

2025 Spring Virtual Conference

American Association for Paralegal Education

March 19–21, 2025
All Times Eastern

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Wednesday, March 19

12:30 – 1:30 PM: Future-Proofing the Paralegal Profession: Navigating AI, Ethics, and Emerging Workflows in the Legal Industry

Speaker: Kelli Radnothy and Kristine Custodio

Session Abstract:

The paralegal profession is at a pivotal moment, with advancements in AI and legal technology reshaping traditional workflows and practice areas. In this session, we explore how paralegals can harness these innovations while maintaining ethical integrity and meeting the evolving demands of the profession. Drawing insights from the Future of Jobs Report 2025 by the World Economic Forum, we will provide actionable strategies to future-proof careers and improve access to justice. This presentation will also highlight case studies across diverse practice areas, emphasizing prompt engineering, automation, and adaptive learning. Join us to gain a roadmap for success in the ever-changing legal landscape.

Learning Objectives:

- **Understand Trends:** Learn about key findings from the Future of Jobs Report 2025 and their implications for paralegals across various practice areas.
- **Ethics in Innovation:** Explore the ethical considerations and best practices for integrating AI and legal technology into paralegal workflows, including ABA Model Rule 1.1 on competence.
- **Practical Applications:** Discover how prompt engineering, automation, and tailored workflows can enhance efficiency while upholding professional standards.

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 60-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Kelli Radnothy is a freelance litigation paralegal and resource consultant with nearly 20 years in the legal industry. She currently serves as a course designer and adjunct instructor for the University of WA Continuum College's Paralegal Program. Kelli also serves as a resource consultant for a non-profit organization empowering survivors of trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence. Her portfolio focuses on advancing and supporting the paralegal profession and includes extensive experience in complex litigation, trials, legal technology, eDiscovery, and pro bono humanitarian relief projects.

Kelli holds a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Northern AZ University, a Paralegal Certificate from Miramar College, and an eDiscovery & Litigation Technology Certificate from UCSD Extension. She is passionate about creating alliances to connect system and community-based advocates to enable access to vital resources. Kelli thrives in coaching, mentoring, and developing the future paralegal workforce. Focusing on continuing education, maximizing fundamental and adaptable skillsets, stress management, networking, self-advocacy, opportunity enhancement, and career path navigation.

Kristine Custodio Suero is an award-winning legal professional and a highly sought-after speaker inspiring legal professionals to achieve authentic, purpose-driven careers and lives. Her nonprofit

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service with local, state and national paralegal associations focuses primarily on professional and leadership development. She serves as a member of the University of San Diego School of Law Paralegal Program's Advisory Board and as Adjunct Faculty. In 2020, Kristine was selected as the California Paralegal of the Year, awarded by the California Alliance of Paralegal Associations and nominated by the San Diego Paralegal Association. Kristine is a graduate of the 2021 International Leadership Association Leadership Education Academy. She is currently a Senior Paralegal/Business Development Director for Schechter Benefits Law Group LLP specializing in ERISA/employee benefits law, business law and civil litigation. Kristine may be reached at kristine.custodio@gmail.com.

1:30 – 1:45 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

1:45 – 2:30 PM: Teaching Introductory Courses

Speaker: Deana & Crew

Session Abstract:

Discover innovative approaches to teaching foundational paralegal courses, focusing on curriculum design and student engagement strategies.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop engaging lesson plans
- Implement active learning techniques
- Create practical assessments

Target Audience: New Faculty Members

Session Format: 45-minute workshop

Speaker Bio:

Deana & Crew are experienced educators specializing in introductory paralegal education with over 15 years of combined teaching experience.

2:30 – 3:15 PM: Quality Matters in the Design of an Online Classroom

Speaker: Becky Walters

Session Abstract:

Many of our paralegal programs are now settled in, or planning to move to, a fully online format. How do we ensure that our online classroom, our LMS, is formatted in a way that best suits our students, yet still delivers rich legal content? South Suburban College received its first nationally certified Quality Matters course in its Fundamentals of Paralegalism course in October 2023. Quality Matters is an internationally recognized, nonprofit organization that reviews the design of online courses through a peer-review and rubric process. This session discusses the certification process and its benefits from both the instructor's perspective and the college's Manager of Instructional Design.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand what "Quality Matters" is and the process for obtaining course certification
- Learn how Quality Matters can improve the design of your online course
- Discover additional program benefits of Quality Matters Certification outside the classroom

Target Audience: Others

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Becky Walters is the Law & Paralegal Studies and Criminal Justice Program Coordinator and tenured Legal Studies Professor at ABA-approved South Suburban College in South Holland, Illinois. She also serves as a Special Assistant State's Attorney in Cook County (Criminal Appeals Division). Her academic credentials include a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a Juris Doctorate from DePaul University College of Law, and a Master Online Teaching Certificate from the University of Illinois Springfield (2023). Walters has also been honored in national teaching competitions.

3:15 – 3:30 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

3:30 – 4:30 PM: Teaching Legal Specialty Courses

Speakers: Page Beetem, Chris Simcox, Tracy Nothnagel

Session Abstract:

Insert Here.

Learning Objectives: None provided.

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 60-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Insert Bio Here.

4:30 – 4:45 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

4:45 – 5:30 PM: Teaching Introduction to Legal Studies – A Cooperative Introduction to Close Legal Reading and Simple Legal Analysis Approach

Speaker: James Croft

Session Abstract:

What is an “introduction to legal studies”? Often, it involves teaching students to closely read legal texts and to analyze legal problems. This session will share examples—from a two-day reading and analysis exercise in the first week of class to larger five-day assignments—illustrating how cooperative problem-solving can be effectively incorporated into the curriculum.

Learning Objectives:

- Improve student ability to closely read legal texts
- Enhance student ability to analyze simple legal problems
- Learn how to cooperatively work through legal problems with students

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

James Croft is the Chairperson of the Division of Legal Studies at St. John’s University. A former corporate restructuring and bankruptcy attorney, James is also a veteran of the United States Marine Corps and a magna cum laude graduate of St. John’s University School of Law. He currently teaches Introduction to Legal Studies, Legal Research, and Legal Writing.

Concurrent Session

4:45 – 5:30 PM: Teaching Introduction to Paralegal/Legal Studies

Speaker: Melissa Brooks

Session Abstract:

Legal studies courses provide the cornerstone for paralegal education, introducing students to the critical thinking, legal analysis, and practical skills necessary for a successful career. This session explores effective teaching strategies for "Introduction to Legal Studies," emphasizing active learning, student engagement, and foundational knowledge development. Attendees will gain insights into fostering an inclusive learning environment that addresses diverse student needs, backgrounds, and learning preferences. We will examine pedagogical approaches integrating case studies, mock trials, and collaborative projects, allowing students to connect theoretical

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knowledge with real-world applications. Discussion will also center on scaffolding techniques to transition students from basic legal concepts to higher-order analytical skills. Informed by ABA guidelines and educational best practices, the session provides a framework for creating comprehensive syllabi, assessing student progress, and using feedback for continuous course improvement. Educators can empower students to confidently tackle advanced coursework and professional challenges by emphasizing practical engagement and skill-building, ensuring their growth into competent and ethical legal professionals.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn how to incorporate case studies, collaborative exercises, and mock trials to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- Discover effective methods to transition students from basic legal concepts to advanced legal analysis and application.
- Understand how to design an engaging and supportive classroom environment that caters to diverse student backgrounds and learning styleT

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Melissa Ansley Brooks is a dedicated educator with a passion for preparing future paralegal professionals. She creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment, emphasizing critical thinking, practical application, and lifelong learning. Melissa's teaching philosophy focuses on empowering students through clear expectations, personalized guidance, and fostering confidence in their abilities. Known for her innovative teaching strategies and subject matter expertise, she bridges theory and practice to equip students with the skills needed for success in the legal field. Melissa inspires students to strive for excellence while embracing collaboration, ethical practice, and continuous growth in their professional journeys.

Thursday, March 20

12:00 – 12:30 PM: Relativity Academic Program

Take a moment to watch the vendor demo of our sponsor

Technology is changing how we practice law – and that means law schools and paralegal programs need to change how they teach it.

We created the Relativity Academic Partner program to give students hands-on experience in the legal industry's leading technology tool before they even graduate.

12:30 – 1:30 PM: Teaching Unauthorized Practice of Law: Professional Identity Formation in an Evolving Legal Landscape

Speaker: Megan Dorton

Session Abstract:

This session explores how educators can use landmark cases like *Upsolve Inc. v. James* to help students develop nuanced critical thinking about UPL doctrine while fostering professional identity formation. Participants will examine regulatory reforms, emerging UPL exceptions, and strategies to engage students with complex legal concepts.

Learning Objectives:

- Use evolving UPL jurisprudence to help students develop critical thinking skills
- Incorporate discussions on regulatory reform and emerging UPL exceptions
- Foster professional identity development and ethical decision-making

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 60-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Megan Dorton is faculty at Portland Community College and a longtime civil rights and anti-poverty lawyer.

1:30 – 1:45 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

1:45 – 2:30 PM: Assessment 101: Tools and Techniques for Faculty

Speaker: Jackie Van Dyke

Session Abstract:

Legal Research and Writing can be intimidating for students. This session demonstrates how techniques like repetition and redrafting, combined with innovative technology, can transform assessments into tools for growth and mastery. A pre-test example and a detailed lesson plan will be shared.

Learning Objectives:

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- Create a semester-long research and writing project incorporating varied skill-building techniques
- Use pre-test examples and targeted lesson plans to reinforce key legal concepts

Target Audience: Early-Career Faculty

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bios:

Jackie Van Dyke:

Jackie Van Dyke is a professor of Legal Research and Writing at both USD and GWU. A Certified Paralegal and CEO of The Paralegal Writer™, she has authored numerous articles on legal writing.

Sheila Grela:

Sheila Grela is a seasoned litigation paralegal and Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP) in eDiscovery. With honors from the USD Paralegal program, she is both a Review Management Specialist and a Certified eDiscovery Specialist, dedicated to mentoring and professional development.

2:30 – 3:15 PM: Implied Bias in Ethics: More Concerning Than You Think

Speaker: Roberto Cosentino

Session Abstract:

This session examines how students' diverse cultural backgrounds influence their learning preferences. Using methods such as rote learning, mnemonics, and group analysis, the session challenges students to identify legal issues and understand the paralegal's role in trial teams.

Learning Objectives:

- Challenge students to identify legal issues critically
- Understand the roles and duties of a paralegal
- Engage in trial team analysis of key legal concepts

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Roberto E. Cosentino is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Legal Studies at St. John's University. With 25 years of legal practice and extensive trial experience, he has resolved over 100 cases and serves on several prestigious legal committees.

3:15 – 3:30 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

3:30 – 4:30 PM: Regional Meetings

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

4:30 – 4:45 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

4:45 – 5:30 PM: Teaching Introduction to Paralegal/Legal Studies

Speaker: Crystal Dowdell

Session Abstract:

In this session, learn how a Paralegal Panel is integrated into the classroom to provide applied learning experiences. The session covers how the panel operates, its benefits for students, and the corresponding APA-style paper assignment.

Learning Objectives:

- Implement a paralegal panel to enhance applied learning in the curriculum
- Leverage panel discussions to enrich student understanding of the legal field

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Crystal Dowdell is the Program Director for the Legal Studies Program at Missouri Western State University. With over 32 years of experience and ongoing graduate studies in Social Work, she brings a multifaceted perspective to legal education.

Friday, March 21

12:00 – 12:30 PM: National Society for Legal Technology

Take a moment to watch the vendor demo of our sponsor

12:30 – 1:30 PM: *Yes, And... the Law: Using Improv to Empower Paralegal Students in the Classroom*

Speaker: Sharon Yamen and Regina Stuart

Session Abstract:

Engaging paralegal students in the classroom requires innovative approaches to help them build the confidence and communication skills necessary for success in the legal profession. This presentation explores the integration of improv techniques as a powerful tool to enhance student engagement and oral advocacy skills. Rooted in creativity and collaboration, improv exercises such as “The Expert” and “Yes, And” encourage active participation, quick thinking, and adaptability—key attributes for legal professionals navigating complex interactions.

Participants will learn how these techniques can transform classroom dynamics, foster confidence in public speaking, and simulate real-world scenarios paralegals may encounter in client interviews, courtroom interactions, and team collaborations. This session will include practical demonstrations, adaptable exercises, and strategies for aligning improv activities with core learning objectives in legal education. Join us to discover how the principles of improvisation can energize your teaching and prepare students for dynamic professional communication.

Learning Objectives:

- Attendees will learn how to incorporate improv exercises like “The Expert” and “Yes, And” into their teaching to enhance student engagement, foster creativity, and build confidence in oral advocacy
- Participants will gain strategies for using improv to simulate real-world scenarios, such as client interviews and courtroom interactions, helping students develop adaptability, quick thinking, and effective communication.
- Participants will gain strategies for using improv to simulate real-world scenarios, such as client interviews and courtroom interactions, helping students develop adaptability, quick thinking, and effective communication.

Target Audience: Early-Career Faculty

Session Format: 60-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Professor Yamen is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Legal Studies at St. John’s University. A graduate of Hofstra University School of Law, she is accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, advocating for veterans’ benefits. In her practice, she supports small businesses, start-ups, and expedition athletes in contract negotiations. Her diverse research spans the American Rule, legal inconsistencies in customs and border

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protection, the duty to rescue, landlord/tenant law, and the risks of equity crowdfunding. Passionate about connecting theory to practice, she brings real-world insights into her teaching and scholarship, empowering students for dynamic legal careers.

1:30 – 1:45 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

1:45 – 2:30 PM: From Assignment to Assessment: Managing Asynchronous Virtual Student Presentations

Speaker: Mara Mooney

Session Abstract:

Learn strategies for adapting traditional oral presentation assignments to an asynchronous online format. The session covers assignment design, the use of digital tools for peer engagement, and the development of clear assessment rubrics.

Learning Objectives:

- Design an engaging asynchronous oral presentation assignment
- Utilize simple digital tools to facilitate meaningful peer interaction
- Develop a rubric to assess presentation quality and peer feedback

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Mara Mooney has been a paralegal educator for over 25 years. A professor at Clayton State University, she also serves as the LEX chapter and pre-law advisor. Her extensive publication record and passion for teaching make her a respected figure in legal education.

2:30 – 3:15 PM: Cannabis Law as a Framework for Practical Learning

Speaker: June McLaughlin

Session Abstract:

This session demonstrates how Cannabis Law can be used to teach introductory legal concepts through practical assignments. Explore how the dynamic regulatory environment offers innovative opportunities to enhance foundational law courses.

Learning Objectives:

- Use the evolving cannabis industry to teach introductory legal concepts
- Integrate practical, cannabis-related activities into foundational law courses

Target Audience: New Educators

Session Format: 45-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

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Prof. June McLaughlin is the author of the forthcoming textbook *Cannabis Law and Practice* (2025, Kendall Hunt) and serves as Program Director and Chair of the ABA-approved Law and Paralegal Studies program at Irvine Valley College.

3:15 – 3:30 PM: Stretch Break

Take a moment to refresh.

3:30 – 4:30 PM: Adapting to Changes in the Legal Profession

Speaker: Doug Lusk

Session Abstract:

Explore the transformative shifts in the legal profession—including advances in artificial intelligence, the normalization of remote work, and evolving paralegal roles. This session provides strategies for integrating legal tech, fostering adaptability, and preparing students for the future.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand emerging technologies and their impact on legal practice
- Develop strategies for effective remote work and digital collaboration
- Explore the evolving roles of paralegals and other legal professionals

Target Audience: New Educators, Adjunct Faculty, Online Instructors

Session Format: 60-minute interactive workshop

Speaker Bio:

Doug Lusk is the founder and CEO of the National Society for Legal Technology (NSLT). A nationally recognized expert, his textbooks are used in over 320 universities. He also serves as an adjunct professor and is a member of several legal technology advisory boards.

Contact Information

For further details, please contact the American Association for Paralegal Education.