PARALEGAL STUDIES

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OVERVIEW

THE OCCUPATIONS

Legal Assistant, Paralegal

ABOUT THE OCCUPATIONS

The terms “legal assistant” and “paralegal” are used inter- changeably to denote a person who assists licensed attorneys in the delivery of legal services. In this occupation, paralegal/legal assistants perform many of the same tasks as lawyers under their direct supervision. Paralegals generally work for one law firm or sole practitioner, but they may also provide their services to licensed attorneys on a contract basis as a freelance paralegal. In either case, legal assistants may assume a variety of responsibilities, such as drafting legal documents, conducting legal research to ascertain the applicable law in a given case, and investigating the facts of cases.

A career as a paralegal also provides diverse employment settings. In addition to having the option to work for small, medium, or large law firms, legal assistants may work for corporations assisting attorneys with such tasks as drafting employee contracts, maintaining corporate minute books, or preparing annual financial reports. Other paralegal assistants may work for the state or federal government in one of their numerous administrative agencies performing a variety of duties. When assigned a legal problem on which to work, legal assistants must be able to communicate their findings to their supervising attorney(s), both orally and in writing. In order to do this effectively, paralegal assistants must not only understand legal terminology and have good research and investigative skills, but also must have excellent communication skills. Proficiency in the operation of computers in legal research and litigation is also essential. As legal assistants gain experience they are usually delegated increasingly challenging tasks, and can be a great asset to their employers. The paralegal occupation provides virtually unlimited opportunities to self-motivated people who recognize the importance of details, are able to work under pressure, and will abide by the strict rules of ethics and confidentiality of the legal profession.

Navarro College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. Navarro College also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of Navarro College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website.

CAREER OUTLOOK

WORK ENVIRONMENT

WORK ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS FOR PARALEGAL-RELATED POSITIONS

Employers

- Law firms
- Corporations
- Government agencies

Typical Schedule

- Corporations or government employers – 40-hour work week
- Law firms – 40 hours/week with possible frequent overtime
- Part-time or temporary employment may be available

Tools and Equipment

- Sources of law (case law, statutes, constitutions, agency rules and regulations, ordinances)
- Sources that discuss the law
- Pleadings, motions and other legal documents Computers, word processing and research software
- Form books

WORKER PORTRAIT

SKILLS, APTITUDES, AND INTERESTS FOR PARALEGAL-RELATED POSITIONS

Skills and Aptitudes

- General knowledge of the law
- Good research and investigative skills
- Familiarity with computers
- Able to handle stressful situations and to solve problems
- Communicates clearly
- Organized and self-motivated
- Team member, flexible, courteous, trustworthy, and dependable

- High ethical standards

Interests

- Likes to read and communicate
- Enjoys challenges
- Likes the law
- Enjoys helping people

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR PARALEGAL OCCUPATIONS

OUTLOOK RATING	OCCUPATIONS
Excellent	Paralegal personnel

SALARY INFORMATION

ANNUAL SALARY RANGES FOR SELECTED PARALEGAL POSITIONS

OUTLOOK RATING	OCCUPATIONS
Paralegal	$38,020 - $56,080

Note: Individual earnings may vary based upon the job set- ting and position. These are ranges – not guarantees of earnings.

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DEGREE/CERTIFICATE

Concentration Options	Degree / Certificate Types	Degree Plans
Paralegal Studies	Associate of Applied Science	View Degree Plan
Paralegal Studies with Criminal Justice Emphasis	Associate of Applied Science	View Degree Plan
Paralegal Studies	Certificate	View Degree Plan

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