

Paralegal Internship

UAF Community & Technical College

PLS 299 ...3 credits

Syllabus

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Alaska Fairbanks offers a two-year Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) Degree in Paralegal Studies. The degree is approved by the American Bar Association. Students qualifying for the degree must complete 61 credit hours in a five-part sequence of studies consisting of:

a) Core Curriculum: Standard courses in oral and written communication, math and human relations.

b) Paralegal Studies: Several paralegal courses are taught by adjunct faculty at the UAF Community & Technical College. All such faculty either are engaged in the practice of law in Fairbanks, or are practicing paralegals. The courses include a broad introductory course (PLS 102), and an ethics course (PLS 105), followed by courses in civil procedure, legal research and legal writing, and practical paralegal skills; plus a selection of classes concerning administrative law, business organizations, contracts, criminal law, employment law, family law, probate law, real estate law and torts.

c) Computers: In addition to an assumption that each student has the basic skills required for the use of a computer, the program offers additional training in the use of specific law office software (PLS 260). Students also have unlimited access to Lexis during their time in the paralegal program.

d) Additional Law-Related Courses: An additional nine credits of law-related courses taught by other departments in the university are required, six credits of which are upper division courses.

e) Near the end of their studies, students are required to complete an internship in a local law office, law-related office, or government or military office. The internship involves a minimum of 150 hours of work under the supervision of a lawyer or, when available, a practicing paralegal. During the internship, the student also meets with and continues under the supervision of the UAF faculty advisor.

2. PURPOSE OF THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The theme of the paralegal internship is one of transition for the student, transition both from classroom to office and from student to employee.

a) Classroom to Office. The internship provides a transition for a student near the end of his or her academic studies into the actual office setting of a private law office, government or military law office or related agency. The student is provided an opportunity to extend what has been learned in the classroom into the "real world," experiencing the paralegal occupation as it functions on a day-to-day basis. Although working and studying in a much more independent atmosphere, continuing guidance and observation during this final stage of the student's UAF education is still provided, but by an actual practitioner rather than by a classroom instructor. A faculty advisor monitors the internship, provides secondary assistance when needed, and assigns a final grade to the student following consultation with the supervising lawyer.

b) Student to Employee. In addition, the student, near graduation, is provided with an opportunity to explore possible career choices. Employment potential following graduation is enhanced by the gaining of practical paralegal experience and the ability to add to a resumé actual hands-on experience in a law or law-related office.

3. PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

There are two prerequisites to a student's participation in the internship program:

a) UAF Paralegal Majors. The internship program is open only to students who have declared the paralegal degree program as their major and have completed at least 45 of the 61 required credit hours of study in the paralegal degree program, including a majority of the required paralegal courses. These requirements may be waived by the UAF faculty advisor in unusual circumstances, but will generally be strictly enforced to emphasize the goal of placing only those students who are adequately prepared through completion of the majority of their course work and are in the final semester prior to graduation.

b) Academic Success. Students must have a minimum cumulative grade index in the paralegal degree program courses of 2.8 ("B-").

4. PLACEMENT OPTIONS

Selection of an office in which the internship will be conducted may be completed through one of three methods:

a) For students not presently employed in a law or law-related office, but who are able to select a law office based on personal acquaintance or other professional connections, the same procedure as discussed in the following paragraph will apply. While students are encouraged to pursue this method of selection, the faculty adviser will retain the authority to not approve a placement which he feels will not be productive.

b) For students not presently employed in a law or law-related office, and who want assistance in selecting an internship office, the faculty advisor will provide a list of offices which have indicated a willingness to participate in the internship program. The faculty advisor will offer suggestions and recommendations concerning the best possible placement for each student based on the advisor's knowledge of the student's individual capabilities and the areas of the law in which the office being considered usually practices. The student will provide a resumé to the office being considered for placement and will schedule an interview with the office manager or lawyer who will supervise the internship. All aspects of the internship program as outlined in this syllabus must be discussed and agreed upon. If an agreement is reached between the lawyer and student, the faculty advisor will approve the placement, following discussion with both the student and lawyer, if it appears likely both the student and the lawyer will benefit from the placement.

c) Since many of the students in the UAF paralegal degree program are already presently employed in local law firms or government offices, the internship requirement may be awarded to the student through the university's "credit for prior learning" (CPL) process. This requires the student to prepare a detailed portfolio which outlines the work she or he routinely performs in the law office and a corroborating letter from the office manager or supervising lawyer. The faculty advisor will assist the student in completing the required paperwork. The university charges a fee of \$50.00 for processing a CPL, plus \$10 per credit hour awarded.

5. COURSE REQUIREMENTS IN THE OFFICE OF PLACEMENT

a) Hours of Work. The student will earn three credit hours toward graduation for completion of the internship. A minimum of 150 hours of work assigned and supervised by the placement office is required. It is the obligation of the student to keep track of these hours in a journal, as outlined below under "Course Requirements at the University." Before a final grade is issued by the faculty advisor, the supervising lawyer must examine and approve the daily journal.

Ordinarily, the student will complete the 150 hour minimum requirement over roughly a ten to twelve-week period, averaging twelve to fifteen hours of work per week. However, the actual schedule involved is entirely up to the student and the placement office. The student can work two full eight-hour days per week, three five-hour afternoons per week, three hours each morning per week, and so forth.

b) Type of Work. The type of work to be performed is a matter of discussion and agreement between the student and the supervising lawyer, depending on the actual practice engaged in by the placement office and the particular skills of the student. The placement office should not feel compelled to devise special projects just to keep the student occupied but instead should only accept the placement if it can use the student's services as it would those of any other paralegal, to assist the supervising lawyer, and his or her support staff, in the regular work of the office. It is acceptable for the student to engage in only two or three major projects during the internship or, in the alternative, perform several different unrelated tasks each week. These are matters which are left entirely to the discretion of the supervising lawyer and the student.

The tasks performed by the student should not be in the nature of clerical tasks such as answering the telephone on a regular basis, performing filing chores for others in the office, transcribing dictation, and so forth. It is understood that in some small Fairbanks law offices everyone, including the supervising lawyer, is sometimes called upon to share various clerical tasks required to keep the office operational. The student must feel free to assist in this manner if it is the usual practice of the office, keeping in mind, however, that the purpose of the internship is to provide practical paralegal experience for the student.

Since the student will have been trained to retrieve documents using Lexis, and has paid a fee for the use of Lexis, he or she will be permitted reasonable access to Lexis to research and retrieve information for use in connection with projects at the placement office during the internship. However, the university's contract with Lexis does not permit those other than internship students to use the student's Lexis password.

c) Supervision of Work. The student will be responsible to a supervising lawyer or a paralegal in the office who is also under the supervision of a lawyer. All work assigned by the office must be completed to the satisfaction of the supervising lawyer.

d) Abiding by Office Rules. The student will be expected to report to the office of placement dressed and groomed in the manner required of other office employees and to observe all office rules regarding punctuality, reliability, decorum and confidentiality. The existence and enforcement of these rules in a particular office are appropriate subjects for discussion during the initial interview. A student should not seek approval of a placement in an office in which he or she cannot abide by the rules of that office.

Students will be expected to perform as he or she would in any employment environment. This includes being on time, if specific hours of work are agreed upon, reporting sick if appropriate, and discussing specific problems which arise with the supervising lawyer, office manager or paralegal with whom the student is working.

e) Terms and Conditions of Internship. During the internship, the terms and conditions of the relationship between the student and the office of placement, will be governed entirely by the agreement entered into by those two parties. The student is not to be considered an employee of the office. No compensation or fringe benefits are contemplated by the internship program.

6. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

a) Resumé. The requirement of a resumé must be met before the internship begins.

b) Initial Class. Students participating in an internship will attend an initial class with the faculty advisor and others participating in an internship. The class will be held on the first Thursday of the semester at 1 PM. at the UAF Community & Technical College, 604 Barnette Street, Room 103 (Law Library), in Fairbanks. This class will be organizational in nature, outlining the goals of the program, discussing the use of a resumé in job searching, discussing the contents of the final memorandum, and sharing with other students the activities, duties and hours contemplated by each individual internship placement. Important ethical issues will be reviewed, such as the need for absolute confidentiality, along with reminders concerning the unauthorized practice of law.

c) Text. There is no text book required for the course.

d) Journal. A record of the internship must be kept and presented by the student as a prerequisite to receiving a final grade. The journal will log all dates and times the student worked, including hours in the placement office, hours in a law library, hours in a courtroom, hours in other court offices, hours at the UAF paralegal law library, and any other hours spent outside of the placement office performing assigned work.

The format of the journal is left for the student to devise, so long as all of the above information is regularly entered.

The journal must be presented to the faculty advisor at the conclusion of the internship for evaluation. The journal must also include a statement, or a separate letter, signed by the supervising lawyer or office manager corroborating the accuracy of the journal and that the internship was completed by the student to the satisfaction of the placement office.

e) Written Assignment-Evaluation of Internship Experience. No less than three days prior to the end of the semester, each student must hand in to the faculty advisor a written memorandum outlining her or his internship and of the paralegal internship program in general. This paper should be 3-5 pages in length. The following topics should be discussed, together with any others the student feels are pertinent:

- (1) The role of the student as a paralegal in the placement office;
- (2) The substantive areas of the law which the student applied during the internship;
- (3) The fact-finding activities engaged in by the student during the internship;
- (4) An assessment of the value of the internship experience as it relates to the student's overall education; and
- (5) The extent to which the student found his or her course work at UAF relevant to the internship activities. This will involve a discussion of which UAF classes were the most relevant to the activities engaged in during the internship and recommendations as to how the UAF paralegal degree program might be improved to make the subjects studied in classes more supportive of students' efforts in an actual paralegal employment situation.

7. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the paralegal internship, a student will fully understand and be capable of performing the following tasks:

- a) Prepare a resumé and present it to a potential employer for evaluation.
- b) Draft for approval by a supervising lawyer several types of legal documents. Depending on the internship office's area of practice, the types of documents might include pleadings to be filed in court, civil or criminal; office memoranda outlining legal research on an assigned topic; contracts; wills and documents for probate proceedings; real estate documents; documents to be used in family law proceedings; and so forth.
- c) Draft routine law office correspondence which need not be approved by a supervising lawyer.

- d) Conduct legal research using both a law library and a computer-assisted research program such as Lexis.
- e) Conduct client and witness interviews.
- f) Engage in basic fact-finding and investigation.
- g) Assist in trial preparation and discovery.
- h) Fully understand the ethical responsibilities owed by a paralegal and supervising lawyer to clients, other lawyers, and the court system.

8. DISABILITY SERVICES

- a) The faculty advisor will work with the Office of Disabilities Services, 208 Whitaker Building, 474-5655, to provide reasonable accommodation to any student with a disability.

9. FACULTY ADVISOR and FINAL COURSE GRADE

During the internship, the faculty advisor will assist the student as follows:

- a) The advisor will provide assistance in finding internship placements if needed and help the student in meeting the requirements of the internship.
- b) The advisor will organize and conduct the initial class of internship participants.
- c) The advisor will monitor the internship experience to assure that it meets the objectives and goals of the program. This will be achieved by maintaining communication both with the student and with the supervising lawyer or office manager in the office of placement. At least one on-site visit by the advisor to the placement office will be scheduled.
- d) The advisor will provide ongoing assistance with specific problems which arise. If a student is assigned a project he or she does not understand or that is beyond his or her capabilities, this type of problem should initially be discussed with the supervising lawyer. However, if a student needs tutoring on a specific point in order to complete an otherwise successful project, the faculty advisor will assist without the involvement of the supervising lawyer.
- e) The advisor will be responsible for the final evaluation of the internship student and the assignment of a final grade. The grade will be based on the following factors:

- 20% ... Quality of Student Resumé, at the beginning of the internship.
- 20% ... Quality of Student Journal, kept during the internship.
- 20% ... On-Site Visit by Faculty Advisor, midway through the internship.
- 20% ... Quality of Written Assignment- Evaluation of Internship Experience, at end of the internship.
- 20% ... Evaluation of Supervising Lawyer

- f) A sheet is attached which provides information about the faculty advisor, his office location, office hours, telephone and e-mail address.

Information Concerning the Faculty Advisor

Faculty Advisor: Ed Husted, Professor and Program Head of the UAF Paralegal Studies Program

Office Address: UAF Community & Technical College
604 Barnette Street, Room 103 (through the Paralegal Law Library)
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Office Telephone: 455-2835

Office Fax: 455-2881

E-Mail: eshusted@alaska.edu

Home Telephone: 457-8314

Home Office Fax: 452-8157

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday: 9:30 AM. to 4:30 PM.
Tuesday and Thursday: 9:30 AM. to 4:30 PM., except for a class from 12 noon to 1:30 PM.
Friday: 9:00 AM. to 12 Noon

Mr. Husted was graduated from Carleton College (B.A.) at Northfield, Minnesota, in 1959 and from Indiana University Law School (LL.B.) at Bloomington, Indiana in 1962. He served as a Deputy Attorney General for the State of Indiana from 1962 to 1964. Thereafter, he engaged in the general practice of law in Indiana until 1979. During this time, he also served as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney from 1966 to 1970.

Mr. Husted came to Alaska in 1981 and worked for six years as a paralegal in two Fairbanks law offices engaged exclusively in workers' compensation law. Beginning in 1988, Mr. Husted worked as a specialist in legal research and writing through his business, Lawyer Support Services, and provided these services on contract to lawyers throughout the state. His wife also owns a law-related business, LSS Court Reporting. Mr. Husted is not admitted to the practice of law in Alaska.

Mr. Husted taught the first "Introduction to Paralegal Studies" class (PLS 101) offered at UAF in the fall semester of 1992 and has taught the same course, now PLS 102, during each succeeding semester until the present time. In addition, Mr. Husted teaches the following courses: Torts (PLS 203), Real Estate (PLS 215), Intro to Legal Research and Writing (PLS 280), Advanced Legal Writing (PLS 285), Mass Media Law (JRN 413), and Media Relations (JUST 630). He also coordinates the paralegal internship program, PLS 299.

In the fall of 1997, Mr. Husted became the first full-time coordinator of the UAF paralegal studies program, a position he has held since that time. As such, he serves as the advisor for roughly 50 students who have declared paralegal studies as their major at UAF.

In February 2001, the UAF paralegal studies program was approved by the American Bar Association, a level of credibility achieved by fewer than 25% of the paralegal training programs in the United States. The program has maintained ABA approval continuously since 2001.