questions are also interspersed throughout the examination.

There is a \$75 registration fee for non-NFPA members and a \$250 examination fee for non-NFPA members. Applicants must meet specific educational requirements and have a minimum of two years work experience as a paralegal. Once the applicant is deemed eligible to sit for the examination, the examination must be taken within 90 days of that eligibility status. The candidate may schedule an examination at any of the 200 or so Sylvan Technology Centers. The examination is a four-hour examination and is divided into two tiers. Tier one involves general legal issues and legal ethics. Tier two involves the testing of specialty areas of law practice.

Students who graduate from the Legal Studies Program will have been exposed to most of the legal concepts and knowledge-based skills tested on the two nationally recognized paralegal practice examinations discussed above. The CLA and PACE examinations both measure minimal competence for practice in paralegal work within the field of law. For purposes of academic program review a satisfactory rate of successful student attempts at the examination would indicate both that the particular student has

achieved a respectable level of comprehension in core Legal Studies concepts and principles; and significantly at the institutional level, that the program of Legal Studies has succeeded in fostering an acceptable level of comprehension in its core curriculum for the benefit of all its students in general terms.

Thus, a strong record of graduate success on the examination would indicate an efficient and effective legal studies course of study and program. There are over 3,200 CLA's in Florida. At least five (5) known FGCU LS students have passed the CLA Exam according to a recent survey.

We take the position that strong performance on these examinations would enable us to objectively and consistently measure successful institutional performance through valid criteria external to the University. Taking this approach has long been a recognized goal in University-wide self-study efforts, and any contributions which we might make to encourage such achievement will be well worth the dedicated time. Currently, live CLA examination preparation courses are not offered locally within our community. We do have faculty members who are qualified to teach such courses, and the offering of such courses would be a significant benefit to all interested members of the community, be they employers, employees, or students of the law within the legal profession. Additionally, the offering of such courses would enable us to reinforce and promote the skills we teach in the Legal Studies Program. The CLA and PACE examinations provide a

fertile opportunity of having a valid, legal testing/review center at FGCU. See <http://www.nala.org/cert.htm> and <http://www.paralegals.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=17>.

**4. Real Estate Academy.**

Under the direction of the Charlotte Campus Legal Studies is developing its four (4) courses, one (1) core and three (3) electives, to offer a real estate certificate to interested real estate and legal professionals.

**5. Legal Studies Club.**

As monies become available and the LS student body grows we will explore the establishment of a club via live and Internet. The Legal Studies Club would probably be a student organization open to all students interested in the study of law. We would host such events as informal gatherings, speaker presentations, field trips, debates, panel discussions, film screenings, fund-raising events and community service projects to better ourselves and our community throughout the school year. We would help students gain exposure to legal issues as well as recent developments in the legal arena. We could also aid in acquainting interested students with law school admission processes, certified paralegal exams and law as a career.

We will also explore establishing a Lambda Epsilon Chi chapter. Lambda Epsilon Chi is the national honor society founded by the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE). There are approximately ninety-four (94) chapters throughout the United States with over 1,000 inductees who have been honored for their outstanding academic achievements. Presently Manatee Community College, The University of West Florida, South University and Nova Southeastern University have chapters in Florida. Each year institutions select students who meet high academic criteria and cite them for their accomplishments by inducting them into Lambda Epsilon Chi. Students are recognized through a formal ceremony and the awarding of a certificate of induction and a special pin.

#### **6. Legal Excellence Center (LeX)**

We are studying the feasibility of a Type II center in order to provide law-related continuing education to lawyers, paraprofessionals, and others whose business/professional duties require an understanding of laws, rules and regulations. The Center, working with accredited entities (such as the Florida State Bar, paralegal accrediting organizations, fraud auditor and healthcare compliance associations), would conduct seminars and provide guest speaker functions; in addition, it would offer such services as test preparation and testing.

The Center's Mission would be to foster ethical and legal standards in the area's businesses, and aid persons in law-related

jobs to better understand the laws which govern their respective job responsibilities. Sample areas of interest would include:

Compliance Officer Training-- Many businesses have compliance officers who are hired to monitor business operations to assure that conduct is ethical and legal. LeX would offer training seminars relating to creating the legal mission statement, drafting procedures and protocols, conducting oversight (assurance) reviews, and, where necessary, internal investigations (called a root cause analysis by the Department of Justice), in order to formulate corrective action.

Paralegal training and certification-- More and more Florida paralegals are desiring to become certified, and national organizations require entry level competency/experience standards/certification examination as well as ongoing continuing education units (ceu's) (see CLA/PACE discussion above).

Specialized accountancy designations-- National associations have established standards for fraud or forensic auditors, and like the compliance officer specialization, these professionals conduct quasi-legal duties (often reporting to corporate counsel) as they review operational systems to confirm legal compliance. We would work in conjunction with Criminal Justice and

Criminal Forensics faculty in the College of Professional Studies to this end.

We anticipate that LeX programs will be approved by the appropriate national credentializing organizations, and that seminar participants (including FGCU students), will get nationally-recognized credits. It will open up doors of interdisciplinary contact with other colleges and programs. Finally, we anticipate that LeX's program may qualify for private and public grant funds.

In summary, there are many opportunities with regard to the Internet, extending FGCU campuses, etc., that will become available as we continue to foster a strong relationship and commitment with the world community. As we continue to listen to the demands and needs of our students, growth and change is inevitable and welcomed.

#### d) Threats

There are two (2) major threats that we have identified:

- a. There has been diminished state funds over the last few years. As a result there is a potential for funds not being able to match growth/needs of the LS Program, and
- b. There has been a recent movement and subsequent allowance of two-year institutions to offer four-year

degrees in management and other areas (as recently evidence by Saint Petersburg College and Edison College as they also have dropped the “community” from their names. Saint Petersburg College has nine (9) bachelor programs, including legal studies). In time more of these institutions may offer four-year degrees in legal studies and related areas.

## **6) CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The process of self-evaluation has helped the Legal Studies faculty to identify several priorities for future action that will facilitate program evaluation, including:

- Assessing the possibility of developing measures of student learning to be used as students enter and exit the LS program, allowing for an evaluation of overall student learning in the program.
- Continuing to offer at least 75% of our undergraduate courses taught by ranked faculty.
- Continuing to offer LS courses in Charlotte as well as exploring new campuses such as Naples and Cape Coral.
- Increasing retention of students while maintaining healthy growth regarding new and transfer applicants.
- Continuing to offer flexible alternatives to traditional on campus courses to maintain program accessibility.
- Maintaining and developing a strong relationship with the legal community to facilitate a positive image of the LS Program among potential employers,

including even more active meetings with our LS Subcommittee. This includes polling the legal community which we are in the process of doing. See Appendix Q.

- Offering a separate and distinct Contract Law course rather than utilizing our *Business Organizations* elective to cover related material (most of our AA/AS students have had a basic contracts-related course).

These strategies will address competition concerns in the following ways:

- Developing further entrance and exit measures of LS knowledge and maintaining a high proportion of courses taught by ranked faculty are indicators of a consistent, high quality program. These strategies will ensure the potential student and the potential employer that an FGCU LS degree is a substantial asset.
- Offering courses at flexible times, with flexible delivery methods opens the program to qualified students in many life situations, and does not restrict access to those who have traditional schedules. Currently distance courses, alternative campuses and evening courses address this issue. Several alternatives (including a compressed weekend degree program, e.g.) are under consideration.
- Working in conjunction with FGCU Community Relations and Marketing to maintain a positive image of the program in the community will serve the program by increasing visibility and enrollment. While enrollment is steady (and distance seats are on the increase) the University is mandated to increase enrollment, and Legal Studies will help to accomplish this goal.

## **CONCLUSION**

The faculty of Legal Studies at FGCU and those affiliated with the LS Program will strive to maintain quality, increase visibility and provide traditional coursework as well as even more flexible alternatives to traditional study. We trust that future evaluations will reflect our efforts. This study has been a learning experience and has challenged us to work even harder for our students.