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Online Degrees Can Charge Your Legal And Paralegal Careers

By Joyce Jackson

The need for trained legal professionals and paralegals is expected to grow faster than the national average for job growth within the next five years. Stiff competition is expected, making your decision to enter the legal profession a critical one. The online program you choose will be a crucial decision affecting the level of success you enjoy.

While paralegals and legal assistants once were trained on the job, employers today are increasingly depending upon employees who have already completed some type of formal legal education or training. That's why a legal or paralegal certification, degree or online degree is so important to your future success in the legal profession.

One of a paralegal's most important tasks is helping lawyers prepare for closings, hearings, trials, and corporate meetings. Your classes and online programs will teach you to investigate the facts of cases and ensure that all relevant information is considered. Colleges and online schools also will teach you critical skills such as preparing the legal arguments, drafting pleadings and motions to be filed with the court, obtaining affidavits, and assisting attorneys during trials.

Once you have earned your legal certification via an online legal degree, you will be able to find work in all types of organizations, but most are employed by law firms, corporate legal departments, and various government offices. Your degree program or online courses will prepare you for work in all areas of the law, including litigation, personal injury, corporate law, criminal law, employee benefits, intellectual property, labor law, bankruptcy, immigration, family law, and real estate.

Because computer use and technical knowledge has become essential to paralegal work, a well-rounded degree program or online program is critical. There are several ways to become a paralegal. Increasingly, employers prefer graduates of four-year paralegal programs or college graduates who have completed paralegal certificate or online paralegal training programs.

Over 800 formal paralegal training programs are offered by 4-year colleges and universities, law schools, community and junior colleges, business schools, and proprietary schools.

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Paralegal programs include 2–year associate's degree programs, 4–year bachelor's degree programs, and certificate programs that take only a few months to complete. Many certificate programs only require a high school diploma or GED for admission, but they usually are designed for students who already hold an associate or baccalaureate degree. Your legal or paralegal education will prepare you for a rewarding and relaxed life. According to the National Association of Legal Assistants, paralegals had an average salary of \$38,000 in 2000.

Joyce Jackson writes, lectures and publishes helpful and easy to understand information for the online degree student. More comprehensive and simple tips are found on her website:

<http://www.theonlinedegreeguru.com>

Paralegals – Top Organizations You Need To Know

By Scott Knutson

The career field of paralegals began developing in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s as lawyers began hiring the assistants to help them with paper work, case investigation and general duties. As more attorneys began hiring legal assistance, the American Bar Association formed the Standing Committee on Legal Assistance to help set the standard in the paralegal – attorney relationship, employment guidelines and other duties associated with the paralegal, or legal assistant. That committee was formed in the late 1960s and today is made up of both attorneys and professional paralegals. The American Bar Association offers a certification program to institutions that give courses in paralegal instruction which gives the bar association the opportunity to set standards in the education of legal assistants.

There are several major national professional organizations for paralegals in the United States, in addition to their representation in the American Bar Association. Some of those organizations have helped form the career field of the paralegal, or legal assistant.

Two professional organizations, the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) and the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA), together represent more than 30,000 paralegals across the U.S. The organizations, while both working to serve the paralegal profession, have been competitive while determining the language that helps shape the profession. The NFPA prefers usage of the word paralegal while NALA prefers the term legal assistant.

The American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) is an organization of institutions and teachers of paralegal education programs. The organization strives for consistent paralegal education standards.

A new organization for paralegals began in 2003 and quickly began setting standards in the legal assistant field. The American Alliance of Paralegals serves individuals. Members in the American Alliance of Paralegals are required to meet certain educational or work experience guidelines in order to be a voting member. The organization was the first national organization for paralegals to become involved in setting minimum educational standards and guidelines.

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If you are a paralegal hoping to gain membership in a national professional organization, do some research to see what type of associations are typical to your area. The national organizations will likely have state and regional groups meeting in your area, or a nearby area. Talk to other paralegals in your area to see if they have professional membership in one of these organizations. Ask about benefits and professional development training the organizations offer.

If you are just entering a career as a paralegal or just beginning training for such a career, see if a professional membership can help you in your career plans. Perhaps an organization that offers various networking or job notice work boards would be of benefit to someone seeking to enter the field. Membership could be like having an insider pulling for you. Also, if you are a student planning to enter the paralegal field, a national organization might be able to hook you up with scholarship or other financial award information to help you complete your training. Contact all the paralegal organizations you can find to see if they have special information that might help you along your path to your legal career.

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