

OHIO BOARD OF REGENTS

Agenda Item 3.12 University of Toledo, Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies

**RESOLUTION**

BE IT RESOLVED: upon the recommendation of the Chancellor and with the concurrence of the Initiatives Committee of the Ohio Board of Regents that the University of Toledo Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in Paralegal Studies is approved.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO**

#### Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies

The University of Toledo seeks approval for a Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies. The Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies will be housed in the Department of Undergraduate Legal Specialities in the College of Health and Human Services.

The baccalaureate program in paralegal studies will prepare students to perform general paralegal duties and provide students with an opportunity to specialize in one of three legal specialty areas: Litigation, Legal Administration or Health Care Law. Students will be prepared to find employment in private law firms, financial institutions, courts and mediation systems, insurance companies, prosecutor offices, educational institutions, corporations, government (federal, state and local), real estate offices and title companies, and public defender offices, to name a few.

The four-year degree will provide paralegal students with education needed to meet increasing employer demand for highly qualified paralegals holding a bachelor's degree from an American Bar Association approved program. The proposed degree program will allow for an expansion of available internship opportunities and for the possible creation of a co-op experience for some students. In addition, the degree program will be responsive to future state requirements for paralegal licensure and certification. Currently, for example, the educational requirement to sit for the national Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (PACE), sponsored by the National Federation of Paralegal Associations, and expected to be the basis for future regulatory programs, is a bachelor's degree. The Ohio Bar Association's Paralegals/Legal Assistants Committee has begun examining the licensure and certification issue in Ohio. Although licensure/certification is not currently required, it is likely to be required in the future. In order to provide for appropriate education background for graduates, the University of Toledo requests that the B.S. in Paralegal Studies be approved.

The curriculum for the proposed program includes the incorporation of existing lower-division paralegal studies courses and the creation of new courses at the upper division level. In addition, as an interdisciplinary program, students will engage in study in a wide range of other departments across the University.

UT's associate degree program in paralegal studies has served as a model for many other such programs throughout the country. In addition, the associate degree program was designated as a national demonstration program by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. In addition, the Ohio Board of Regents designated the program as a "program of excellence". UT's paralegal programs are the only ABA approved paralegal programs in northwestern Ohio. As such, UT has a strong base for launching a B.S. in Paralegal Studies in order to extend the program to the baccalaureate degree

level. The American Bar Association has already approved the UT proposal for the B.S. degree in Paralegal Studies.

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that the paralegal profession is one of the fastest growing occupations through the year 2008. Experts in the field agree that the trend is to move the field from associate degree programs to baccalaureate degree programs. UT has already graduated more than 800 associate degree graduates. Over 100 currently enrolled students will be able to continue their studies to the baccalaureate degree level with the approval of the B.S. program. A survey of these students indicated that 74% of the students surveyed plan to pursue a bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies. The program anticipates an average of 71 new student in the first two years, with increases over the next five years. It should also be noted that UT has numerous articulation agreements with other Ohio colleges and universities as well as an agreement with Toledo Public Schools regarding students participating in the Northwest Ohio Tech Prep Program.

In addition to courses in paralegal studies related to the various tracks within the program, students will be expected to take mathematics, science and business-oriented classes. A core of 45 semester hours in lower division coursework is required before entrance to the upper division classes. A total of 124 semester hours is required for the program. Student outcomes will be assessed through various measures, including the successful completion of a supervised internship. Graduates and employers will also be surveyed.

Based upon current faculty resources, the University will not immediately need new faculty to support the program. New full-time faculty will be needed at some point after fall term 2001. Other resources are sufficient to support the program. Administrative support will be enhanced as program needs grow. Library resources are sufficient.