



## Paralegal/Legal Assistant Studies Certificate of Achievement

### 1. Labor Market Information and Analysis

In 2000, in response to growing demand for paralegals and the perceived lack of training standards, California became the first state in the nation to regulate this job field. As a result of this legislation, both the “paralegal” and “legal assistant” job titles are defined under California Business and Professions Code §6450. The most important change under §6450 was the requirement that anyone using the job title “paralegal” or “legal assistant” must complete the proper education, such as through completion of at least 24 semester units of law-related courses at a regionally-accredited college.

As a result of this legislation, community college is the primary point of entry into the growing paralegal profession, which typically requires an associate’s degree or a certificate in paralegal studies. Unfortunately, the closest American Bar Association (ABA)-approved paralegal programs are all about 60 miles away from Delta. In fact, no community college offers any paralegal program within Delta’s region (Central Valley/Motherlode).

The lack of a local, affordable paralegal training option means that higher education in the area is not adequately preparing the local population for higher paid jobs that benefit from paralegal training with 113 annual projected openings in the region from 2015 to 2020. Further, this lack of local, affordable, high-quality CTE education in the paralegal field appears particularly disconcerting when considering the relative availability of these higher paying jobs requiring such training in the region.

Indeed, local LaunchBoard data projects that there will be 76 paralegal and legal assistant job openings that become available on an annual basis between 2015 and 2020, as well as 25 job openings for legal secretaries and 12 job openings for other legal support workers that would benefit from paralegal training. This LaunchBoard data also reveals that paralegals in the region possess an entry level salary of \$33,738 and a median salary of \$48,568. Similarly, legal secretaries in the region possess an entry level salary of \$30,909 and a median salary of \$43,222. And other legal support workers that benefit from paralegal training in the region possess an entry level salary of \$26,478 and a median salary of \$40,497.

Further, the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, also projects continued job growth for paralegals and relatively high salaries, including an annual mean wage of \$59,230 in California. Also, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the Stockton-Lodi, CA area specifically, the annual mean wage for paralegals is \$56,310 (over 24% higher than the area’s average annual mean wage for all occupations, which is \$45,330. Further, the California Employment Development Department states that paralegals and legal assistants in San Joaquin County earn a median salary of \$55,858 and are projected to realize a staggering 30% growth rate in jobs available from 2012-2022--well over the average total growth rate for all occupations in the area and above



the average growth rate for the paralegal profession in all areas, which is already high at 17.7% for California as a whole.

Despite the aforementioned strong income and job growth in the regional paralegal market, no community college in this region offers a paralegal training program. And the lack of funding to develop and implement such a program has thus far acted as an insurmountable barrier to entry. Thus, the program will provide a career opportunity in demand by groups in our community based on advisory committee feedback, local program review, and employment/labor market information and analysis.



# SAN JOAQUIN DELTA COLLEGE

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