

For Immediate Release

ACM'S NEW PARALEGAL PROGRAM BUILDS ON LEGAL ASSISTANT STUDIES

CUMBERLAND, Md. – Paralegal studies at Allegany College of Maryland, which prepare graduates for careers in law and related fields, will be offered this fall as a newly independent academic program.

The associate-degree curriculum builds on the legal (paralegal) assistant option that has been offered for nearly two decades within the office technologies program.

Standalone status, in accordance with new Maryland Higher Education Commission guidelines on course work among related curricula, confers advantages that will strengthen the program. MHEC is currently reviewing the pending changes.

Paralegal will move from the Technologies Building, where office technologies programs are housed, to the Humanities Building, where it will join the related subjects of criminal justice and political science.

Brandon Hoover, the program's coordinator, said independence will give paralegal studies higher visibility for students and employers and allow his program to affiliate with others across Maryland.



“It’s going to allow us to network with other paralegal programs and to join their affinity groups,” said Hoover, assistant professor of political science and criminal justice, a program that he also coordinates.

Paralegals provide important support services in law offices and other settings, such as financial services firms, insurance companies, government agencies and corporations.

ACM graduates who enter the area job market typically do so in private law practices, where they assist attorneys in such tasks as document drafting, records research, correspondence and office management.

Other graduates transfer to bachelor’s degree programs in legal studies or related subject on their way to careers in a law-related field or for admission to law school.

Because the paralegal program is small, faculty members are able to guide students from diverse backgrounds and walks of life toward their career goals.

“We have a lot of non-traditional students and students with diverse goals,” said Hoover. “We take students where they are and go out of our way to work with them.”

The program concludes with a practicum in which students gain experience in a law office or other setting. “Many of our students have been able to find work through the internship,” said Hoover.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects career opportunities for paralegals to increase by eight percent through 2024 as law firms step up hiring to increase efficiency and cut costs.

State-by-state figures from another source put Maryland’s paralegal job growth at 8.4 percent through 2022. That for West Virginia and Pennsylvania was put at 11.9 and 18.4 percent, respectively, through the same period.

The program is well-known to area attorneys, who contact the college for potential hires. Demand often exceeds the graduation rate, according to Hoover. As a practicing lawyer, Hoover is himself well-known to members of the tristate legal community.

A Grantsville native, Hoover earned a bachelor’s degree at Frostburg State University and a law degree at Ohio Northern University. After a two-year clerkship to the chief judge of West Virginia’s 21st judicial circuit, Hoover entered the private practice of law.

He worked full-time for three years with a Cumberland law firm, where his practice areas ranged from civil, real estate and criminal defense litigation to personal estate administration.

When ACM advertised an opening in its legal (paralegal) assistant program, Hoover acted on another career interest -- teaching. He joined the ACM faculty in 2013.

He continues to practice law part-time in the office of a Grantsville attorney, focusing on real estate work, wills-writing and basic estate-planning and administration.

For more information about the new paralegal program contact Hoover at 301-784-5300 or at bhoover5265@allegany.edu by email. More information is also available at the college website, www.allegany.edu.