

2018 GRADUATE SURVEY RESULTS

In 2018 surveys were sent to graduates from the years 2014-2016. Sixty-six graduates were mailed the questionnaire twice, emailed the questionnaire, and many were contacted on Facebook Messenger. The survey was put on Qualtrics as well as on paper. Qualtrics is an on-line platform for collecting and analyzing data. Twenty-five responses were received, for a return rate of 38%. Seven were on paper and 18 through Qualtrics.

Twenty-three respondents completed the bachelor's degree and two completed the Paralegal Certificate. Five were from 2014, 14 from 2015 and 4 from 2016, and one each from 2013 and 2017.

In this report, percentages are of the total who answered that question unless it says otherwise.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Ten graduates (40%) indicated they continued their education after completing the program, with three studying for a J.D., four for Master's Degrees and one for a Broker's license. In addition, two indicated they continued on for their bachelor's degree.

PARALEGAL EMPLOYMENT

Twelve work as paralegals or in a law-related environment while three had previously done so. Nine did not.

	Work as paralegal or in law related job	Have worked as paralegal in past	Total paralegal	Do not work as paralegal	Seeking employment
Number	12	3	15	9	5
Percentage	50%	12.5	62.5%	37.5	21%

The job titles of those who work in law related positions are: Paralegal/LegalAssistant (4), Project Manager, Sr. Business Analyst, Office Manager, Court Liaison, Legal Intern, Senior Legal Analyst, and Family Law Clerk.

The reasons people left paralegal positions were:

- Education
- Family responsibilities
- Other (not explained)

REASONS FOR NOT OBTAINING WORK IN LEGAL FIELD

Graduates gave the following reasons for not obtaining work in the legal field:

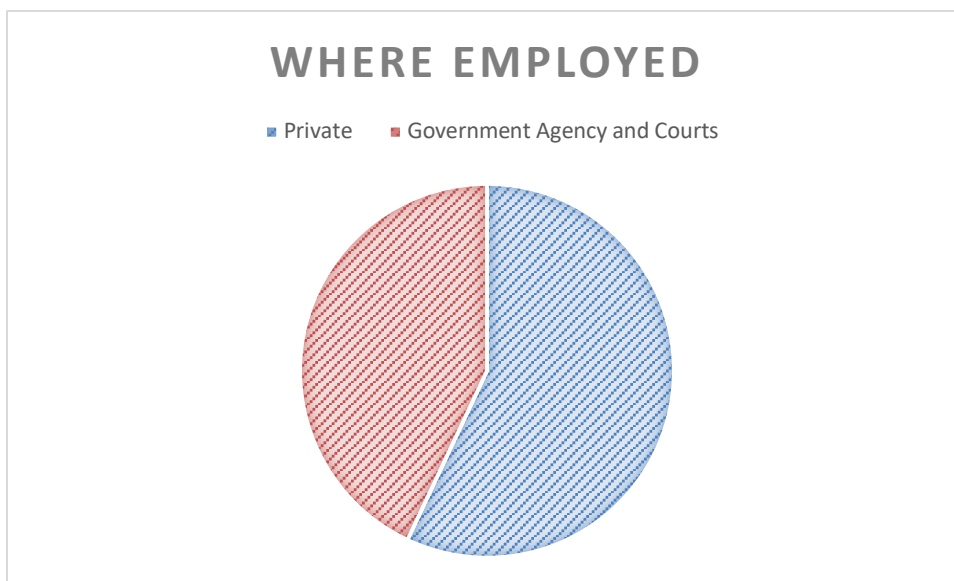
- Have sought a paralegal position but have been unable to find one because of lack of experience and not bilingual. (3)
- Cannot earn as much as a paralegal as I am earning now. (2 people)
- Have a job in another field and prefer not to leave it. (1 person)
- Have not looked for a paralegal position. (1)
- Continued my education. (1)

A specific comment was: “The specific law firms that I wanted to apply for would not hire someone who didn't have a paralegal certificate or a bachelors. Though when I graduated I finally did receive those documents, I wasn't able to find the jobs because I lacked the years of experience. Those four years I was working on receiving the degree and certification.(sic)”

TYPES OF FIRMS GRADUATES ARE EMPLOYED IN

Graduates who work in the legal field indicated they are employed as follows.

Type of Law Office	Number	Percent
Private	8	57
Government Agency and Courts	6	43
Insurance Company	0	
Corporation	0	



Because the graduates did not always distinguish between working for a government agency and working for the courts, the two are combined.

Some of the government agencies the graduates work for are Orange County Superior Court, Palm Springs Police Department, Los Angeles District Attorney, Los Angeles County Counsel, San Bernardino County Superior Court, and State Compensation Insurance Fund.

In the last survey, there was more diversity in the types of practices and fewer worked for the government or courts. However, private firms were the primary employer as here.

Because the Qualtrics form does not allow the researcher to match answers between questions, a view of how many attorneys per paralegal could not be done with this survey.

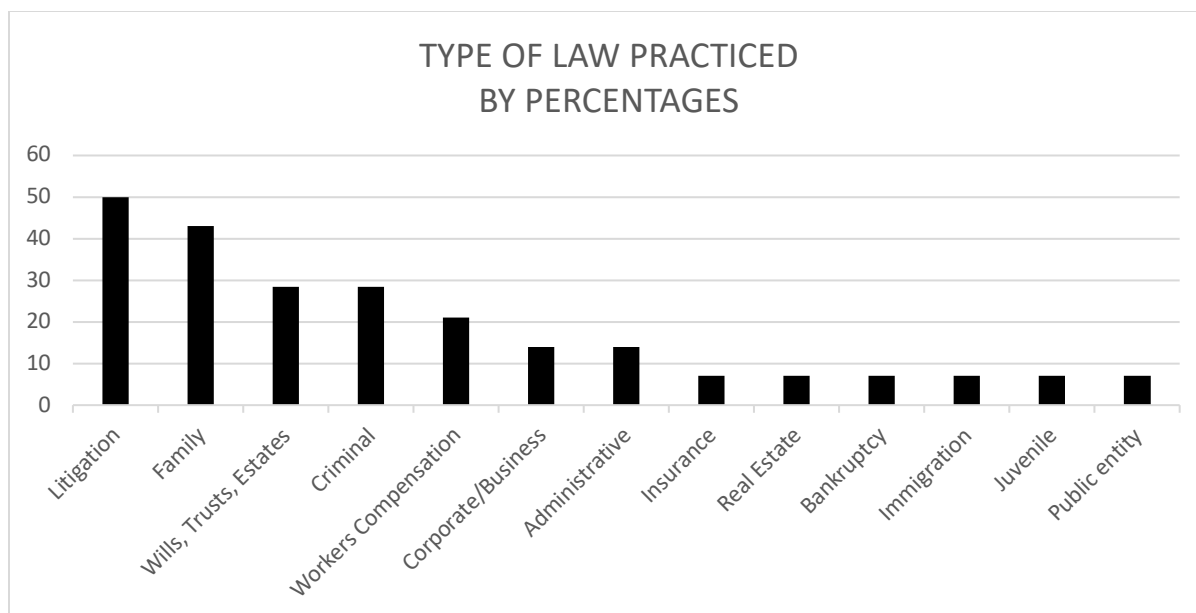
Twelve graduates indicated their positions are full-time and one said it was part-time. Five are salaried and seven are hourly.

Salaries were as follows.

ANNUAL SALARY	20,000-29,999	30,000-34,999	35,000-39,999	40,000-44,999	45,000-49,999	50,000-54,999	55,000-59,999	60,000-64,999	65,000-69,999	70,000-74,999	75,000-79,999
STARTING	4	4					2				
CURRENT		2	1	1		1	2	2			1

In regard to what areas of law the graduates work in, graduates could indicate more than one. However, it appears that 14 graduates answered that question, so the percent will be of 14. This may be inaccurate if the actual number who answered is different from 14.

Areas the firm practices	Number	Percent
Litigation	7	50
Family	6	43
Wills, Trusts, Estates	4	28.5
Criminal	4	28.5
Workers Compensation	3	21
Corporate/Business	2	14
Administrative	2	14
Insurance	1	7
Real Estate	1	7
Bankruptcy	1	7
Immigration	1	7
Juvenile	1	7
Public entity	1	7



This ratio is similar to the 2014 survey in regard to litigation, but there are many more working in family law than in 2014.

QUALIFICATIONS SOUGHT IN PARALEGALS

The students who are completing this have a four year degree and a paralegal certificate. They indicate what their employers look for.

Current results

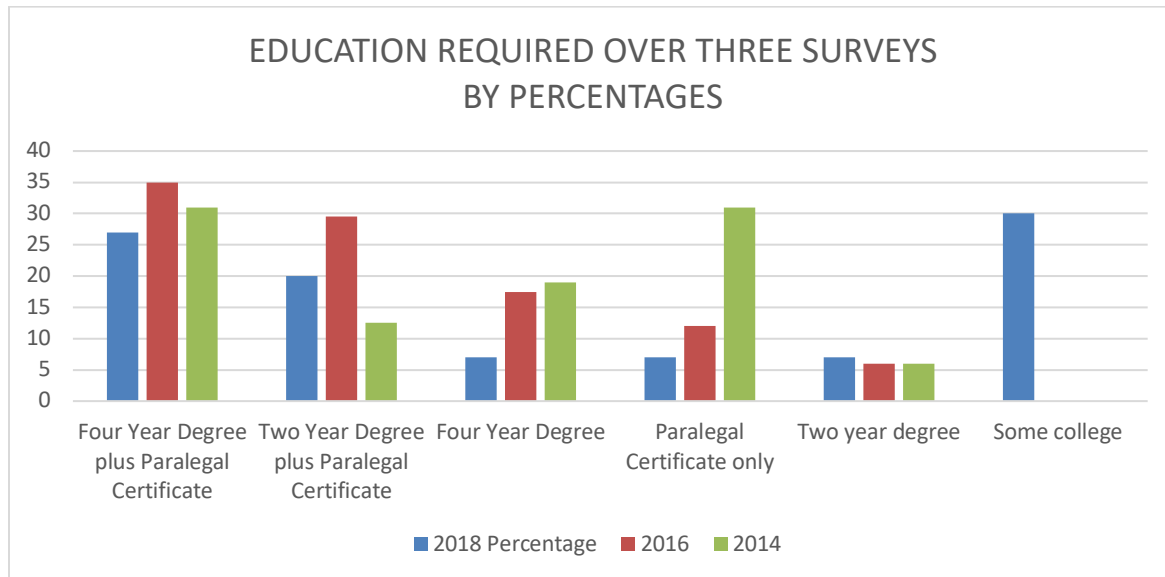
Education desired	Number	Percentage
Four Year Degree plus Paralegal Certificate	4	27
Two Year Degree plus Paralegal Certificate	3	20
Four Year Degree	1	7
Paralegal Certificate only	1	7
Two year degree	1	7
Some college	5	30

2014 results of graduate survey

Education desired	Number	Percentage
Four Year Degree plus Paralegal Certificate	6	35
Two Year Degree plus Paralegal Certificate	3	17.5
Four Year Degree	3	17.5
Paralegal Certificate only	2	12
Two Year Degree or Four Year Degree plus Paralegal Certificate	2	12
Two year degree	1	6

2012 results of graduate survey

Four year degree and Paralegal Certificate	5	31
Two year degree and Paralegal Certificate	2	12.5
Four year degree	3	19
Paralegal Certificate only	5	31
Two year degree	1	6



This comparison of different years is very much skewed by the fact that 30 percent of 2018 respondents put “some college,” which was never before an option.

Combined with the 2016 survey, there is certainly an increase in the number who indicate the employer wants a bachelor’s degree and a paralegal certificate. It is also very clear that the paralegal certificate alone is not a very common requirement.

Experience

Experience desired	Number	Percentage
Experience in a law office	6	43
Experience as a paralegal	4	28.5
Experience as a paralegal in a particular area of law	2	14
No experience	1	7
No experience if college grad	1	7

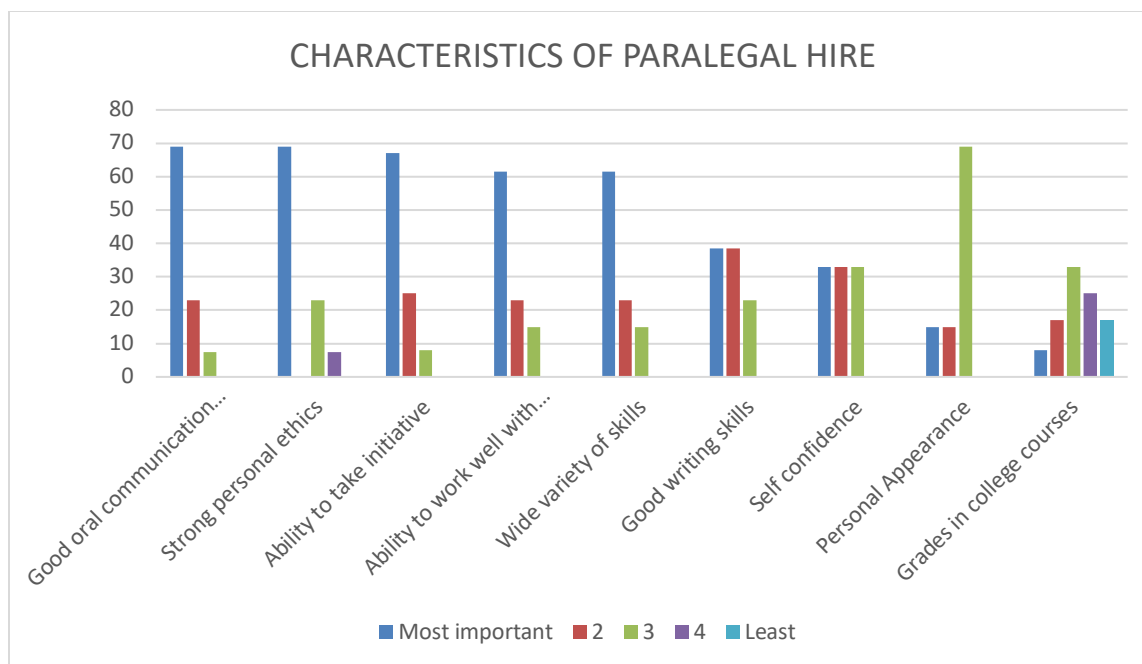
This shows that about 86 percent of the employers are looking for experience in either a law office or as a paralegal. The education and experience is what is looked for most often.

The graduates were asked to evaluate what characteristics of paralegal applicants were important to their firm in hiring.

Question	Extremely important		2		3		4		Not at all important		Total
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	
Good oral communication skills	69	9	23	3	7.5	1					13
Strong personal ethics	69	9			23	3	7.5	1			13
Ability to take initiative	67	8	25	3	8	1					12
Ability to work well with others	61.5	8	23	3	15	2					13
Wide variety of skills	61.5	8	23	3	15	2					13
Good writing skills	38.5	5	38.5	5	23	3					13
Self confidence	33	4	33	4	33	4					12
Personal Appearance	15	2	15	2	69	9					13
Grades in college courses	8	1	17	2	33	4	25	3	17	2	12

Every survey that we have done show that grades are not important in obtaining a paralegal position. However, they may be important in obtaining an interview. That has not been tested.

This table shown as a chart is clearer.



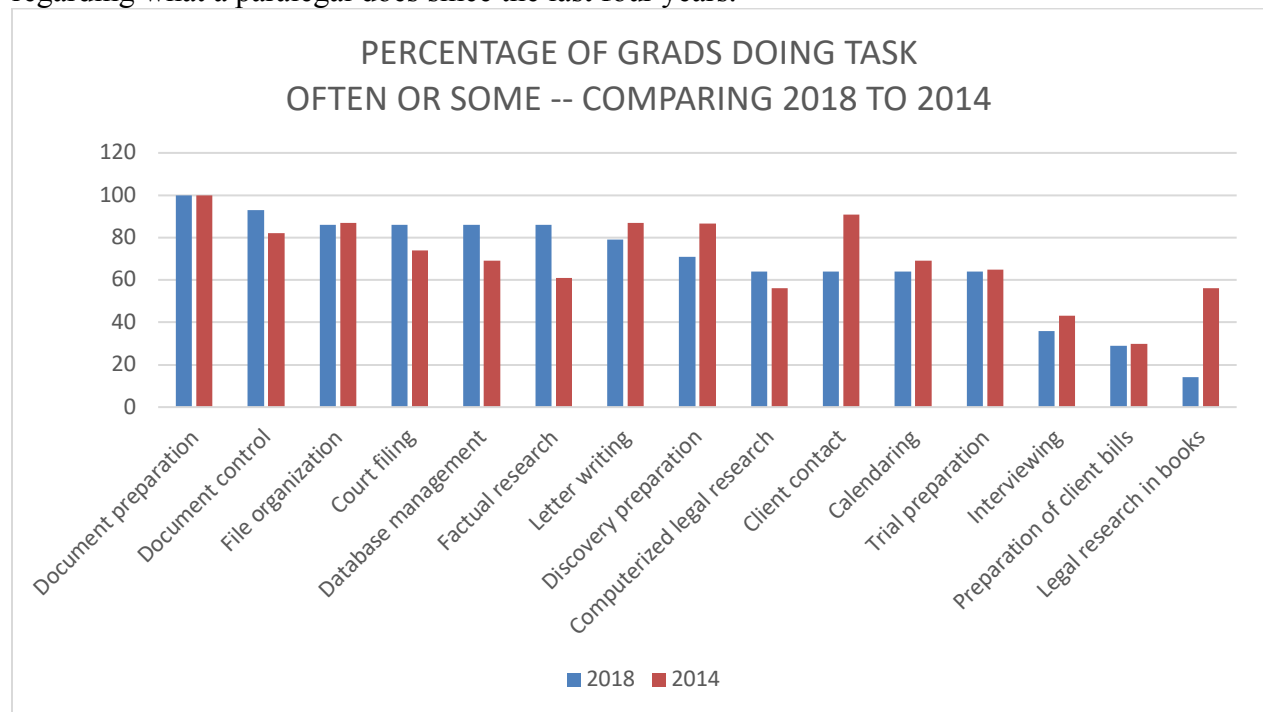
DUTIES OF PARALEGALS

Graduates were asked about certain tasks and whether they performed them often, sometimes, rarely or never.

DUTY	OFTEN		SOME		OFTEN & SOME	RARE		NEVER	
	Numbe r	Percent	Numbe r	Percent	Percent	Numbe r	Percent	Numbe r	Percent
Document preparation	13	100	0		100	0		0	
Document control	11	79	2	14	93	1	7	0	
File organization	10	71	2	14	86	2	14	0	
Court filing	11	79	1	7	86	0		2	14
Database management	9	64	3	21	86	2	14	0	
Factual research	9	64	3	21	86	2	14	0	
Letter writing	8	57	3	21	79	1	7	2	14
Discovery preparation	8	57	2	14	71	1	7	3	21
Computerized legal research	7	50	2	14	64	5	36	0	
Client contact	8	57	1	7	64	3	21	2	14
Calendaring	7	50	2	14	64	0		5	36

Trial preparation	8	57	1	7	64	3	21	2	14
Interviewing	3	21	2	14	36	5	36	4	29
Preparation of client bills	2	14	2	14	29	1	7	9	64
Legal research	2	14	0		14	9	64	3	21

These figures were compared to the 2014 survey of graduates to see if there is a difference regarding what a paralegal does since the last four years.



While document preparation was the most commonly performed task in both surveys, there were marked changes in what other things were performed frequently. In 2014, client contact, letter writing, and discovery preparation were much higher than in 2018. Document control, database management and factual research were much higher in 2018. While computerized legal research was a little higher in 2018, legal research in the books was much lower.

Less client contact and letter writing may reflect the high number who work for the government.

Most of these tasks were performed by more than 60 percent of the graduates. Emphasis on litigation, document preparation, document control and database management should be continued. More factual research could be taught.

COMPUTER PROGRAMS USED

WORD PROCESSING	Number
Microsoft Word	9
Corel WordPerfect	1
Both	0

LEGAL RESEARCH	Number
Lexis/Nexis	5
Westlaw	5
Other	3

WordPerfect is now much less used. However, in regard to legal research, these numbers raise the issue of whether we should change to Lexis rather than Westlaw. We cannot afford both, and we switched to Westlaw because we can control the passwords ourselves. There had been a lot of problems with Lexis in getting the passwords.

Graduates listed other computer programs they used. The variety of programs once again shows us that we cannot teach all that is available. However, computer education should emphasize self-teaching, and the ability to learn. However, we could include Essential Forms which might be good based on other comments made.

Time and billing programs

Aderant
Bill4Time (2)
Juris
Timeslips

Practice, Case management, billing

Barbooks
Clio (2)
Practice master
Smokeball

Document management

Alfresco
iManage
Uptime

Forms

Bestcase
Essential Forms
Legal Solutions (2)

Other

Adobe (2)

Drop box
Excel
Google drive
Jury selector
Outlook
Trial Director

JOB SEARCH

How the first position was found:

Worked there before	5
Internship	3
Saw advertisement	2
U.S. Army	2
Referral from friend or relative	1
Found before graduation	1
Craigslist	0
Agency	0

Number of potential employers a graduate contacted before finding initial paralegal position.

Number of employers contacts	# respondents
1-3	10
4-10	2
Over 10	2

The length of time it took to obtain the first job after began job search.

1 month or less	7
2-4 months	2
4-7 months	1
Over 7 months	1

The graduates indicated how important their paralegal education was in obtaining their first positions.

Essential to obtaining the positions	5
Extremely important	8
Important, but equal to other factors	0
Somewhat important	1

Other factors which were important in obtaining their first position were:

- Knowledge of law

- In pursuit of further law education
- Law firm experience
- Prior work history as project manager

Six of those who were working prior to graduation received a promotion or salary increase after graduating. Two stated they did not.

ELECTRONIC DISCOVERY

Four stated they had had at least one case involving electronic discovery while seven stated they had not any.

COMMENTS REGARDING THEIR EDUCATION

There were a number of questions asked only of those who worked in law related positions about their preparation for those positions and their education.

Education prepared them adequately

1. Considering your paralegal experience(s) after completing your education, did the program prepare you adequately for your initial employment?

Nine respondents, or 90%, indicated that the program did prepare them adequately for their initial employment. One stated the question did not apply because that person already had a job.

What they wished they had learned

2. Graduates were asked “After working as a paralegal, what do you wish the program had prepared you more for?” The answers varied.

- Legal research
- More legal research and case briefing.
- Discovery and legal strategy
- Billing. I struggled with tracking time because I switch projects constantly.
- Bad clients who don't pay and how to get them to pay.
- I feel that I was well prepared for entry-level civil litigation. I doubt a class on how to deal with lawyers who treat support staff poorly exists.

They understand the law and can apply it

3. Graduates were asked whether they understood the law involved and procedures used in their work. All eleven who answered said yes. They were also asked if they had any problems applying the law to any legal question and ten out of the eleven said no. The eleventh person provided an answer which did not respond to the question.

Education prepared them for technology used

4. When asked if their education prepared them to adapt to different technologies and computer programs, nine stated yes. One stated he or she already had those skills and one stated, “I was familiar with Clio but not with Essential Forms or Best Case.”

Want more to be taught in legal research

5. Graduates wished they had learned more in regard to legal or factual research as follows:

- Lexis as that is what is used at our firm. We don't use west law
- More practical application with both Lexis and Westlaw
- Additional practice and time as it such a crucial and difficult component.
- Understanding penal codes a little more
- A little more of issue spotting
- Westlaw and Lexis

Most have good writing skills

6. In regard to the graduates' writing skills, they were asked about employer feedback. They indicated:

- Yes, he was pleased with my work.
- I have excellent writing skills
- They are very particular with grammar and punctuation
- Good writing skills, very few, if any, changes
- Yes, always excellent feedback.
- Need to improve
- Only good feedback
- My writing was professional and clear.

Communication skills acceptable but have concerns

7. While most have not had problems communicating with clients, attorneys, or others, a few stated:

- Not much but sometimes clients want to discuss billing issues and learning client control has been a learned skill after being in the field.
- Many attorneys want the paralegals to be mind readers

Most continuing legal education

8. Two questions asked about continuing education and whether employers paid for it.

	Yes	No	Not need
Continuing education to comply with Bus. & Prof. Code 6450	8	1	2

	Yes	No
Does employer pay for continuing education?	4	4

One stated: “Yes I continue my education. I'm an active member of LAPA and NALA to receive notifications and get discounts on seminars. My employer does not pay for CE (because most employers don't know that paralegals require it).”

Some would like to learn more about prioritization and time management

9. Finally they were asked about education relating to their organizational skills, calendaring, prioritizing, or managing time.

	Yes	No
Education was sufficient in relationship to organizational skills, calendaring, prioritizing, or managing time	7	2

Statements about this were as follows:

- Teach prioritizing tasks. Why things maybe more important than others.
- But I think it would be a good idea to incorporate organizational skills, priortization, and time management into the courses.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION TO ALL GRADUATES

All the graduates answered questions about the quality of their education. 19 responded. Three of those indicated they did have difficulties with their education. Those problems were:

- Responding to discovery
- Experience
- Certain forms were unfamiliar

These answers seem duplicative of the answers provided by those who work in the legal field.

Topics of courses that were recommended to be included were:

- More about programs of computer
- More about filling out forms (2 persons)
- Four unit course on E Discovery (which has been created)
- Longer internships
- Legal terms in Spanish
- Constitutional law
- Criminal appeals
- Administrative law
- Alternate Dispute Resolution

Two people recommended taking the computer courses out of the curriculum.

A final comment by a graduate in law school who has worked as a paralegal for several years.

“I am thoroughly pleased with the La Verne Paragal Program. I definitely recommend it. The familiarity with writing legal documents, forms and letters was and is instrumental. I could not have been more pleased.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Share this with the Advisory Committee.
- Per the Advisory Committee, all students should know how to file court documents on line, especially since Los Angeles County should be on-line in January.
- Per AC, students need more time interacting in person, as interviewing skills are often weak with people who don't have enough of that type of interaction.
- Put quote on advertising.
- The College of Law had done a two-day course in legal terms in Spanish and perhaps that could be done again.
- Prepare a short version for the students.
- Post this on our website.
- *If* Qualtrics is used again, the questions must match the paper questionnaire and must be written in a way that obtains the information sought. More knowledge of Qualtrics is required.
- Should we change to Lexis/Nexis for legal research?