

**Minutes of First Meeting of
Paralegal Studies Program
Moraine Valley Community College
November 11, 2020**

The first meeting of the Paralegal Studies Program was held virtually on Wednesday, November 11, 2020 at 12 p.m. Those present were: Cathy Cantolec, paralegal and board member and chair of Illinois Paralegal Association; Kris Condon, retired paralegal director at KCC; Joseph Flynn, Department Chair of Business/Culinary/Paralegal/Cannabis, full time faculty MVCC; James Garlanger, attorney at law; Panos Hadjimitsos, Assistant Dean, Science/Business/Computer Technology MVCC; Marie Harrell, internship manager, MVCC; Lynn Harrington, chief HR officer, MVCC; Suzanne Kendryna, assistant director, Moraine Area Career System; Eileen Kerlin Walsh, attorney at law; Julie Lawler, attorney at law; Elisabeth McNamara, private paralegal; Kelly Mensik, attorney at law; Courtney Michalik, private paralegal; Gerilyn Miller, private paralegal/paralegal manager; Mervate Mohammad, attorney at law; Ryen Nagle, Dean of Science/Business/Computer Technology MVCC; Liana Podman, corporate paralegal and law manager; Cathi Predl, coordinator of Paralegal Studies and Office Technology programs, full-time faculty MVCC; Susan Swanson, private paralegal; Beth Triezenberg, Office of Chief Counsel, IRS; Carol White, adjunct MVCC; Charles Zarzecki, attorney at law, adjunct MVCC; Lindsey Zerbian, coordinator of Southwest Education Center, MVCC.

Invited but not in attendance: Patrick Canna, attorney at law; Anna Johnson, paralegal for US General Services Administration; Tracey Nobis, paralegal Argonne National Laboratory; Irena Stefanovski, attorney at law; Jennifer Thiel, Seyfarth Shaw; Tamir Tommalieh, attorney at law Cynthia Anderson, Dean, Academic Development MVCC; Jacqueline Sharp, PLS student.

Cathi Predl served as facilitator of the meeting and put the minutes in final form and Lindsey Zerbian agreed to take notes.

Introductions. The meeting started with a brief introduction by each attending committee member. The members introduced themselves and told us a little about their background and expertise.

Update of the Paralegal Studies Program. Cathi gave a background of the paralegal program. In April of 2019, Moraine started exploring the possibility of starting a paralegal program. A steering committee was formed in August of 2019 and a consultant, Dr. Kristine Condon, paralegal director at Kankakee Community College, was hired to guide us in the paperwork submission for MVCC board approval and state approval. The goal is also to set up the program in accordance with ABA guidelines. The program was approved by Moraine Valley and by the state in March of 2020.

The first advisory meeting was set for March 25, 2020. Less than a week before the meeting, the state closed down. Everything was put on hold until May 2020. In May, an introductory PowerPoint explaining the program and inviting feedback regarding potential involvement in the program and desire to be on the advisory committee, was created.

On June 2, 2020, an email was sent to the same individuals who were to attend the March 25 meeting. The email was included the PowerPoint, as well as an interest survey to discover who might be interested in being an advisory member, offering internships, being an adjunct, assisting with steps to be

ABA approved, and donating to the law library. The results of that survey were filtered for interests and the advisory committee was formed.

In May, Cathi prepared a booklet for perspective students explaining the paralegal program. It was sent to every student who contacted us through the website or otherwise.

As of November 11, 2020, there were 25 students enrolled in the Intro to Paralegal Studies classes.

ABA approval and curriculum. A discussion was had regarding the desire to have our program ABA approved. ABA approval is a stamp of quality. Moraine Valley Community College has a reputation of offering quality programs and providing a quality education to our students. We want the Paralegal Studies program to have that same level of high quality.

When the invitations to the meeting were sent to the invitees, a copy of the curriculum for the degree and the certificate, as well as a description of the paralegal courses that will be offered was included. A discussion was had regarding the courses that are offered and the requirements that have to be met in order for a student to choose the certificate. The student must have completed a bachelor's degree or an AS, AA, AES, or AFA.

Internships and job placement. Internships are a requirement in the degree, as well as the certificate. Moraine Valley has always advocated for internships in our programs. Internships are also a requirement for ABA approval. Moraine Valley's Internship Director of the Job Resource Center, Marie Harrell, was at the meeting. She explained that she works closely with students practicing interviewing skills, creating a resume, and helping students obtain an internship. Cathi also stated that as the Internship Coordinator for the Office Technology program, she understands the importance of an internship. It allows the student to learn in a safe environment without the pressure of being fired if a mistake is made. It pulls together all the skills learned in the classroom and allows the student to practice soft skills or personal skills such as work ethic and dependability.

Many of the advisory members also discussed the importance of internships and offered to give our students an internship opportunity when they reach that point in the program.

Library/Resource room. It was discussed how the classes are now held in a virtual format because of COVID 19; however, when the classes go face-to-face, they will be held at the Southwest Education Center at 17900 South 94th Avenue, Tinley Park, IL. Therefore, is it our goal to have a fully stocked library/resource room on the SWEC campus. Also, each student will be given access to Westlaw resources. In October, Moraine received a donation of over 100 books from a private law firm. By the time the spring semester begins on February 1, 2021 at the SWEC campus, the law library will be fully stocked and operational. However, we will always be looking for additional donations, as well as the advice of committee members of what resources we should have in our library.

Adjuncts. Of utmost importance to Moraine Valley is the hiring of adjunct to teach the paralegal courses. Four highly qualified adjunct have already been hired to teach in the paralegal program. Our adjuncts have been through extensive training regarding teaching in a virtual format. It was discussed that we will be hiring additional adjuncts as the courses are offered. If the committee members are interested in teaching and they meet the MQT (minimum qualifications to teach), they are welcome and encouraged to apply.

Advisory board members. It was discussed how important the advisory board members are to the paralegal studies program. The members help in a variety of ways: internship opportunities, assessing our resources and donating to our library, serving as or recommending adjuncts, and attending semi-annual advisory committee meetings and participating in discussions of key topics. The advisory board will meet twice a year.

Advisory members can be attorneys, paralegals (public and private), managers of paralegals, government officials, members of the business community and/or general public (not legal), civil and community leaders, faculty, and school administrators.

The committee members we have now are a diverse group dedicated to ensuring that Moraine's program meets the needs of each student, as well as the community. It was suggested that if anyone knows of anyone who would be interested in becoming a member, please let Cathi know. We look forward to many participants.

ABA advisory committee topics. It was discussed that the committee meetings, will focus on the following topics: change and trends in the field, assess the job market, evaluate the adequacy of the library resources, and other topics that a member feels are important. We are open to all input. If something is important to the community or an advisory member, it is important to us.

It was further discussed that attending a virtual or face-to-face meeting twice a year is a big commitment on the part of all of our members. We value the opinions of every member and will be mindful of your time. Therefore, we will send out a survey after the meeting so that if any participant has to leave the meeting early or wants to add something after the meeting, the member can still participate.

Questions. It was asked if estate planning was part of the curriculum and if not, can it be added. Kris Condon explained that PLS 260 covers estate planning and probate, and focuses specifically on Illinois law.

Marie Harrell from Moraine's Job Resource Center, let everyone know that when employers are ready to start the process of looking for interns, to contact her or Cathi. Marie will get the paperwork started so students can be moved right into internships.

It was discussed how phenomenal it is that 30 people are engaged in this committee today and are involved as consultative committee members. We will still need to look for a member who is not affiliated with Moraine and does not have a legal background. It was also discussed that the makeup of this board will help students with questions regarding paralegal work in different types of law.

It was asked if students would learn e-filing. Kris Condon said that it is covered in Civil Litigation, as well as Law Office Automation.

Closing. Cathi Predl thanked everyone for taking time in their day to attend our meeting. Cathi asked that if anyone is interested in being a guest speaker in a class, to please let her know. Also, please contact Cathi if you know of anyone who would be willing to serve as a committee member. We will be meeting again in the spring. Please let Cathi know if you have any thoughts/questions/suggestions for the next meeting. It was mentioned that a survey will be sent out to everyone regarding the main topics that we will cover every meeting. If a member has any thoughts or ideas on each subject, put it in the survey.

Everyone was thanked for their time and input today. It was a great meeting.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m. and a survey was sent out.

Dated: December 18, 2020

Cathi Predl, Paralegal Studies Program Coordinator