

## **School of Continuing Studies**

### **Paralegal Studies**

The Tulane paralegal studies program is a college credit program, established in 1979. The program was first grant approval by the American Bar Association in 1981, and it remains the oldest such approved program in this region.

The School of Continuing Studies offers Bachelor's and Associate's degrees in Paralegal Studies, a Minor, and a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate upon fulfillment of the requirements listed below.

Tulane's Paralegal Studies Program prepares professionals who are ready to succeed in today's competitive legal environment. According to the American Bar Association, a paralegal is:

“...a person qualified by education, training or work experience who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation, governmental agency or other entity and who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which a lawyer is responsible.”

Paralegals are not lawyers and do not practice law. Under the supervision of attorneys, they work in large and small law firms, banks, corporations, legislatures, administrative agencies, legal aid offices and clinics, and in public and private advocacy associations.

The primary goal of Tulane's Paralegal Studies Program is to educate students of diverse background to become effective, ethical and professional paralegals who are employable in a variety of legal settings and who are committed to on-going improvement and continuing paralegal education. The program encourages diversity in its student body and faculty and is committed to equal opportunity in its placement program.

The program achieves this goal by meeting the following objectives:

1. To provide students with a comprehensive general education that includes studies in writing, formal thought, speech, the humanities, sciences and social sciences, and that is designed to develop students' critical thinking and communication skills.

2. To educate students about the role of the paralegal in the delivery of legal services.
3. To educate students to perform legal and factual investigation and research using both traditional and technology-based methods.
4. To educate students about the court system, including civil, criminal and administrative fields, on trial and appellate levels, and also on alternative dispute resolution methods.
5. To teach students to analyze factual situations, handle legal procedures, and draft legal documents used in state and federal practice.
6. To prepare students to function effectively with the computer technology used in practice and to adapt to ever-changing technological advances.
7. To assist students to develop the organizational skills necessary for successful law office functioning , including categorizing and organizing documents, calendaring, prioritizing work, managing time, using forms, and maintaining billing data.
8. To expose students to a range of specialty areas enabling them to explore their interests and to prepare for careers in a variety of settings, including but not limited to admiralty law, family law, corporate law, personal injury and medical malpractice, healthcare compliance, and succession practice.
9. To provide students with an understanding of the rules of professional conduct involving lawyers and their application to paralegals and of the ethical codes and canons of the national paralegal associations.
10. To encourage students to engage in lifelong learning and professional development and to provide continuing paralegal education opportunities for graduates and other members of the local paralegal community.

The program runs a job placement service at no cost to students, graduates, or employers. Students are encouraged to join TUPA, the Tulane University Paralegal Association, to take advantage of the networking and mentoring opportunities available. TUPA sponsors an annual Career Fair and disseminates information on career opportunities.

Students can earn a Certificate in Paralegal Studies by completing 1) an Associate of Arts in Paralegal Studies, 2) a Bachelor of Arts in Paralegal Studies, or 3) a Postbaccalaureate Certificate in Paralegal Studies (open to students who hold an undergraduate degree from an accredited college).

**Note:** Paralegal studies majors with no prior college coursework must take general education courses their first semester. A first-year writing course (ENGL 101 or CSEN 125) is a prerequisite for enrollment in any Paralegal Studies course.

**Note:** Paralegal Studies courses in the School of Continuing Studies do not satisfy degree requirements for full-time Newcomb-Tulane students.

### CORE COURSES IN PARALEGAL STUDIES

Requirements for the Associate of Arts, the Bachelor of Arts, and the Certificate in Paralegal Studies include the following sequence of 6 core courses:

- PARA 201 Introduction to Paralegal Studies
- PARA 302 Legal Research
- PARA 303 Legal Writing
- PARA 305 Litigation I
- PARA 306 Litigation II
- PARA 402 Computers in the Law Firm

**Sequence of courses:** ENGL 101 (or CSEN 125) must be completed prior to enrollment in any Paralegal Studies course. CPST 100, Introduction to Microcomputers, or director approval is a prerequisite for PARA 402, Computers in the Law Firm. PARA 302, Legal Research, is a prerequisite to PARA 303, Legal Writing. PARA 305, Litigation I is a prerequisite to PARA 306, Litigation II.

**NOTE:** Paralegal students may not use ENLS 367, Technical Writing to fulfill the additional English/writing requirement nor THEA 210, Fundamentals of Acting to fulfill the Oral Communication proficiency.

Before registering for courses, new students must consult with the Paralegal Studies adviser. It is both important and required that students acquire a grounding in general education courses before enrolling in paralegal coursework. The adviser completes a degree worksheet with each student charting a path for successful completion of the degree.

### ASSOCIATE OF ARTS IN PARALEGAL STUDIES

For students with little or no college experience, the recommended path is to pursue the Associate of Arts degree (AA) and then to continue working towards the Bachelor of Arts degree. All coursework for the A.A. rolls forward and applies towards the bachelor's degree. Students earn their Certificate in Paralegal Studies upon the completion of the requirements for the 60-semester hour Associate of Arts degree.

To receive the Associate of Arts degree with a major in Paralegal Studies, students must complete a total of 60 hours of coursework. Nine paralegal courses plus an internship (which has a classroom component) are required to complete the major. Students begin with the six core paralegal courses (see above). In addition students must complete three advanced elective courses required, followed by the internship course. Advanced elective courses are paralegal courses at or above the 400-level, a section of which are offered on a rotating basis each semester. The core courses must be taken before registering for any of the advanced electives. Generally, the internship course is taken in the last semester of enrollment. To successfully complete this degree, the student must maintain a 2.000 grade point average in all paralegal courses taken as well as a 2.000 grade point average overall.

In addition, students must complete the following courses from the general liberal arts curriculum: ENGL 101 or CSEN 125, one additional English literature/writing course, two humanities electives, two social science electives, one science elective, one formal thought course (math, critical thinking, or symbolic logic); and electives of the student's choice as necessary to reach 60 hours, the minimum required for the A.A. degree.

There is a trend in paralegal employment to prefer a four-year degree. Many graduates of the two-year program are gainfully employed in the field, but students pursuing the two-year Associate of Arts degree should be aware that they may need to complete their bachelor's degree to advance within the profession.

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PARALEGAL STUDIES**

Students may elect to major in paralegal studies as they work towards their Bachelor of Arts degree which requires a total of 124 credit hours. Students who choose this option will receive a Certificate in Paralegal Studies at the same time they receive their bachelor's degree. To successfully complete the major, the student must maintain a 2.000 grade-point average in all paralegal courses taken. Students who have earned an Associate of Arts degree in Paralegal Studies from the School of Continuing Studies will have already completed all but two of the advanced electives required for the major.

Eleven courses and an internship (which has a classroom component) are required for the major. Of the eleven courses, six are the required core courses (see above). In addition students must complete five advanced elective courses required, followed by the internship course. Advanced elective courses are paralegal courses at or above the 400-level, a selection of which are offered on a rotating bases each semester. The core courses must be taken before registering for any of the advanced electives. Generally, the internship is taken in the last semester of enrollment.

In addition, students must complete the School of Continuing Studies general education requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree.

## **POSTBACCALAUREATE CERTIFICATE**

The postbaccalaureate certificate is available for students who already have an undergraduate bachelor's degree. This program allows college graduates to undertake intensive paralegal training.

The postbaccalaureate certificate requires eight paralegal courses and an internship (which has a classroom component). Of the eight courses, six are required core courses (see Core Courses in Paralegal Studies above). After the core courses are completed, students register for the two remaining advanced elective courses and the internship. The internship course is generally taken after the student has completed all other courses.

Students must maintain a 2.000 grade-point average in all paralegal studies courses taken in order to receive the certificate.

## **MINOR IN PARALEGAL STUDIES**

Students may elect a minor in paralegal studies as they work toward a bachelor's degree in another field. Students who choose this option do not receive a Certificate in Paralegal Studies. If they wish to earn a certificate, they may pursue a double major or complete a post-baccalaureate certificate after graduation. The minor does not constitute a program option under ABA guidelines. It is not designed to educate the student to work as a paralegal. The minor is not approved by the American Bar Association.

Six courses are required for the minor. The six courses are

PARA 201 Introduction to Paralegal Studies

PARA 302 Legal Research

PARA 303 Legal Writing

PARA 305 Litigation I

2 advanced elective courses in paralegal studies (400+ level)

To successfully complete the minor, the student must maintain a 2.000 grade-point average in all paralegal courses taken.