



March 18, 2022

Dr. Scott Ralls
President
Wake Technical Community College
9101 Fayetteville Road
Raleigh, NC 27603-5696

Dear Dr. Ralls:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

New Program-Approval

Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) in Paralegal Technology

Submission date:

1/19/2022

Intended Implementation date:

8/15/2022

Case ID:

SC016476

The institution submitted information for the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree program in Paralegal Technology in the format required in the Curriculum Program Application submitted to the North Carolina Community Colleges. Although some information in the state application was applicable to the requirements for a new program approval (as outlined in the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*), significant required content for SACSCOC review was not included. Action on the program was deferred pending receipt and review of additional information (provided by the institution March 2, 2022), which has been incorporated into the initial analysis below.

The submission included a Substantive Change Cover Sheet and a transmittal letter, as required. However, a list of programs offered by the institution was not included with the submission. A list of programs offered by the institution was provided in the deferral response.

The 64–67 credit hour program will give graduates the knowledge and skills needed for employment in a high-demand profession providing a sustainable wage. Graduates from the program will be trained to assist attorneys in probate work, investigations, public records search, drafting/filing legal documents, and other duties. North Carolina is one of only three (3) states that offer paralegals the option of earning state certification, and graduates will be able to sit for the North Carolina certification exam. As noted in the deferral response, the program projects



Dr. Scott Ralls
March 18, 2022
Page 2

enrollment of approximately 25 students and will be ongoing based on availability of positions for program graduates (monitored as part of the program review process). The program will be offered on the main campus with a minimum of nine (9) required hours of seated instruction. The narrative notes any courses offered through distance education will meet the institution's requirements for distance education delivery.

Program need was informed through employment projections from Burning Glass, U.S. Department of Labor, and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which indicate a 13-17% increase in paralegal positions over the next ten (10) years. Locally, Wake County job openings for paralegals/legal assistants indicate a strong market for program graduates. As requested, the institution provided evidence of faculty involvement in the planning and approval of the program in the deferral response. The initiative supports the institution's mission and specific goals of its strategic plan. A notation referencing draft minutes of the institution's Board of Trustees meeting approving the program application for submission to the state was included, and approval by the North Carolina Community College System was anticipated in early 2022. Verification of program approval by the institution's Board of Trustees and by North Carolina Community College System was provided in the deferral response.

As the proposed program of study was submitted in the format required for state submission, the prospectus lacked the following: (1) projected schedule of course offerings for the program; (2) program-specific goals and specific program learning outcomes; (3) description of how program learning outcomes will be assessed; (4) course descriptions for all courses in the program. The information was provided in the deferral response and included a curriculum plan by semester/year and course descriptions; a list of preliminary major electives was noted. Four (4) program learning outcomes were delineated. Each academic program assesses program outcomes on a two-year cycle with data collection effected in Year One and an action plan implemented in Year Two; the process is managed by the Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness Committee using rubrics.

Admissions and graduation requirements for the program were provided in the deferral response. As there was no discussion of compliance with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) in the prospectus, discussion of institutional compliance was requested and also provided in the deferral. Discussion referenced standards outlined by the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Credit Hours and the North Carolina State Board of Community College Code. As noted, courses adhere to the same established policy regardless of method of delivery. The Business Administration Department (within the Business and Public Services Technologies Division) will provide administrative oversight for the program. As noted in the submission, a program director will be selected.



Dr. Scott Ralls
March 18, 2022
Page 3

Also as noted in the prospectus, the institution has appropriately credentialed faculty in the Business Administration Department to teach discipline courses, and existing faculty will handle the course load until the program can support other full-time faculty exclusively devoted to the program. However, the submission did not include the required Faculty Roster Form for faculty to teach in the program, nor did it include discussion of the number of full-time faculty assigned to the program. A Faculty Roster Form was submitted in the deferral response, and teaching assignments in the discipline were noted for five (5) full-time faculty. Faculty qualifications and adequacy of faculty appear appropriate. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.

The submission noted the institution has the appropriate classroom and lab space, library, and support services to initiate and maintain the program. However, there was no discussion of the required elements in Common Content C—Resources required for a new program prospectus. Analysis of the institution's deferral response follows.

Library resources in the discipline include books/e-books, e-journals, and databases (specific examples were included). Students may access library databases from off-campus using their Blackboard (learning management system) username and password. The library provides research guides for degree programs, and a guide for the Paralegal Technology program has been developed. Materials not available at the institution's libraries may be accessible through interlibrary loan from a consortium of North Carolina Community College libraries. Librarians provide face-to-face and virtual instructional services, and *Chatstaff* (virtual resource) provides reference services online, 24/7.

Students in the new program have access to established support services (advising, career coach, Individualized Learning Center, and others) on campus and online through the College's internet site. Online services have been enhanced as a result of the COVID pandemic.

The main campus has the capacity to support the program as current classrooms and computer labs can be configured to accommodate the program's needs. Initial equipment and supply expenditures for the program (provided in the deferral response) delineated the following library resources to be purchased for program support: *West's North Carolina General Statutes Annotated*, *North Carolina Reporter 2d*, and the WestLaw Edge (online service).

A two-year program budget was also provided in the deferral, noting programming expenses for salaries, supplies, and professional development. Revenue comes from state FTE (full-time equivalent) funding, and the program projects positive net revenue with the program's implementation year. Financial support appears adequate, and contingency planning was noted.



Dr. Scott Ralls
March 18, 2022
Page 4

As the submission did not address Common Content D—Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, the information was requested through deferral. Assessment of student learning outcomes was noted earlier in the review. Operational program outcomes for each program are assessed annually through FTE generated, retention rates, graduation rates, and others. Faculty use semester reports to compare student performance between instructional locations and methods of instructional delivery. Every five years, department heads conduct academic program reviews, and the Paralegal Technology program will be added to the assessment protocol.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree program in Paralegal Technology. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of the current accreditation.

Thank you for including a check for \$500 to help defray the costs of the prospectus review.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. Stephanie L. Kirschmann at (404) 492-5388 or via email at skirschmann@sacscoc.org.

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/MAC:lp

cc: Dr. John Bower Boone, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and
Research/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, Wake Technical Community College
Dr. Stephanie L. Kirschmann, Vice President, SACSCOC