Career Exploration Project

Paralegal
GSU1010
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Overview

• A paralegal is defined as “a person qualified by education, training or work experience employed by a lawyer, law office, corporation, or government agency that performs specifically delegated legal work for which a lawyer is responsible.”

• Paralegals are in high demand, in a highly stable field

• Paralegal jobs will increase by 12% between now and 2024 (according to the GA Department of Labor)
Nature of Work/Responsibilities

- Maintains client files
- Drafts documents and correspondence (communication by exchange of letters)
- Performs research
- Monitors details of files
- Is the "bridge" between the clients and the attorney
- Other duties are specific to the type of firm they work at
Working Conditions

• Typically are full-time and work 40 hours a week
• Work under a supervising attorney that is responsible for the paralegal’s work
• Could work in either a private or public sector
• *Private sectors are law firms (hence being privately owned)
• *Public sectors are corporate law departments and government agencies
Education/Training

• While paralegals don’t require a college education, it does better chances of finding employment and increase income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate Certificate in Paralegal Studies</th>
<th>Associates Degree (AA/AS or AAS)</th>
<th>Bachelors Degree in Paralegal Studies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solely based on paralegal coursework</td>
<td>Associate of Arts/ Associate of Science, Associate of Applied Science</td>
<td>Is ideal for specialized areas of law</td>
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<td>18-24 credit hours (Takes about one academic year)</td>
<td>Generalist degree with specialized paralegal courses</td>
<td>Takes four years of full-time study. Between 120-130 credit hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly for entry level positions</td>
<td>Takes two years</td>
<td>Can major, minor, or have a concentration in paralegal studies</td>
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Income

- Overall average salary for Paralegals in the U.S. ~ $52,930 a year
- Can be as high as $80,620 a year
- Overall average salary for paralegals in Atlanta ~ $55,170 a year
- Can be as high as $83,880 a year
- Depends on sector and specialized law
- *according to the U.S. Bureau of Statistics & Georgia Department of Labor
Advancements in the Field

- Can become certified or receive certification in specific areas of law (through the NFPA, NALA, NALS, or AAPI)
- Can join organizations for Paralegals (NALA, ABA, NFPA) in order for networking
- Take the bar exam in order to become an attorney
How GSU Plays A Role

- Offers many majors, minors, and concentrations for a bachelors degree that could help a paralegal career (criminal justice, law and society, political science, sociology, legal studies, etc.)
- Has tools for guidance and experience in the field (GSU Pre-Law Society and mandatory criminal justice internship)
- Offers the Accelerated Bachelor’s & J.D. Program which can be completed in six years, which is why I personally decided on GSU.
References

• “A GUIDE TO FAST TRACKING YOUR PARALEGAL CAREER.” Paralegaledu, Paralegaledu, www.paralegaledu.org/paralegal-career-guide/.

• “Five Professional Associations for Paralegals.” Online Paralegal Degree Center, www.online-paralegal-degree.org/lists/5-professional-associations-for-paralegals/.
