



The Legal Studies Program at Syracuse University's University College, Syracuse, NY

[By Devon Pryor]

University College, the continuing education campus of Syracuse University, has a long history of serving the needs of students who wish to continue their educations by earning certifications and post-baccalaureate degrees. Ground was laid for Syracuse University's future in extended education in 1933, when a UCITA extension center opened on the Syracuse campus. According to the University College website, 13 years later, in 1946, the school of extension was reorganized to form University College, fulfilling the university's aims to better serve part-time adult students working at other jobs and grant adult education equal status with education at the other Syracuse University colleges and schools. Various certification and post-baccalaureate programs were added to the repertoire of University College's offerings, and in 1979, the Legal Assistant Certificate Program was formed with the help of the New York State and Onondaga County bar associations.

University College's Legal Studies Program has been approved by the American Bar Association since 1983 and is a long-standing member of the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE). University College also enjoys the privileges of association with groups affiliated with its parent institution, Syracuse University. Among these affiliated groups are the International Paralegal Management Association, the National Association of Legal Assistants, and the National Federation of Paralegal Associations. According to the school's website, program objectives include providing challenging general legal education, providing instruction regarding the operations of legal theory, law, and analysis, and providing an understanding of the ethical concepts by which legal professionals are bound. The program prepares students for employment as paralegals and legal assistants in a wide array of fields. As the website explains, it is "designed for adults seeking employment in the legal setting" and helps its students develop competency in both substantive and procedural law.

The Legal Studies Program at University College offers four different educational options from which legally minded students can choose. The first is the Bachelor of Professional Studies (B.P.S.) in Legal Studies. This degree is earned through a 120-hour credit program and can be completed by taking evening classes. Students hoping to enter the legal field can also pursue the Credit Certificate in Legal Studies. This option is for students who have already earned associate's degrees, or credit equivalents, and who

intend to earn their bachelor's degrees before entering the legal profession. This program is completed by taking 26 units of legal specialty courses. These 26 units may be applied toward a bachelor's degree, which benefits students who intend to continue earning their bachelor's degrees after certification.

The Post-Baccalaureate Certificate is a third option available through the university's legal studies program. This option is for students who have already earned their bachelor's degrees and wish to obtain certification in the legal field. Finally, for undergraduates who are considering careers in law, University College's Legal Studies Program offers a 19-credit legal studies minor, which focuses on giving students a broad understanding of law. With so many degree options to choose from, University College features a legal studies program that complements the educational and career goals of a large number of prospective students. Both the bachelor's degree and the credit certificate offered by the program have official approval from the New York State Education Department.

Coursework within the program involves study in the areas of litigation, commercial law, real estate, business organizations, civil practice, estates, criminal law, family law, law office technology, tort law, contracts, alternative dispute resolution, creditor and debtor law, bankruptcy, healthcare law, sports law, legal ethics, and legal research and writing. Legal internships are required for those wishing to complete the Bachelor of Professional

Studies (B.P.S.) degree but are elective for students pursuing the Credit Certificate in Legal Studies. Internships are geared toward exposing students to practical experience in the legal field. All internships, whether mandatory or elective, include class sessions, and students are required to complete oral and written reports and participate in discussions of workplace ethics issues. Internships are only open to students of senior standing.

Classes for the program are held primarily at University College. The college—along with the rest of the Syracuse University campus—is located in downtown Syracuse, NY. University College students have access to all of the resources of Syracuse University, including the Syracuse University College of Law Library, which contains a wealth of legal information, including a 350,000-volume collection of print, microform, audio, video, and CD-ROM materials. Bird Library, the campus' main library, is also available to students at University College, as is the New York State Supreme Court Law Library in downtown Syracuse.

ON THE NET

Alphabetical list of ABA-approved paralegal education programs
www.abanet.org/legalservices/paralegals/directory/allprograms.html

University College of Syracuse University
www.yesu.syr.edu

University College's Legal Studies Program
suce.syr.edu/lap