

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability

NO.: AAC 10-22

COMMITTEE DATE: June 8, 2010

BOARD DATE: June 15, 2010

**APPLICATION OF BUNKER HILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO AWARD THE
ASSOCIATE IN SCIENCE IN PARALEGAL STUDIES**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application of **Bunker Hill Community College** to award the **Associate in Science in Paralegal Studies**.

Upon graduating the first class for this program, Bunker Hill Community College shall submit to the Board a status report addressing its success in reaching program goals as stated in the application and in the areas of enrollment, curriculum, faculty resources and program effectiveness.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(b)

Contact: Francesca B. Purcell, Ph.D., Associate Commissioner for Academic and P-16 Policy

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Bunker Hill Community College

Associate in Science in Paralegal Studies

INTENT AND MISSION

Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) submitted an expedited proposal to offer an Associate in Science in Paralegal Studies. The proposed program intends to prepare students for legal employment by training them to assist lawyers, qualify graduates for transfer to four-year institutions, and fill an opportunity gap for low-income residents by providing an affordable paralegal education. The proposed paralegal studies program will prepare students for legal employment by training them to assist lawyers in gathering and analyzing factual data, drafting correspondence, researching legal questions, and preparing legal documents. Graduates of the program may directly enter the workforce or opt to continue their education and pursue a four-year degree. Paralegals typically find jobs with law firms, corporations, government offices, non-profit entities, banks, health care organizations, bio-tech companies and financial institutions. Areas of specialization include litigation, corporate law, criminal law, regulatory compliance, intellectual property, bankruptcy, labor law, immigration, family law, and real estate.

Private law firms are the largest employers of paralegals, but a growing number of other organizations are hiring paralegals, thereby increasing demand. Employers of paralegals include law firms, state and federal offices and agencies, courts, town and city governments, corporations, real estate offices, insurance companies, title insurance companies, banks, health care organizations, and non-profit organizations, among others.

The Bunker Hill Community College board of trustees approved the proposed program on March 22, 2010. The required Letter of Intent was circulated on April 2, 2010. No comments in response were received.

NEED AND DEMAND

The United States Department of Labor expects paralegal employment to grow much faster than average, 22 percent between 2006 and 2016. Nationally, Martindale.com ranks Boston as the seventh-largest legal market in the United States in terms of the number of lawyers per city. According to Robert Lopez, Senior Consultant at Beacon Hill Legal, Boston, paralegals are increasingly replacing associates at law firms and government offices because they are more cost effective. Paralegals are paid less than associates, allowing firms to reduce salary overhead; paralegal time can be billed out at a substantial mark-up in comparison to attorneys, thus increasing net revenues; during downturns in the economy, it is easier for firms to absorb a paralegal salary than that of an associate; and firms can carry more paralegals at lower salaries than lawyers to provide a greater level of customer service, which can lead to increased market share.

Increasingly paralegals are required to have an associate degree to enter the field. Based on the findings of a 2008 study by the National Association of Legal Assistants, the percentage of paralegals whose highest level of education was a high school diploma dropped from 32 percent to just 16 percent.

Currently, no community college in Boston offers a paralegal associate degree program, a situation that limits professional opportunities to the student demographic served by BHCC. Roxbury Community College (RCC) offers the only other paralegal training program that is both within ten miles of BHCC and at a comparable cost, but RCC does not offer a paralegal associate degree program.

A total of 26 institutions located in Massachusetts provide paralegal training, offering 25 certificate programs, 16 associate degree programs, and six bachelor degree programs. Of the 16 paralegal associate degree programs, three are located within ten miles of BHCC's Charlestown campus: Fisher College, Newbury College and Suffolk University. The annual tuition for each institution is \$20,065, \$23,650 and \$27,000, respectively—about six to seven times the cost of attending BHCC.

There are six paralegal associate degree programs offered by community colleges at comparable cost to BHCC: MassBay (Wellesley Hills), Middlesex (Bedford/ Lowell), Mount Wachusett (Gardner), North Shore (Danvers), Northern Essex (Lawrence), and Quincy College (Quincy). None are located within 10 miles of the BHCC's main Charlestown campus.

Upon approval, BHCC will become the only community college to offer a paralegal degree program in Boston. In addition, there are currently only five ABA-accredited paralegal programs in Massachusetts: Bay Path College (Longmeadow), Elms College (Chicopee), Northern Essex Community College (Haverhill), North Shore Community College (Danvers), and Suffolk University (Boston). None are both within the geographic area served by BHCC and comparable in affordability.

ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

Admission to the program is open. As a prerequisite to admission, students must have completed Writing Skills II, Reading Skills II, or Academic Reading III, or the equivalent placement. The required computer course may be waived by the academic dean based on previous coursework or experience

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT PROJECTION

	# of Students Year 1	# of Students Year 2	# of Students Year 3	# of Students Year 4*
New Full Time	10	15	20	25
Continuing Full Time		10	25	45
New Part Time	15	25	28	30
Continuing Part Time	10	25	50	78
Totals	35	65	123	178

BHCC anticipates significant interest in the program due to a high enrollment in its current paralegal certificate program and the relative cost of the program as compared to average paralegal salaries. According to research conducted by the Massachusetts

Paralegal Association (MPA), the following are the average salaries for paralegals in Massachusetts by area:

Boston	\$34,107 - \$78,276
Springfield	\$32,383 - \$74,319
New Bedford	\$31,882 - \$73,168

CURRICULUM (Attachment A)

The proposed Paralegal Studies degree program requires 62-65 credits for graduation. Students are required to take 38 general education credits, 18 credits in paralegal studies and nine electives, three of which can be an internship for qualified students. The internship is designed to provide students with hands-on experience prior to seeking employment, enhance BHCC's standing in the legal community, and benefit local business and government offices by providing a source of labor.

The paralegal studies curriculum was designed to comply with BHCC general education requirements, ABA accreditation criteria and the statewide *MassTransfer* policy to allow students the opportunity to continue their education at a four-year institution. Development of the program was built on the currently offered paralegal certificate program. Many of the core courses required for the proposed degree program, including eight three-credit paralegal courses—all of which are developed and taught by licensed attorneys—are already being offered by the College.

Subsequent to the implementation of the Paralegal Degree program, BHCC will pursue American Bar Association accreditation.

Upon completion of this program, graduates will be able to:

- Understand the legal process and the nature of law practice
- Use critical thinking skills to construct and evaluate logical arguments in support of specific positions
- Demonstrate an understanding of legal terminology in a variety of practice areas
- Employ problem-solving skills to evaluate and supply needed information to supervising attorneys, colleagues, and clients
- Assist the supervising attorney(s) with interviews, pre-trial preparation, depositions, trials, and the preparation of legal documents
- Attain a working knowledge of legal ethics rules, such as conflicts of interest, unauthorized practice of law, and confidentiality
- Understand billing, timekeeping and other law office procedures
- Attain a working knowledge of the structure of federal and state judicial systems
- Understand the role of technology in the modern law office and have practical experience using legal technology programs
- Prepare, edit and transmit legal documents, forms or papers in their area of practice
- Demonstrate effective communication skills by preparing legal documents, research summaries, conducting client interviews and possess the ability to adjust to a variety of audiences and purposes
- Conduct effective legal research, using both printed and electronic sources to research legal issues
- Demonstrate effective self-management and interpersonal skills in order to successfully interact with people from diverse backgrounds

- Work independently and as a team member to complete required projects and tasks effectively and within specific timeframes
- Manage multiple tasks according to deadline priorities
- Represent the legal profession in a professional manner

RESOURCES AND BUDGET (Attachment B)

Faculty

Faculty consists of eleven licensed attorneys (two full time), who teach courses for the current Paralegal Certificate Program. The College intends to hire up to an additional two paralegals, who will co-teach and provide hands-on professional training. Faculty paralegals will be required to possess a college degree and at least five years of experience in real estate, corporations, probate or general practice.

Administration

The paralegal studies program will be housed within the Department of Legal Studies and Public Safety, which is part of the Division of Professional Studies. The Dean of Professional Studies will have the ultimate oversight and responsibility for the program. During the first two years, the program will be managed by a part-time Program Coordinator, after which a full-time faculty member will be hired to assume this responsibility.

Library and Information Technologies

The BHCC library maintains a collection for the existing Criminal Justice and Paralegal Certificate programs, and minor expansion is necessary to accommodate the new program. It was determined that \$7,000 will cover start-up expenses during FY11, while ongoing yearly expenses are expected to be \$3,000.

The BHCC library subscribes to LexisNexis and holds a collection that includes the Massachusetts Reporter, the Massachusetts Digest, and the Massachusetts General Laws. In addition, BHCC is part of a resource-sharing consortium with Northern Essex Community College and North Shore Community College. The library also offers instructional workshops in legal research and has a part-time staff librarian who has completed extensive coursework in law collections at the University of New York at Buffalo Law School (certified by the in the American Library Association).

BHCC has over 900 computer stations available for student use, each with access to Microsoft Office 2007, the Internet and Web Advisor. The CSDL center provides computer systems for self directed education and the TASC center that provides computers for tutoring efforts.

Physical Resources

Because the paralegal degree program consists primarily of existing general education and paralegal courses, BHCC facilities and resources would be only modestly affected by the creation of the new program. Facility issues would be limited to scheduling and logistics rather than the procurement of new resources.

Budget (Attachment B)

The College submitted a four-year budget for the proposed program.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Goal	Measurable Objective	Strategy for Achievement	Timetable
Prepare students to enter the legal profession as qualified paralegals	Achieve enrollment forecasts	Market program through internal information and advising sessions, advertising, and the creation of partnerships with the Boston legal community, including private practitioners and professional associations, outreach to high schools	Summer 2010, ongoing
	Surpass college retention and graduation rates	Ensure students have access to faculty advisers to monitor their development and develop effective strategies for completing program coursework	Implementation, fall 2010; ongoing review
	Provide relevant skills needed to succeed as a paralegal	Conduct extensive student, internship and employer evaluations to gauge the effectiveness of the knowledge, skills and abilities of graduates	Develop during spring 2011; implement during 2011-2012 academic year

Ensure program responds to market requirements and trends	Adapt program to market needs	Develop an advisory committee consisting of paralegals, attorneys and alumni to provide input regarding the needs of the industry	Fall 2010
	Provide a curriculum capable of imparting the skills necessary to ensure employability	Hire paralegals to create case studies and classroom exercises that closely match the requirements of the profession	2010-2011 academic year
		Collect data, analyze it and take action to implement necessary responses to accomplish the objective	Fall 2010 and ongoing
		Conduct student/paralegal/ attorney focus groups to identify gaps in the training provided and the outcomes needed	Spring 2011 and fall 2011
Obtain ABA Accreditation	Meet minimum time requirements	Ensure effective operation and administration of program	2010 – 2013
	Ensure full program compliance with ABA criteria	Establish internal committee to review and evaluate data against ABA criteria and effect necessary changes	2011
		Create team to prepare to accreditation review	2013
	Apply for ABA accreditation	Complete self-evaluation report	2013
		Submit application	2014

EXTERNAL REVIEW AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The proposed Associate in Science in Paralegal Studies was externally reviewed by two individuals approved by the Department of Higher Education: Stacey Peter, Department Head, Paralegal Studies, Concord Community College, in Concord, New Hampshire; and Deborah B. Walsh, Director of Legal Studies, Middlesex Community College in Bedford, Massachusetts. The reviews both express strong support for the program, concluding that it is thoughtfully designed with a well-rounded offering of legal specialty

courses and general education courses that will prepare qualified students for the growing paralegal profession.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Board staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Bunker Hill Community college and external reviewers. Staff recommendation is for approval of the Associate in Science in Paralegal Studies.

Upon graduating the first class for this program, BHCC shall submit to the Board a status report addressing its success in reaching program goals, as stated in the application, and in the areas of enrollment, curriculum, faculty resources and program effectiveness.

ATTACHMENT A: CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Associate in Science in Paralegal Studies

Required (Core) Courses in the Major (Total # courses required = 6)		
Course Number	Course Title	Credit Hours
PL101	Introduction to Law	3
PL102	Legal Research and Writing	3
PL103	Litigation	3
PL104	Ethics	3
BUS201	Business Law	3
CIT110	Introduction to Computers and Applications <i>(may be waived based on previous coursework or experience)</i> .	3
Subtotal Required Credits		18
Elective Courses (Total # courses required = 3) (attach list of choices if needed)		
PL202	Business Organizations	3
CRJ103	Criminal Law	3
PL201	Family Law	3
PL203	Real Estate	3
PL204	Wills, Estates, and Trusts	3
PL220	Paralegal Internship (requires completion of required courses and 3.0 GPA)	3
Subtotal Elective Credits		9
Distribution of General Education Requirements		# of Gen Ed Credits
Attach List of General Education Offerings (Course Numbers, Titles, and Credits)		
College Writing I & II		6
Individual and Society		9
World View		3
Quantitative Thought		3
Science and Technology (with lab)		8
Humanities		9
Subtotal General Education Credits		38
Curriculum Summary		
Total number of courses required for the degree		20-21
Total credit hours required for degree		62-65
Prerequisite, Concentration or Other Requirements:		
Writing Skills II (ENG095), Reading Skills II (RDG095) or Academic Reading III (ESL098) or placement.		

ATTACHMENT B: BUDGET

Associate of Science in Paralegal Studies

<i>One Time/ Start Up Costs</i>	<i>Cost Categories</i>	<i>Annual Expenses</i>			
		<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>
-	Full-Time Faculty (Salary and Fringe)	-	-	74,943	74,943
-	Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty (Salary and Fringe)	63,866 (22)	72,575 (25)	81,284 (28)	89,993 (31)
-	Staff	9,207	9207	-	-
500	General Administrative Costs	500	500	500	500
4,000	Instructional Materials, Library Acquisitions	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
750	Facilities/Space/Equipment	250	250	250	250
-	Field and Clinical Resources	-	-	-	-
3,500	Marketing	500	500	500	500
-	Other (Specify)				
8,750	TOTALS	77,323	86,032	160,477	169,186

<i>One Time/Start-Up Support</i>	<i>Revenue Sources</i>	<i>Annual Income</i>			
		<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>
	Tuition	1,800	3,600	5,040	7,200
	Fees	10,185	18,915	35,793	51,798
	Departmental	20,166	27,875	102,320	111,029
	Reallocated Funds	55,157	55,157	55,157	55,157
	Other (library)	7,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
	TOTALS	94,308	108,547	201,310	228,184

Income		94,308	108,547	201,310	228,184
Expenses		77,323	86,032	160,477	169,186
Income - Expenses		16,585	22,515	41,409	59,574