



IN BRIEF

CENTER FOR ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES

The Paralegal People®

Accredited by the Council On Occupational Education • Approved by the American Bar Association

Winter, 2007



Center For Advanced Legal Studies co-founders Doyle Happe and Gail Armatys

CELEBRATING TWO DECADES of Excellence

February 23, 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the Center's first class. In its original location on Richmond Avenue, the Center used a single classroom and enrolled an initial class of 26 students. The professor, Tom Swanson, is still with the Center as Academic Dean. Another of the Center's current faculty, Jim Wiedemer, started in July 1987. In the ensuing years, the Center has graduated more than 3000 paralegals and has advanced its reputation for excellence by becoming a highly-regarded ABA-approved institution and an active member of the legal community in

Houston and the Southwest. Now, with web-based classes that allow students to attend just one night a week, the Center leads the way in paralegal education while continuing to help graduates make their dreams come true.

PARALEGAL – AN EXCELLENT Career Choice

The value of the paralegal is apparent in the legal field. Increasingly, law firms are relying on paralegals to handle a variety of tasks that add value to the firms' clients. The name *Paralegal* has become differentiated from other legal community titles, such as legal assistant and legal secretary, as being the most professional. With the new standards developed and endorsed by the State Bar of Texas, lawyers are formally encouraged to place a higher value on the credentials of paralegals graduating from ABA approved programs. The

roles of paralegals are increasingly becoming defined and expansion of responsibilities encouraged. As a measure of that confidence, paralegal compensation is escalating. According to a comprehensive annual salary and benefits

continues

Attorneys Testify

The Center's program is excellent, demonstrated by the skills the extern possesses to function in a legal office.

Extern Sponsor

Due to this successful extern experience, I will be willing to hire more students from the Center and will tell my colleagues about the program.

Extern Sponsor

2007 WINTER SESSION

Day Classes: January 29
March 12

Evening Classes: January 29
March 26

Register
Call 800-446-6931 to register, TODAY!



GRADUATE PROFILE

Lorena Fischer

Barely a month after completing the Center's Associate of Applied Science Degree program, Lorena secured a high-profile position in the legal department at Money Management International (MMI). The non-profit company offers a host of personal credit counseling, education and debt reduction services.

Houston-headquartered MMI has counseling offices in approximately 30 states, with three major calling centers in Houston, Phoenix and Fort Worth. In all, they employ more than 1100 persons. Lorena's responsibilities as Legal Assistant of Compliance and Administration are as varied as the company itself. She handles the licensing of new and existing locations as the company continues to grow, assuring compliance with the laws of each state in which the company operates. She also manages the leases for all of the company offices, and works on contract renewals for them all. In her newly-created position, Lorena reports to the Director of Compliance and Administration in Houston, while also working on legal research, forms management and other projects for the corporate attorney based in Denver.

Lorena developed a strong work ethic early in life. A native of El Salvador, she immigrated with her family to Houston at age nine, completed high school at Memorial H.S., and took classes at a local community college which allowed her to transfer hours into her program at the Center. After graduating from the Center, Lorena earned her ALS Certification through the Houston

Association of Legal Professionals during her weekends. Prior to entering the Center's program, Lorena worked for nine years as an executive assistant, learning many business skills in manufacturing, sales, and administrative environments. She developed a skill in accounting and continues to do contract accounting for clients on the weekends. She is completely bilingual, with English originally learned as her second language.

Lorena credits the Center for providing her with many of the needed resources to succeed in business. While she enjoyed all of her professors, she singled out three as being extra special. Sassan Badzradeh, (Mr. B), her algebra teacher, was very encouraging and kept her motivated. His letter of recommendation on her behalf, she feels, had an impact in her job quest. Larry King taught her several classes in corporate and commercial law and greatly influenced her career direction. When speaking of Tom Swanson, she states, "What can I say? He's the best." Her experience at the Center already has her planning to continue her education.

In her off-hours, Lorena is committed to her family – husband Michael, 13-year old son Wences and nine-year old daughter Samantha. Together, the family is very involved at Second Baptist Church, participating in bible studies and individual groups, as well as regularly attending services. She enjoys spending free time with her family.

Lorena's drive, eagerness to learn and aptitude help make her successful in her new career. We are pleased that she chose the Center to start her path toward becoming a paralegal.



Graduate Gratitude

The Center For Advanced Legal Studies has fully prepared me to enter the legal profession. In fact, I have already begun my career. I know I now have the tools and knowledge I need to be a successful paralegal. The Center For Advanced Legal Studies has a great reputation in the legal profession. I am proud to say I attend this school, and I am very thankful I did.

Leah Nicholson

The courses are all very well planned and the teachers are very knowledgeable. I am glad that I chose to come to the Center. It has been a great experience, and I would recommend the school to anyone who was thinking about starting a career in the legal profession.

Heather Garcia

I found at the Center For Advanced Legal Studies a great opportunity to learn about the U.S. law system and become familiar with the working requirements of paralegals... The Center For Advanced Legal Studies exceeded my expectations. I am very glad I chose it.

Gisela Dall'orto

AAfPE Scholarship OPPORTUNITY

The American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) is offering five \$500 scholarships, available solely for students of Lambda Epsilon Chi (LEX) honor society chartered paralegal institutions. The Center, with its LEX program, is a qualified school for these scholarships. The submission deadline for the scholarships is February 15. For those interested in this opportunity, further information and applications are available at the Center's front office.

Faculty In-Service A SUCCESS

The Center's annual faculty in-service, held December 8, featured Angela McGlynn as its guest speaker. Ms. McGlynn, professor emerita of psychology is the author of "Successful Beginnings for College Teaching" and is a noted presenter at workshops throughout the U.S. on teaching effectiveness and diversity awareness. She shared valuable information and insights on these topics as well as on student motivation.



Facts on File

Graduation

February 24, 2007

Westin Galleria Hotel

Speaker: Kevin Chávez, Attorney

Kennedy Hodges, L.L.P., Houston

Contact Tami Riggs for more information.

Register

800-446-6931



HPMA Scholarship Awarded

Veronica Torres, a student at the Center, recently received a \$250 scholarship from the Houston Metropolitan Paralegal Association (HMPA). The organization, the largest in the State of Texas, presented Veronica with the award at their annual gala fundraising event. Veronica (left) is pictured with Placement Director Tami Riggs.

part-time *online*™ Starts Strong

The Center's part-time/online evening classes have begun, offering students the best of both worlds. They can attend traditional classes one night a week and utilize the web-based online instruction as well. It can be the perfect solution for getting a quality education for persons who are full-time employees or who have other responsibilities. The new program lets students determine their own schedule and study routines. It takes only a basic knowledge of the computer to make it work. If you can do e-mail, you can do online courses. Comments from students after just the first two sessions indicate a positive reaction to the program:

I like the self tests and quizzes that help you study for the tests. I give it a 10!

...It helps with my organization and gives me a better understanding of their lectures

It allowed us easy access to homework assignments, quizzes and links to many helpful websites.

...It gives us a way to communicate with other students and clears up questions on discussion topics

This is awesome!

While the flexibility of the new program is a big benefit, personalized feedback is available as it has always been with the traditional courses. Students utilizing this curriculum also have the same access to the Center's services and resources as they always have.

The Center is pleased to offer this alternative opportunity to its students along with the traditional day class schedule.

CENTER STUDENTS Score Well on CLA/CP Exam

The Certified Legal Assistant/Certified Paralegal (CLA/CP) designation is an achievement that helps set a standard of competence for our profession. After 30 years, the voluntary two-day exam, administered by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), has produced more than 13,000 persons having a CLA/CP credential. The exam covers five content areas, all of which have to be passed – Communications, General Law Electives, Ethics, Judgment &

Analysis and Legal Research. The Center has been very successful in preparing students for taking the exam, including a comprehensive review course taught by the Center's Judge Ana Otero. A recent report from NALA shows that the Center's students score well above the state and national average for those taking the exam. The report is still another indication of the Center's high level of competence in preparing students for the legal profession.

THE CENTER OFFERS Needed Assistance

When the Southwestern Professional Institute unexpectedly closed its doors in early November, students in its paralegal program were faced with the possibility of having to abandon their dreams of entering the legal profession. After being alerted by the State of Texas and the American Bar Association of the school's closure, the Center quickly analyzed the situation, met with students and offered a positive solution, providing teach out for more than 50 who had already or were very close to completing at least one-half of their paralegal coursework.

The Center added three professors from Southwest's faculty and offered the students a chance to complete their education. The professors, Aida Ziemicki, Tony Hale and Marissa Garcia, became valued additions to the Center's teaching staff. The Center's financial assistance staff worked closely with the students to make sure they could attend

without losing any monetary grants or loans. The students, given this opportunity, have labored hard to fulfill their requirements for a certificate program and will be given the chance to participate in a special portion of the Center's graduation ceremony on February 24th. All enrolled students from Southwestern will have completed their program by the end of March, 2007. Not only have the students been afforded a chance to become paralegals, they will receive placement assistance through the Center's continuing placement program.

Program Director, Doyle Happe, states, "We recognized that, through no fault of their own, these students would be deprived of an education unless we intervened. There was no question that this was the right thing to do. We are glad that we could assist in this worthwhile endeavor and provide a meaningful experience for these committed students."

continued from page 1

survey conducted by *Legal Assistant Today* magazine (LAT), nationwide average paralegal salaries rose approximately 11 percent in 2005 above those in 2004. In the South region which includes Texas, reported salaries increased by more than 17 percent. The survey results, reported in the magazine's March/April issue, indicate that the five most lucrative specialties are intellectual property, securities, environmental law, civil rights and commercial law. The survey further revealed that better than three-fourths of all paralegals feel as if they are fairly paid.

The LAT survey also asked the question, "What title denotes the higher professional status – Legal Assistant or Paralegal?" The result was resoundingly in favor of the term "Paralegal." Almost 80 percent of respondents chose that title, as opposed to only four

percent that thought Legal Assistant was more professional.

According to the most recent survey of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the paralegal profession is projected to continue to grow rapidly. "Employers are trying to reduce costs and increase the availability and efficiency of legal services by hiring paralegals to perform tasks formerly carried out by lawyers." The report goes on to say that formally trained paralegals should have the best employment opportunities.

At the Center, we stay abreast of the continual changes that are happening in the legal community and take a proactive role by designing our curriculum to make sure our graduates are well prepared for fulfilling their career goals. Our emphasis is exclusive. We are the *Paralegal People*. It is all we do!



Placement News

The following are graduates who have obtained employment since our last newsletter through the Center's placement office and/or through networking efforts of their own.

Rosa Arvizu	Lauryl Guidry	Angela Reed
Emmitt Barrett	Nancy Harlow	Patricia Reyes
Eunice Barrios	Anastasia Ingram	Delia Rivas
Shaun Belcher	Avis James	Michelle Rivers
René Brevard	Alex Johnson	Maria Sandoval
Maria Cerros	Diana Lopez	Stacy Stepp
Michelle McHenry	Leonel Lopez	Veronica Torres
Edrington	Alejandrina Madmouj	Catherine Walker
Lorena Fischer	Mischa Montgomery	Dawn White
Chris Flowers	Deborah McCabe	Crystal Zapata
Jeremy Freeman	Michelle McCoy	Judith Zamber
Heather Garcia	Tomanicka Morris	
Melissa Gonzalez	Holly Moss	

If you know of someone else who desires a professional paralegal career, pass this newsletter along and tell them about the Center.

The only ABA Approved and Accredited College in Texas that Specializes in Paralegal Education. *It's All We Do!*

CENTER FOR ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES

- Program Director / *Doyle Happe*
- Compliance Liaison / *Gail Armatys*
- Academic Dean / *Tom Swanson*
- Placement Director / *Tami Riggs*
- Admission Team
Debra Garcia / Director
Marsba Elam
- Financial Aid Director / *Lori Baggett*
- Financial Aid Assistant / *Pete Becerra*
- Registrar / *Brooke Weeks*
- Course Designer / *Randi Jerding*
- Secretary / *Elaine Calderon*
- Librarian / *Dianne Dallman*
- Library Assistant / *Susan McGuire*
- IT Director / *Eric Happe*
- Teaching Assistant / *Spencer Stauffer*

Mission Statement

To provide students with the skills, practical and ethical knowledge and abilities which will allow them to excel as paralegals as they meet the needs of the legal, governmental, and corporate communities.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Website: www.paralegal.edu

e-mail: info@paralegal.edu

800-446-6931

Houston, Texas 77098

3910 Kirby Dr., Ste. 200

The Paralegal People[®]

LEGAL STUDIES

CENTER FOR ADVANCED

PRRST STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
HOUSTON TX
Permit No 12724