RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE

PARALEGAL STUDIES CO-OP LEGL-290

I. Basic Course Information

A. Course Title and Number: Paralegal Studies Co-op LEGL-290

B. New or Modified Course: Modified

C. Date of Proposal: Spring 2011

D. Sponsoring Department: Business & Public Service

E. Semester Credit Hours: 3

F. Weekly Contact Hours: Lecture: 30

G. Prerequisites: Permission of Coordinator Needed

H. Laboratory Fees: None

I. Name/Email of Coordinator: Maria M. DeFilippis, Esq.

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II. Catalog Description

A work experience whereby students are employed in law-related positions to gain the practical experience necessary for success as paralegals. Students will be supervised by practicing attorneys and graded on their ability to apply classroom acquired skills to the legal workplace. Enrolled students will attend a scheduled seminar in addition to working 15-20 hours per week (225-300 hours per semester). Eligibility will be determined by the Coordinator of the Paralegal Studies Program and generally will be limited to those students in their second year of study.

III. Statement of Course Need

Reliance on paralegals to handle many aspects of the law is widespread and includes their use in the traditional law firm, in corporate legal
departments, and in governmental agencies. This course is designed to provide students with hands-on experience in the field, adding a practical working understanding of the law to their classroom legal studies. Employers emphasize the need for practical experience in this career degree program and this course meets that need.

IV. **Place of Course in College Curriculum**

A. The course is an elective in the following programs: Paralegal Studies, AAS Degree and Certificate.

B. This course will transfer to schools with a Paralegal Studies four year degree, which includes Montclair, Thomas Edison, and St. Elizabeth College in New Jersey. It will also transfer to most four year institutions offering an ABA approved paralegal program of study.

V. **Outline of Course Content**

A. **Job-Oriented Learning Objectives** (200-275 hours)

Students and employers will develop a set of five substantive legal goals for completion during the course of the semester. These goals will be approved by the program coordinator. Students will keep a log of substantive work performed on the job. Students will also keep regular time records, which will be verified by the employer, and do regular evaluations of progress on the job and toward their goals.

B. **Ethics Training** (25 hours)

Students will read assigned text and draft a paper relating and discussing on-the-job examples of legal ethics in their workplace to the NJ Rules of Professional Responsibility.

VI. **Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes**

A. **Education Goals**

Students will:

1. Produce written work that reflects critical and creative thought relative to their job-related legal tasks. (GE NJ 1)

2. Develop the ability to communicate clearly and logically, utilizing both verbal and written skills, with clients, adversaries and others in the legal environment. (GE NJ 1)
3. Analyze and evaluate ethical problems encountered in the real-life practice of law. (GE NJ 9)

B. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify a set of individual goals and learning objectives in the substantive law area for accomplishment during the cooperative experience.

2. Assess the roles and responsibilities of a paralegal working in a law office or law-related field, including such dimensions as specific tasks performed for clients, attorneys and other office staff.

3. Apply oral and written communication skills to develop a rapport with clients and other necessary parties through actual client/party contact.

4. Examine the needs of clients in various legal situations and differentiate between those that can be handled by a paralegal and those that require an attorney.

5. Analyze the organizational structure of the employer and develop strategies to deal with various office situations.

6. Identify ethical situations as they arise in the real-life practice of law.

7. Assess first-hand the concept of and need for confidentiality and various other legal-ethical considerations which govern those who work in the law.

VII. Modes of Teaching and Learning

This course will employ the following methods of teaching:

A. On-the-job training, observation, involvement and experience
B. Regular communication and collaboration with coordinator

VIII. Papers, Examinations, and other Assessment Instruments

This course will employ the following methods of assessment:

A. Student Log of Substantive Legal Work performed
B. Attainment of Substantive Legal Goals
C. Written Evaluation by Employer
D. Written Ethics Paper

IX. **Grade Determinants**

Due to the nature of the course, traditional types of evaluation are less appropriate and as such, various subjective methods of evaluation are necessary. Student grades will be based in part on the employer’s evaluation of the student’s on-the-job performance and the student’s ability to demonstrate to the coordinator that he/she has experienced academic benefit from the work assigned. In addition, the student’s log and a written ethics paper will be used to assess the students according to the general education ethics goals and learning outcomes listed above.

X. **Text and Materials**


XI. **Resources**

The course will take place off-campus, at the workplace, and no special RVCC resources will be needed.