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CECE

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AWARDS PROGRAM

IEP CATEGORY - TALENT

2025
CASE
STUDY

**University of California,
Los Angeles**
Paralegal Training Program

INTRODUCTION: UCLA EXTENSION'S PARALEGAL TRAINING PROGRAM

A legacy of excellence

UCLA Extension's Paralegal Training Program (PTP) stands as an example of higher education's role in workforce development, innovation, and economic growth. Celebrating over 50 years of excellence, the program has not only shaped the legal landscape in Los Angeles but has also set a benchmark for paralegal education nationwide. This case study highlights the program's unique attributes, its impact on the legal profession, and its contributions to economic development, supporting its nomination for the Talent Award under the APLU Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) designation.

Launched in 1972 as the Attorney Assistant Training Program, UCLA Extension's PTP has evolved into one of the largest and most recognized certificate programs offered by the institution. It was among the first two programs nationally to receive approval from the American Bar Association (ABA), ensuring adherence to rigorous standards in instructor selection, curriculum, and student services. This approval underscores the program's commitment to providing high-quality education that meets the dynamic needs of the legal profession.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW

The PTP's curriculum is developed in collaboration with the UCLA School of Law, incorporating insights from an advisory committee of industry experts. Instructors, including judges, attorneys, legal technology experts and experienced paralegals are approved by the law school, ensuring that students receive instruction from professionals with real-world experience. This partnership bridges the gap between legal theory and practice, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the legal landscape.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Designed to accommodate diverse schedules, the program offers both 2-quarter daytime and 5-quarter evening programs. This flexibility allows students to engage in real-time learning while balancing personal and professional commitments. The program's comprehensive curriculum covers areas such as civil procedure, legal research, and professional ethics, as well as legal technology, which has and will continue to change how the law is practiced in the future.



The program embraces the diverse educational and personal backgrounds of students, and by placing them in cohorts to learn together, it promotes the exchange of ideas and experiences that can influence how students interpret their roles in the legal profession. Students range from recent college graduates to attorneys from foreign jurisdictions. While the makeup of California’s attorneys do not yet reflect the demographic makeup of the state, the Paralegal Training Program students mirror the makeup of both Los Angeles County and the state. (See **Table 1** illustrating the ethnic and gender diversity of students). With some program graduates deciding to pursue law school in the future, the program not only diversifies the legal profession overall, but also provides an accessible pathway for future attorneys who had not previously thought working in the legal field was within their reach. Their ability to work within a law firm or non-profit organization often triggers a desire to continue their education by successfully applying to law school and becoming attorneys. This is exemplified by a graduate of the program, who, after graduating from the program, became an attorney, judge, program instructor, textbook author on a practice manual for paralegals, and a mediator.

Table 1: UCLA Extension Paralegal Training Program Student Demographics

Ethnicity and Gender	June 2020-May 2021	June 2021-May 2022	June 2022-May 2023	June 2023-May 2024
% of Students Identifying as Non-White/Caucasian	58	64	57	63
% Female	82	75	75	76
% Male	16	22	21	20
% Other Students	2	3	4	4



BROADENING PATHWAYS AND STRENGTHENING LEGAL WORKFORCE

Impact on innovation and economic development

UCLA Extension's PTP has significantly contributed to innovation and economic development in Los Angeles County and beyond. By providing accessible legal education, the program has empowered individuals from underrepresented communities to enter the legal profession, thereby fostering diversity and inclusion within the industry. Graduates have gone on to work in law firms, government agencies, and corporate legal departments, driving economic growth and enhancing the legal infrastructure of the region. Importantly, many students are motivated by the desire to support and be a resource for individuals and communities that do not have affordable access to legal services.

Training students is not the only way that the program supports professional development. The program also has an impact on the instructors who teach in the program. The legal academic profession can feel remote and out of reach even for experienced practitioners. There is a perception that only those with spotless academic records and the ability to transition away from their legal practice could teach in higher education. By recruiting and employing legal professionals from across different practice areas, the program has also become an avenue to expand access to careers in academia. Many program instructors who start teaching in the program develop their teaching methods sufficiently to successfully teach as law school adjuncts and lecturers at institutions, including UCLA School of Law, USC Gould School of Law, and Loyola Law School.

State and national reach in workforce development

While rooted in Los Angeles, the Paralegal Training Program attracts students from across California and the United States, reflecting its national reputation and the increasing demand for qualified paralegals. Students have hailed from 25 states and Washington, D.C. They have secured positions with global law firms, state agencies, and non-profit organizations. And program students volunteer and intern with legal aid organizations, public agencies including the public defender's office, and UCLA School of Law's Veterans Legal Clinic.

CONCLUSION

By integrating education with practical skills, UCLA Extension's Paralegal Training Program provides a direct pathway to a rewarding, in-demand profession while opening a view onto a myriad of other opportunities within the legal profession.



KEY PROGRAM FACTS

- Over 8,500 students have graduated from the program since its inception in 1972
- 50 years of continuous approval by the American Bar Association
- More than 75% of the program's students identify as female
- Greater than 85% completion rate for enrolled students
- 9 cohorts offered annually in 2-quarter and 5-quarter programs

LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Supporting Information

- [Paralegal Program celebrates 50 years](#)
- [UCLA Extension certificate in Paralegal Studies](#)

Videos:

- [UCLA Extension's Paralegal Training Program Video](#)



ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP PROGRAM

APLU and its [Commission on Economic and Community Engagement \(CECE\)](#) established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP Program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP Awards Program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- Talent and workforce development
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- Place development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP

