

Paralegal Studies

Departments of Business, Accounting and Office Information Systems

Dean Mark Meadows, Ph.D., Office 215, 619-482-6460

Faculty Victoria López, J.D.; Elizabeth Shapiro, J.D.

Department Chair Dick Wasson, M.B.A.

General Description

The paralegal (legal assistant) works under the supervision of an attorney. Responsibilities are broad and varied including preparing and interpreting legal documents, interviewing clients, performing legal research, preparing for trial, and organizing and managing documentation. Paralegals often work with attorneys in specialized areas of law such as immigration, family law, personal injury, contracts, wills, trusts, and probate.

Southwestern College offers two programs, paralegal studies and paralegal studies—bilingual, which provide students with a litigation background and focus on developing an awareness and sensibility to the language, culture, and common legal issues of clients from various ethnic groups within the community. An understanding of international legal issues which impact San Diego due to its geographical location and other legal and business related activities are also developed.

Employment in the field tends to vary. Larger, well-established law firms commonly require a bachelor's degree, and smaller law firms and legal agencies often require a two-year associate degree or its equivalent. Potential employees who have an advanced education level, knowledge of a frequently used foreign language, and/or an emphasis in a legal specialty will have the greatest opportunities in the job market.

Career Options

Below is a sample of the career options available for the paralegal studies major. A few require a certificate of achievement, some require an associate in science degree, and some require a bachelor's degree: claims examiner, compensation and benefits manager, corporate legal assistant, court clerk, customs agent, forms and procedures specialist, freelance paralegal, legal assistant, investigator (for local, state, and federal departments and agencies), legal aide, legal research assistant, legal technician, patent agent, and title examiner. This training can also provide entrance to some careers in administration of justice such as youth authority, probation, and parole officer when a candidate passes appropriate tests and gains related experience.

Degree/Certificate Options

Associate in Science Degree: Career/Technical

Paralegal Studies A2516

Certificate of Achievement

Paralegal Studies A2518

Consult with a counselor to develop a Student Education Plan (SEP), which lists the courses necessary to achieve your academic goals.

ASSOCIATE IN SCIENCE DEGREE

Paralegal Studies

Career/Technical (Major Code: A2516)

Prepares students for a career as a paralegal or other law-related career with a multicultural international perspective. Trains students with a combination of legal theory, principles, procedures, and practical applications, including a hands-on paralegal internship. Emphasizes research, litigation, trial preparation skills, including familiarity with court documents, interviewing clients, drafting legal documents, and experience with legal software.

LEGL 255	Introduction to Law and Legal Terminology	3
LEGL 258	Legal Communications	3
LEGL 259	Legal Assistant: An Introduction	1
LEGL 260	Legal Research	3
LEGL 261	Civil Litigation I	3
LEGL 268	Computer Assisted Legal Research (CALR)	2
LEGL 270	Computer Skills for Legal Professionals	2.5
LEGL 290–293	Legal Cooperative Work Experience I–IV * (2–4)	2

Complete 11 units from the following:

LEGL 225	Law Office Management (3)	11
LEGL 256	International Law for Business (3)	
LEGL 262	Immigration Law and Procedure (3)	
LEGL 263	Family Law (3)	
LEGL 264	Wills, Trusts, and Estates (3)	
LEGL 266	Mediation, Negotiation, and Conflict Management (2)	
LEGL 267	Interviewing and Investigation for Paralegals (2)	
LEGL 269	Civil Litigation Procedures (3)	
LEGL 272	Business Organizations (2)	

Complete 3 units from the following:

AJ 151	Concepts of Criminal Law (3)	3
AJ 156	Legal Aspects of Evidence (3)	
AJ 181	Juvenile Law and Procedures (3)	
BUS 140	Business Law/The Legal Environment of Business (3)	
RE 106	Legal Aspects of Real Estate (3)	

Total units 33.5

To earn an associate degree, additional general education and graduation requirements must be completed. See page 51.

* 60 or more hours of on-the-job work experience internship, paid or volunteer, are required in LEGL 290. Program faculty and Student Employment Services assist students with placements, which can consist of as few as four-hours per week for students working full-time. Students who are presently employed in a law office may use their employment to fulfill this requirement. These hours may include summer work. The instructor must approve the work experience for application to the program.

Note: The Paralegal Studies Program prepares students to work under the supervision of an attorney in accordance with California law. A paralegal may not engage in the unauthorized practice of law by accepting cases, giving legal advice, appearing in court or setting fees for clients. To do so would be a crime in the state of California.

CERTIFICATE

Paralegal Studies

Certificate of Achievement

Career/Technical (Major Code: A2518)

LEGL 255	Introduction to Law and Legal Terminology	3
LEGL 258	Legal Communications	3
LEGL 259	Legal Assistant: An Introduction	1
LEGL 260	Legal Research	3
LEGL 261	Civil Litigation I	3
LEGL 268	Computer Assisted Legal Research (CALR)	2
LEGL 270	Computer Skills for Legal Professionals	2.5
LEGL 290–293	Legal Cooperative Work Experience I–IV * (2–4)	2–4

Complete 11 units from the courses listed below: 11

LEGL 225	Law Office Management (3)
LEGL 256	International Law for Business (3)
LEGL 262	Immigration Law and Procedure (3)
LEGL 263	Family Law (3)
LEGL 264	Wills, Trusts, and Estates (3)
LEGL 266	Mediation, Negotiation, and Conflict Management (2)
LEGL 267	Interviewing and Investigation for Paralegals (2)
LEGL 269	Civil Litigation Procedures (3)
LEGL 272	Business Organizations (2)

Complete 3 units from the courses listed below: 3

BUS 140	Business Law/The Legal Environment of Business (3)
AJ 151	Concepts of Criminal Law (3)
AJ 156	Legal Aspects of Evidence (3)
AJ 181	Juvenile Law and Procedures (3)
RE 106	Legal Aspects of Real Estate (3)

Total units 33.5–35.5

Note: The certificate of achievement is awarded only to students who possess an associate or higher degree in any major prior to completing the paralegal program.

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Paralegal Studies: Bilingual

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Degree/Certificate Options

Associate in Science Degree: Career/Technical

Paralegal Studies: Bilingual (English/Spanish) A2517

Major Code

Certificate of Achievement

Paralegal Studies: Bilingual (English/Spanish) A2519

Consult with a counselor to develop a Student Education Plan (SEP), which lists the courses necessary to achieve your academic goals.



Some courses within this program may require additional coursework that must be completed prior to enrollment in those courses. Please consult the individual course listings for prerequisites and any other limitations on enrollment.