



Program Assessment Report

Program: College of Policy and Legal Studies: Paralegal, BAS

Option: Paralegal

Report Year: 2021-22

Drafted by Christy Powers on Mar 30, 2023

Data Files

[BAS Legal Data Tables - 2019-2022](#)

[PLA 4941 Capstone Scores Combined 2019-2022](#)

Overall Introduction

In support of the mission of St. Petersburg College, faculty committees established thirteen value statements. Three of these value statements are:

- Student Focus: We believe students are the heart of SPC! All SPC resources, decisions, and efforts are aligned to transform students' lives to empower them to finish what they start!
- Academic Excellence: We promote academic excellence through interactive, innovative, and inquiry-centered teaching and learning.
- Culture of Inquiry: We encourage a data-driven environment that allows for open, honest dialogue about who we are, what we do, and how we continue to improve student success.

It is the intent of St. Petersburg College to incorporate continuous improvement practices in all areas. Assessment reports provide comparisons of present and past results which are used to identify topics where improvement is possible. SPC has traditionally used past results as a vital tool in achieving its commitment to continuous improvement.

Program Learning Outcomes

#1: Acquire and implement advanced critical thinking and analytical skills needed to effectively problem solve.

I. Use of Past Results

Based on the case table and analysis of data, the Analytical (worth 25 points out of 200) competency maintained increasing scores from the first to the last of the three year period, while Legal Research (worth 30 points out of 200) and Critical Thinking (worth 20 points out of 200) competencies have slightly decreased while still maintaining an "A" average. Individual projects are assigned to each student while considering the following: prior areas of interest/disinterest; prior areas of competency; current employment in a particular area of law; and pre-law potential. The fluctuation overall is believed to be related to the exposure and awareness of the resources offered online for state and federal matters. The slight decrease in critical thinking and legal research is due to the student pool missing a few causes of action in their research.

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #1, and considering the current processes for determining pairings between case studies and students, the Paralegal, BAS program were scheduled to complete the following projects during the 2019-2020 academic year:

1. revise the types of projects currently available in order to continue to meet the needs of the legal community;
2. review the rubric criteria and guidelines provided to students to ensure sufficient direction is provided; and
3. continue to retain a legal research and writing tutor in order to increase overall scores in this area across the next three years.

In addressing the projects listed above, the scores during the 2019-2022 academic years incorporated the following improvements. Please see the comments numbered below:

1. New projects were added in areas such as business law and administrative law which are common issues in the local community and which provide employment for our students;
2. Added communication related sub-categories to the rubric that incorporated monitoring the projects more closely throughout the 16 or 10 week semesters; and
3. We have legal research tutors in place in the Clearwater library offered on an as-needed basis.

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II. Methodology

Means of Assessment: The PLA 4941 Capstone Project is the final culminating project through which students demonstrate competency in all 5 program goals/learning outcomes. In grading and assessing the projects, MLO #1 is clearly aligned to the requirements of the projects and the criteria on which the projects are assessed. The students employ advanced critical thinking and analytical skills as they execute each step in the project. Each case/fact pattern has a cause of action(s) or scenario which presents the necessary elements for critique. Students are encouraged to identify the causal links that may or may not be present. After assessing the fact pattern and researching the legal information necessary to complete the tasks assigned, the student completes two mandatory memorandums documenting: 1. the utilization of websites and references to begin work and 2. internal case practice manuals and guidelines as prescribed by the state or federal government. Preparing the student for success in this learning outcome truly begins with proper guidance and research into the particular area(s) of law that each project encompasses. Each student is assigned a project along with a supervising attorney to assist should any questions or issues arise. From that point, the student is expected to maintain contact throughout the project with the assigned supervising attorney.

Date(s) of Administration: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22

Method: Students are instructed and guided to determine the contents of the final submission by their professor or supervising attorney. Each project has its own set of guidelines (parameters) as part of the initial fact pattern that are to be met as a minimum. Three competencies within goal #1 are assessed: analytical, critical thinking, and legal research.

Assessment Instrument: Projects are assessed using a rubric, where one or more of the the seven criteria align to the five program goals. The rubric criteria are then paired with the guidelines provided for each type of case study. Both the guidelines in the project specs and the rubric are provided to students at the start of the term. While students complete various types of projects within the same course, there is a consistent and common set of criteria on which students are assessed.

Population: All students enrolled in the PLA 4941 capstone course are assessed on the culminating project.

III. Criteria for Success

For each of the three competencies within goal #1 that are assessed - analytical, critical thinking, and legal research - there is a maximum number of available points (90 for all three areas, combined) that contribute to the overall grade of the project (200 points total).

Students are required to score a minimum of 63 out of 90 possible points (70%) in order to successfully demonstrate the program goal.

When students experience difficulty with one or more areas of the project, they are required to write an internal memorandum to the supervising attorney identifying the questions they have; feedback is provided accordingly. Once students submit the project to be assessed, the grade is final unless a student has not met the minimum of 70% on the respective sections relating to each MLO. In cases where students do not meet the minimum requirements, they are given a "guided" opportunity to revise the project until the required competency level is met. Students cannot pass the course unless they complete the project.

IV. Summary of Assessment Findings

Results via Face-to-Face

Assessment course is taught exclusively online, there were no face-to-face sections to report.

Results via Distance Delivery (Online, Blended, etc)

Student Performance on PLO #1 Competencies: 2019-2022							
Competency (points)	2019-2020 (n=33)		2020-2021 (n=26)		2021-2022 (n=25)		3yr Avg (n=84)
	Avg	%	Avg	%	Avg	%	
Analytical (25)	23.9	96%	24.0	96%	23.0	92%	95%
Critical Thinking (20)	19.2	96%	19.6	98%	17.6	88%	94%
Legal Research (30)	26.3	88%	28.9	96%	26.6	89%	91%

V. Discussion and Analysis of Assessment Findings

Based on the case table and analysis of data, the Analytical (worth 25 points out of 200) competency maintained increasing scores from the first to the last of the three year period, while Legal Research (worth 30 points out of 200) and Critical Thinking (worth 20 points out of 200) competencies have slightly decreased while still maintaining an "A" average. Individual projects are assigned to each student while considering the following: prior areas of interest/disinterest; prior areas of competency; current employment in a particular area of law; and pre-law potential. The increase overall is believed to be related to the exposure and awareness of the resources offered online for state and federal matters. The slight decrease in critical thinking and legal research is due to the student pool missing a few causes of action in their research.

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #1, and considering the current processes for determining pairings between case studies and students, the Paralegal, BAS program were scheduled to complete the following projects during the 2019-2020 academic year:

1. revise the types of projects currently available in order to continue to meet the needs of the legal community;
2. review the rubric criteria and guidelines provided to students to ensure sufficient direction is provided; and
3. hire a legal research tutor in order to increase overall scores in this area across the next three years.

In addressing the projects listed above, the scores during the 2019-2022 academic years incorporated the following improvements. Please see the comments numbered below:

1. New projects were added in areas such as business law and administrative law which are common issues in the local community and which provide employment for our students;
2. Added sub-categories to the rubric that incorporated monitoring the projects more closely throughout the 16 or 10 week semesters; and
3. We have legal research tutors in place in the Clearwater library offered on an as-needed basis.

VI. Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

Based on the analysis of the results the following Action Plan Items have been selected for implementation:

- Students' scores vary from semester to semester. Focusing on the individual competencies attained and future skill sets will continue to guide how the projects are provided to the students. Students survey themselves via an Essential Functions Checklist to assess current competencies and ones to gain proficiencies. Click here for the Essential Functions Checklist Survey <https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773>
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Aug 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

- Continue to mandate The Legal Technology Assessment ("LTA") as a benchmark assessment and a training platform. The results of which can be used for marketing, professional development, team assembly, on-boarding, rate negotiation, invoice review, provider differentiation, and more. Above all, however, benchmarked scores should be used to ensure legal professionals are getting the training they need on the technologies they use every day. The LTA pairs competence-based assessments with synchronous, active learning in order to provide effective tailored training
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

Yearly grant applied and funded.

- Continue to utilize our Paralegal Studies Advisory Board members for ideas and alterations for continuous improvement. Our members apprise the Program of shifts in legal topics and workload management.

- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

#2: Demonstrate the appropriate use of communication and organizational skills within and outside the legal system.

I. Use of Past Results

Based on the case table and analysis of data for the years 2019-2022, the Presentation (30 points out of 200) competency decreased in scores from the first to the last of the three year period as did the Legal Writing (worth 30 points out of 200); the Communication section (45 points out of 200); Critical Thinking (20 points out of 200); and Organization (20 points out of 200). The onset of COVID and switch to LIVE Online learning affected students in organization and legal writing as the projects saw a drastic decline in those areas. The decrease is believed to be related to the students not being aware of how to use current technology and software to implement a short-form presentation to their fellow students and myself, as the instructor. The use of a table of contents and a logical order to the project go hand-in-hand for a concise submission.

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #2, in order to address the decrease in the Organization scores, the Paralegal, BAS program will be implementing more mandatory projects in core courses in the upper division to practice and demonstrate the compilation of a concise and organized submission of work product. As for Communication and Legal Writing, students are mandated to work through the NSLT training in PLA 3734 Computers and the Law Office and highly encouraged to certify in the Legal Technology Assessment (LTA).

II. Methodology

Means of Assessment: The PLA 4941 Capstone Project is the final culminating project through which students demonstrate competency in all 5 program goals/learning outcomes. In grading and assessing the projects, MLO #2 is clearly aligned to the requirements of the project and the criteria on which the projects are assessed. Each case/fact pattern has a cause of action or scenario which presents the necessary elements for review. Students are encouraged to identify the causal links that may or may not be present. After assessing the fact pattern and research necessary to complete the tasks assigned, the student completes two mandatory memoranda documenting: 1. the utilization of websites and references to begin work and 2. internal case practice manuals and guidelines as prescribed by the state or federal government. Setting the student up for success starts with proper guidance and research into the particular area(s) of law that each project covers. Each student is assigned a project and a supervising attorney to assist in facilitating this process. From that point, the student is expected to maintain contact throughout the project with the assigned supervising attorney.

Date(s) of Administration: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22

Method: The PLA 4941 Capstone project assesses five competencies within MLO #2 - communication, presentation, organizational skills, critical thinking, and legal writing. Students are instructed and guided to determine the make-up of the submission pursuant to course instructions, supervising attorney guidance, and professor guidance. Each project has its own set of guidelines (parameters) as part of the initial fact pattern that are to be met at a minimum.

Assessment Instrument: Projects are assessed using a rubric where one or more of the the seven criteria align to the five program goals. The rubric criteria are then paired with the guidelines provided for each type of case study. Both the guidelines in the project specs and the rubric are provided to students at the start of the term. While students complete various types of projects within the same course, there is a consistent and common set of criteria on which students are assessed.

Population: All students enrolled in the PLA 4941 Capstone course are assessed on the culminating project.

III. Criteria for Success

For each of the five competencies within goal #2 that are assessed - communication, presentation, organizational skills, critical thinking, and legal writing - there is a maximum number of available points (145 for all five areas, combined) that contribute to the overall grade of the project (200 points total). Students are required to obtain a minimum of 102 out of 145 possible points (70%) in order to successfully demonstrate the program goal. When students feel they are experiencing difficulty with one area of the project, they are required to write an internal memorandum to the supervising attorney, identifying the questions they have; feedback is provided accordingly. Once students submit the project to be assessed, the grade is final unless a student has not met the minimum of 70% on the respective sections relating to each MLO. In cases where students do not meet the minimum requirements, they are given the opportunity to revise the project until the required competency level is met. Students cannot pass the course unless they complete the project.

IV. Summary of Assessment Findings

Results via Face-to-Face

Assessment course is taught exclusively online, there were no face-to-face sections to report.

Results via Distance Delivery (Online, Blended, etc)

Student Performance on PLO #2 Competencies: 2019-2022							
Competency (points)	2019-2020 (n=33)		2020-2021 (n=26)		2021-2022 (n=25)		3yr Avg (n=84)
	Avg	%	Avg	%	Avg	%	%
Communication (45)	44.0	98%	44.7	99%	42.2	94%	97%
Presentation (30)	29.2	97%	28.9	96%	27.6	92%	95%
Organization (20)	16.1	80%	19.0	95%	14.4	72%	82%
Critical Thinking (20)	19.2	96%	19.6	98%	17.6	88%	94%
Legal Writing (30)	25.8	86%	28.9	96%	24.0	80%	87%

V. Discussion and Analysis of Assessment Findings

Based on the case table and analysis of data for the years 2019-2022, the Presentation (30 points out of 200) competency decreased in scores from the first to the last of the three year period as did the Legal Writing (worth 30 points out of 200); the Communication section (45 points out of 200); Critical Thinking (20 points out of 200); and Organization (20 points out of 200). The onset of COVID and switch to LIVE Online learning affected students in organization and legal writing as the projects saw a drastic decline in those areas. The decrease is believed to be related to the students not being aware of how to use current technology and software to implement a short-form presentation to their fellow students and myself, as the instructor. The use of a table of contents and a logical order to the project go hand-in-hand for a concise submission.

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #2, in order to address the decrease in the Organization scores, the Paralegal, BAS program will be implementing more mandatory projects in core courses in the upper division to practice and demonstrate the compilation of a concise and organized submission of work product. As for Communication and Legal Writing, students are mandated to work through the NSLT training in PLA 3734 Computers and the Law Office and highly encouraged to certify in the Legal Technology Assessment (LTA).

VI. Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

Based on the analysis of the results the following Action Plan Items have been selected for implementation:

- Students' scores vary from semester to semester. Focusing on the individual competencies attained and future skill sets will continue to guide how the projects are provided to the students. Students survey themselves via an Essential Functions Checklist to assess current competencies and ones to gain proficiencies. Click here for the Essential Functions Checklist Survey <https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773>
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Aug 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

- Continue to mandate The Legal Technology Assessment ("LTA") as a benchmark assessment and a training platform. The results of which can be used for marketing, professional development, team assembly, on-boarding, rate negotiation, invoice review, provider differentiation, and more. Above all, however, benchmarked scores should be used to ensure legal professionals are getting the training they need on the technologies they use every day. The LTA pairs competence-based assessments with synchronous, active learning in order to provide effective tailored training

- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

Yearly grant applied and funded.

- Continue to utilize our Paralegal Studies Advisory Board members for ideas and alterations for continuous improvement. Our members apprise the Program of shifts in legal topics and workload management.

- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

#3: Execute the technical skills, including legal research and writing, needed to succeed in the legal profession.

I. Use of Past Results

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #3, each of these program learning outcomes were discussed and analyzed above in MLOs #1 and #2.

Overall, the elements of style in legal writing are more critically governed as words in the English language may have specific meaning within the law. Legal definitions have weight and authority which must be determined given the particular project area. Students continue to work with concise writing which effectively communicates the work product they are producing.

In Legal Research & Writing, the students continue to uncover the variety of resources available to them during their research. Narrowing down what is reliable and correct are being refined through techniques in PLA 1104, Legal Research and Writing; PLA 2114, Advanced Legal Research; and PLA 4116, Legal Writing Seminar.

II. Methodology

Means of Assessment: The PLA 4941 Capstone Project is the final culminating project through which students are able to demonstrate their competency in all 5 program goals/learning outcomes. In grading and assessing the projects, MLO #3 is clearly aligned to the requirements of the project and the criteria on which the projects are assessed. Each case/fact pattern has a cause of action or scenario which presents the necessary elements for critique. Students are encouraged to identify the causal links that may or may not be present. After assessing the fact pattern and research necessary to complete the tasks assigned, the student completes two mandatory memoranda documenting: 1. the utilization of websites and references to begin work and 2. internal case practice manuals and guidelines as proscribed by the state or federal government(s). Preparing students for success starts with proper guidance and research into the particular area(s) of law covered in each project. Each student is assigned a project and a supervising attorney to assist in facilitating this process. From that point, the student is expected to maintain contact throughout the project with the assigned supervising attorney.

Date(s) of Administration: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22

Method: Students are instructed and guided to determine the make up of the submission pursuant to course instructions and professor guidance. Each project has its own set of guidelines (parameters) as part of the initial fact pattern that are to be met as a minimum. Seven competencies within goal #3 are assessed: analytical, communication, presentation, organization, critical thinking, legal research, and legal writing.

Assessment Instrument: Projects are assessed using a rubric where one or more of the the seven criterion align to the five program goals. The rubric criteria are then paired with the guidelines provided for each type of case study. Both the guidelines in the project specs and the rubric are provided to students at the start of the term. While students complete various types of projects within the same course, there is a consistent and common core set of criteria on which students are assessed. Attached is a copy of the PLA 4941 Capstone Grading Rubric.

Population: All students enrolled in the PLA 4941 capstone course are assessed on the culminating project.

III. Criteria for Success

For each of the seven competencies within goal #3 that are assessed, there is a maximum number of available points (200 for all areas, combined) that contribute to the overall grade of the project (200 points total). Students are required to obtain a minimum of 140 out of 200 possible points (70%) in order to successfully demonstrate the program goal. When students feel they are experiencing difficulty with one area of the project, they are required to write an internal memorandum to the supervising attorney, identifying the questions they have; feedback is provided accordingly. Once students submit the project to be assessed, the grade is final unless a student has not met the minimum of 70% on the respective sections relating to each MLO. In cases where students do not meet the minimum requirements, they are given the opportunity to revise the project until the required competency level is met. Students cannot pass the course unless they complete the project.

IV. Summary of Assessment Findings

Results via Face-to-Face

Assessment course is taught exclusively online, there were no face-to-face sections to report.

Results via Distance Delivery (Online, Blended, etc)

Student Performance on PLO #3 Competencies: 2019-2022							
Competency (points)	2019-2020 (n=33)		2020-2021 (n=26)		2021-2022 (n=25)		3yr Avg (n=84)
	Avg	%	Avg	%	Avg	%	%
Analytical (25)	23.9	96%	24.0	96%	23.0	92%	95%
Communication (45)	44.0	98%	44.7	99%	42.2	94%	97%
Presentation (30)	29.2	97%	28.9	96%	27.6	92%	95%
Organization (20)	16.1	80%	19.0	95%	14.4	72%	82%
Critical Thinking (20)	19.2	96%	19.6	98%	17.6	88%	94%
Legal Research (30)	26.3	88%	28.9	96%	26.6	89%	91%
Legal Writing (30)	25.8	86%	28.9	96%	24.0	80%	87%

V. Discussion and Analysis of Assessment Findings

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #3, each of these program learning outcomes were discussed and analyzed above in MLOs #1 and #2.

Overall, the elements of style in legal writing are more critically governed as words in the English language may have specific meaning within the law. Legal definitions have weight and authority which must be determined given the particular project area. Students continue to work with concise writing which effectively communicates the work product they are producing.

In Legal Research & Writing, the students continue to uncover the variety of resources available to them during their research. Narrowing down what is reliable and correct are being refined through techniques in PLA 1104, Legal Research and Writing; PLA 2114, Advanced Legal Research; and PLA 4116, Legal Writing Seminar.

VI. Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

Based on the analysis of the results the following Action Plan Items have been selected for implementation:

- [Students' scores vary from semester to semester. Focusing on the individual competencies attained and future skill sets will continue to guide how the projects are provided to the students. Students survey themselves via an Essential Functions Checklist to assess current competencies and ones to gain proficiencies. Click here for the Essential Functions Checklist Survey https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773](https://web.spcollege.edu/edoutcomes/reports/1820[4/6/2023 10:59:11 AM])
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Aug 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

- Continue to mandate The Legal Technology Assessment ("LTA") as a benchmark assessment and a training platform. The results of which can be used for marketing, professional development, team assembly, on-boarding, rate negotiation, invoice review, provider differentiation, and more. Above all, however, benchmarked scores should be used to ensure legal professionals are getting the training they need on the technologies they use every day. The LTA pairs competence-based assessments with synchronous, active learning in order to provide effective tailored training
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

Yearly grant applied and funded.

- Continue to utilize our Paralegal Studies Advisory Board members for ideas and alterations for continuous improvement. Our members apprise the Program of shifts in legal topics and workload management.
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

#4: Exhibit the ability to deliver professional and ethical legal services in a culturally and locally appropriate manner.

I. Use of Past Results

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #4, each of these program learning outcomes were discussed and analyzed above in MLOs #1 and #2.

Individual projects are assigned to each student while considering the following: prior areas of interest/disinterest; prior areas of competency; current employment in a particular area of law; and pre-law potential. As noted in previous program goal action items, the Paralegal program plans to continually revise project areas in the coming year to ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of stakeholders in the culminating project, namely students and potential employers.

II. Methodology

Means of Assessment: Addressing requirements in MLO #4 presents many issues for the student that are both internal and external in the legal community. In addition to interacting with the "supervising attorney" for the case project, the student is required to complete a minimum of ten volunteer hours in the legal community. They receive 100 points for this in the PLA 4941 coursework which includes: 1. a learning contract between the student and the work site, 2. a reflection paper of the hours spent, and 3. a reflection piece on how the experience benefited the student by being placed in a live setting within the legal community. As part of our program's new initiatives, we have collaborated with legal aid services in the effective delivery of legal services in our local area. The Tampa Bay area and the State of Florida face many legal challenges particular to our region. When students are in a clinic, courtroom, or law office, the interactive learning and mentorship enhances the student's ability to deliver professional and ethical legal services in a culturally and locally appropriate manner. The onset of COVID and remote work opportunities gave each student a challenge to overcome potential deficiencies in technology and online interaction.

Date(s) of Administration: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22

Method: Students are instructed and guided to determine the make up of the submission pursuant to course instructions and professor guidance. Each project has its own set of guidelines (parameters) as part of the initial fact pattern that are to be met as a minimum. Three competencies within goal #4 are assessed: communication, critical thinking, and legal research.

Assessment Instrument: Projects are assessed using a rubric, where one or more of the the seven criterion align to the five program goals. The rubric criteria are then paired with the guidelines provided for each type of case study. Both the guidelines in the project specs and the rubric are provided to students at the start of the term. While students complete various types of projects within the same course, there is a consistent and commoncore set of criteria on which students are assessed.

Population: All students enrolled in the PLA 4941 capstone course are assessed on the culminating project.

III. Criteria for Success

For the 2019-2022 Assessment Data, each of the three competencies within goal #4 had a maximum number of available points (95 for all areas, combined) that contribute to the overall grade of the project (200 points total). Students are required to obtain a minimum of 67 out of 95 possible points (70%) in order to successfully demonstrate the program goal. When students feel they are experiencing difficulty with one area of the project, they are required to write an internal memorandum to the supervising attorney, identifying the questions they have; feedback is provided accordingly. Once students submit the project to be assessed, the grade is final unless a student has not met the minimum of 70%

on the respective sections relating to each MLO. In cases where students do not meet the minimum requirements, they are given the opportunity to revise the project until the required competency level is met. Students cannot pass the course unless they complete the project.

IV. Summary of Assessment Findings

Results via Face-to-Face

Assessment course is taught exclusively online, there were no face-to-face sections to report.

Results via Distance Delivery (Online, Blended, etc)

Student Performance on MLO #4 Competencies: 2019-2022							
Competency (points)	2019-2020 (n=33)		2020-2021 (n=26)		2021-2022 (n=25)		3yr Avg (n=84)
	Avg	%	Avg	%	Avg	%	%
Communication (45)	44.0	98%	44.7	99%	42.2	94%	97%
Critical Thinking (20)	19.2	96%	19.6	98%	17.6	88%	94%
Legal Research (30)	26.3	88%	28.9	96%	26.6	89%	91%

V. Discussion and Analysis of Assessment Findings

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #4, each of these program learning outcomes were discussed and analyzed above in MLOs #1 and #2.

Individual projects are assigned to each student while considering the following: prior areas of interest/disinterest; prior areas of competency; current employment in a particular area of law; and pre-law potential. As noted in previous program goal action items, the Paralegal program plans to continually revise project areas in the coming year to ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of stakeholders in the culminating project, namely students and potential employers. The Paralegal Studies Advisory Board has played an important role in keeping the Program apprised of current legal topics for projects.

VI. Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

Based on the analysis of the results the following Action Plan Items have been selected for implementation:

- Students' scores vary from semester to semester. Focusing on the individual competencies attained and future skill sets will continue to guide how the projects are provided to the students. Students survey themselves via an [Essential Functions Checklist](https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773) to assess current competencies and ones to gain proficiencies. Click here for the [Essential Functions Checklist Survey](https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773) <https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773>
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Aug 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

- Continue to mandate The Legal Technology Assessment ("LTA") as a benchmark assessment and a training platform. The results of which can be used for marketing, professional development, team assembly, on-boarding, rate negotiation, invoice review, provider differentiation, and more. Above all, however, benchmarked scores should be used to ensure legal professionals are getting the training they need on the technologies they use every day. The LTA pairs competence-based assessments with synchronous, active learning in order to provide effective tailored training
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

Yearly grant applied and funded.

- Continue to utilize our Paralegal Studies Advisory Board members for ideas and alterations for continuous improvement. Our members apprise the Program of shifts in legal topics and workload management.
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

#5: Demonstrate an advanced knowledge and understanding of the American legal system.

I. Use of Past Results

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #5, each of these program learning outcomes were discussed and analyzed above. In researching the studies of American General Law in prior classes (through the use of Subsequent Courses Taken through Business Intelligence software), the students who maintained the highest scores which demonstrate a detailed and concise understanding of the American Legal System had taken classes such as PLA 4944, Paralegal Certificate Capstone and PLA 4225, Civil Trial Practice. PLA 4944 focuses heavily on Communication, Ethics, Legal Memorandum Writing, and American General Law (Commercial Transactions, Constitutional Law, Administrative Law, Estates & Probate Law, Real Estate Transactions, Criminal Law, Contracts, Business Organizations, and Civil Litigation). Hence, these courses will continue to be recommended to the students before or while they are in the PLA 4941 Capstone Course.

II. Methodology

Means of Assessment: For the last and final MLO #5, understanding the American Legal System ("ALS") is best taught through a series of various teaching methods. All prior Learning Outcomes considered, PLA 4941 is an opportunity to challenge a student to provide an attorney with a complex assessment supported by legal research. Rote memorization and recitation of an infinite number of elements of causes of actions are not the ultimate goals. The ALS is an essential flow chart and system of avenues to resolve disputes or matters in law or equity. As highlighted in MLO #1, which assessed both critical thinking and legal research, students are given initial memorandums to start the chain of investigation for the assigned case.

Date(s) of Administration: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22

Method: Students are instructed and guided to determine the make up of the submission pursuant to course instructions and professor guidance. Each project has its own set of guidelines (parameters) as part of the initial fact pattern that are assigned as a minimum. Five competencies within goal #5 are assessed: analytical, presentation, critical thinking, legal research, and legal writing .

Assessment Instrument: Projects are assessed using a rubric, where one or more of the seven criterion align to the five program goals. The rubric criteria are then paired with the guidelines provided for each type of case study. Both the guidelines in the project specs and the rubric are provided to students at the start of the term. While students complete various types of projects within the same course, there is a consistent and common core set of criteria on which students are assessed.

Population: All students enrolled in the PLA 4941 capstone course are assessed on the culminating project.

III. Criteria for Success

For the 2019-2022 Assessment Data, each of the five competencies within goal #5 had a maximum number of available points (135 for all areas, combined) that contribute to the overall grade of the project (200 points total). Students are required to obtain a minimum of 95 out of 135 possible points (70%) in order to successfully demonstrate the program goal. When students feel they are experiencing difficulty with one area of the project, they are required to write an internal memorandum to the supervising attorney, identifying the questions they have; feedback is provided accordingly. Once students submit the project to be assessed, the grade is final unless a student has not met the minimum of 70% on the respective sections relating to each MLO. In cases where students do not meet the minimum requirements, they are given the opportunity to revise the project until the required competency level is met. Students cannot pass the course unless they complete the project.

IV. Summary of Assessment Findings

Results via Face-to-Face

Assessment course is taught exclusively online, there were no face-to-face sections to report.

Results via Distance Delivery (Online, Blended, etc)

Student Performance on MLO #5 Competencies: 2019-2022							
Competency (points)	2019-2020 (n=33)		2020-2021 (n=26)		2021-2022 (n=25)		3yr Avg (n=84)
	Avg	%	Avg	%	Avg	%	%
Analytical (25)	23.9	96%	24.0	96%	23.0	92%	95%
Presentation (30)	29.2	97%	28.9	96%	27.6	92%	95%
Critical Thinking (20)	19.2	96%	19.6	98%	17.6	88%	94%
Legal Research (30)	26.3	88%	28.9	96%	26.6	89%	91%
Legal Writing (30)	25.8	86%	28.9	96%	24.0	80%	87%

V. Discussion and Analysis of Assessment Findings

Upon reviewing the findings for MLO #5, each of these program learning outcomes were discussed and analyzed above. In researching the studies of American General Law in prior classes (through the use of Subsequent Courses Taken through Business Intelligence software), the students who maintained the highest scores which demonstrate a detailed and concise understanding of the American Legal System had taken classes such as PLA 4944, Paralegal Certificate Capstone and PLA 4225, Civil Trial Practice. PLA 4944 focuses heavily on Communication, Ethics, Legal Memorandum Writing, and American General Law (Commercial Transactions, Constitutional Law, Administrative Law, Estates & Probate Law, Real Estate Transactions, Criminal Law, Contracts, Business Organizations, and Civil Litigation). Hence, these courses will continue to be recommended to the students before or while they are in the PLA 4941 Capstone Course.

VI. Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

Based on the analysis of the results the following Action Plan Items have been selected for implementation:

- [Students' scores vary from semester to semester. Focusing on the individual competencies attained and future skill sets will continue to guide how the projects are provided to the students. Students survey themselves via an Essential Functions Checklist to assess current competencies and ones to gain proficiencies. Click here for the Essential Functions Checklist Survey <https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773>](#)
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Aug 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

- [Continue to mandate The Legal Technology Assessment \("LTA"\) as a benchmark assessment and a training platform. The results of which can be used for marketing, professional development, team assembly, on-boarding, rate negotiation, invoice review, provider differentiation, and more. Above all, however, benchmarked scores should be used to ensure legal professionals are getting the training they need on the technologies they use every day. The LTA pairs competence-based assessments with synchronous, active learning in order to provide effective tailored training](#)
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

Yearly grant applied and funded.

- [Continue to utilize our Paralegal Studies Advisory Board members for ideas and alterations for continuous improvement. Our members apprise the Program of shifts in legal topics and workload management.](#)
- Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers / Jul 2023

Budget / Planning Implications:

N/A

Action Plan

Category	Action Plan Detail / Implications	For PLO	Responsible Party / Due Date
A. Enable Greater Student Success			
A1. Identify needs and address ways to improve overall student success			
	Students' scores vary from semester to semester. Focusing on the individual competencies attained and future skill sets will continue to guide how the projects are provided to the students. Students survey themselves via an Essential Functions Checklist to assess current competencies and ones to gain proficiencies. Click here for the Essential Functions Checklist Survey https://web.spcollege.edu/survey/29773 Budget / Planning Implications: N/A	#1, #2, #3, #4, #5	Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers Aug 2023
B. Enhance Curriculum & Faculty Development			
B7. Make technology related improvements			
	Continue to mandate The Legal Technology Assessment ("LTA") as a benchmark assessment and a training platform. The results of which can be used for marketing, professional development, team assembly, on-boarding, rate negotiation, invoice review, provider differentiation, and more. Above all, however, benchmarked scores should be used to ensure legal professionals are getting the training they need on the technologies they use every day. The LTA pairs competence-based assessments with synchronous, active learning in order to provide effective tailored training Budget / Planning Implications: Yearly grant applied and funded.	#1, #2, #3, #4, #5	Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers Jul 2023
B10. Other			
	Continue to utilize our Paralegal Studies Advisory Board members for ideas and alterations for continuous improvement. Our members apprise the Program of shifts in legal topics and workload management. Budget / Planning Implications: N/A	#1, #2, #3, #4, #5	Christy Powers, Ian Banks, and Susan Demers Jul 2023

Evaluation of the Impact of Action Plan Items on Program Quality

The Program continues to refine the Essential Functions Checklist Survey to assess known and to be gained competencies in organization; law office practice and technology; legal research and writing; interview and investigation; critical thinking; communication; and professional ethics/office demeanor. Students take a WITS survey in PLA 1003 and again in their capstone courses. Our advisory board assisted us with this over a 12-month period. The student's awareness of strengths and weaknesses assists each student in focusing on how to improve their weaknesses. This, in turn, guided the student's focus on attaining the necessary skills that the legal field desires for employment.

With the implementation of the NSLT Certificate and a focus on exploring software for data and document management, students confront this in a core class, PLA 3734 Computers and the Law Office. The addition of the Legal Technology Assessment (LTA) Certificate has increased proficiencies in Microsoft Office Suite and Adobe. Organization of information through projects and assignments have improved as students continue to adjust post-COVID. Creating the situational awareness necessary to meet the demands in the legal industry assists in developing a highly proficient and effective paralegal. Students learn how to organize items electronically and in a fashion consistent with file-naming protocols and document management. Altogether, most students are gainfully employed on or before graduation when utilizing their capstone project on interviews.

Approvals

Program Administrators:

Christy Powers - Faculty

Ian Banks - Faculty

Rachel Bennett - Academic Director, CETL

Approved by Christy Powers - Faculty on Mar 30, 2023

Educational Outcomes Coordinators:

Amy Eggers - Coord, Accredtn&BaccAssessment

Magaly Tymms - Assessment Director

Approved by Magaly Tymms - Assessment Director on Mar 30, 2023

Dean:

- Dean, College of Policy Ethics and Legal Studies

Approved by - Dean, College of Policy Ethics and Legal Studies on Mar 30, 2023

Senior Vice President:

Sabrina Crawford - AVP, Institutional Eff Acad Srv

Approved by Sabrina Crawford - AVP, Institutional Eff Acad Srv on Apr 6, 2023

St. Petersburg College
P.O. Box 13489
St. Petersburg FL 33733-3489

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