

D. Action Plan

1. Report of opportunities for improvement that were identified in the academic review

Paralegal Studies faculty identified opportunities for improvement in two major areas:

Advising/Retention –

Because Lake Superior College is an open enrollment institution that allows students to self-advise regarding program and course selection, the Paralegal Studies program faces several issues regarding student readiness for the demands of the program. These issues include (1) admission of students who may not be prepared to read at the level required in the paralegal profession, (2) admission of students who may not have the necessary writing skills to communicate at the level required in the paralegal profession, and (3) admission of students who have over-estimated their readiness for online course work, including study skills, time management, and technological readiness.

Paralegal Studies faculty believe that the development of a plan to address these advising/retention issues should be the first priority of the program in the next academic year.

Program Enrollment -

The current Paralegal Studies program enrollment of 60 – 70 students as reflected in the number of program advisees represents another opportunity for improvement. A discussion of the pros and cons of increasing enrollment is appropriate at this point in the growth of the Paralegal Studies program. Expansion of introductory course offerings would probably increase enrollment, but would present issues of retention (a significant number of LGST 1400 students select a less demanding career path), course sequencing and pre-requisite requirements creating a temporary lower enrollment in advanced courses, a potential dilution of the onground aspects of the Paralegal Studies program, and the potential of lower placement of graduates in the immediate geographical region served by Lake Superior College.

2. A plan of action indicating the steps necessary to address the opportunities for improvement

Paralegal Studies faculty have developed a three-year Action Plan. This action plan is contained in the Appendix. The Action Plan sets forth specific steps to be taken in the areas of Advising, Curriculum, Faculty Development, Student Retention, and Program Partnerships for academic years 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014.

Two action steps have top priority:

1. The development of orientation materials for new Paralegal Studies students. These orientation materials will provide resources for prospective students to more accurately assess their readiness for the Paralegal Studies program and to improve their opportunities for success.
2. The development of a Paralegal Studies program website to provide a central location for students to access information about program courses and faculty, current job opportunities in the legal field, matters of interest within the paralegal field, and a means of maintaining contact with program graduates.

3. A list of resources necessary to accomplish the plan of action

Two resources are crucial for the success of each of the components of the Action Plan:

1. Administrative support in recognition of the additional workload outside of course assignments required for a successful advising and retention plan in the Paralegal Studies program. This support may take the form of release time on a temporary or permanent basis and/or in the form of allowing slightly under-enrolled courses to run when justified by program development needs.
2. Approval of increased budget requests for resources identified as necessary for improvement of the Paralegal Studies program. One example of this type of resource would be the purchase of established pre- and post-testing materials to assist students in assessing their readiness for the Paralegal Studies program and their readiness for employment as paralegals.