

Welcome to Bryan & Associates! An Unreal Law Firm

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Students learn by doing – that is the overarching educational philosophy of our paralegal program – and the “doing” part is done best when it replicates as close as possible a real-world working environment. That is why from day one, every student enrolled in the paralegal studies program at Bryan University is considered a newly hired paralegal at Bryan & Associates (an unreal law firm). Throughout the program, students are consistently referred to as paralegals, working with attorneys in a law firm. This allows students to envision themselves in that role; instilling self-confidence of truly belonging in the legal profession.



All instructors are attorneys in Bryan & Assoc., and the class assignments are based upon real life client scenarios. The student paralegal is given access to the client’s file, complete with court transcripts, internal memorandums, emails, texts, interview videos, etc. and are delegated tasks and responsibilities typically assigned to a working paralegal. Our student paralegals work on a variety of cases with different clients, such as employment discrimination, bankruptcy, divorce, criminal defense, contract disputes and are provided templates with the firm logo used in completing certain assignments such as writing internal memos, billing, emails, and other correspondence. They also must document their time, as they would in a real law firm using software common to most legal offices.

Every Wednesday evening, Bryan & Assoc. holds an All Staff meeting, to which all paralegals are invited. The program director serves as the senior partner and hosts the All Staff meeting with other attorneys participating. The faculty attorneys and student paralegals discuss cases and clients along with workplace issues, announcements, ethical conflicts, and general discussion of current legal news just as would happen in a working law firm.

The purpose for the All Staff meetings is not only to create a real-life simulation of working in a law firm, but also to promote community and build communication skills. The law, by definition, is conflict, and can bring out the worst in people. Paralegals often serve as a buffer and a liaison for attorneys, having frequent contact with adversaries, clients, court personnel and others. Their role requires them to use the subtleties of non-cognitive behavior and interpersonal communication skills in order to navigate troubled waters in a calm and objective, yet compassionate manner. During the All Staff meetings, along with class discussion forums (called Yellow Dig) student paralegals are encouraged and guided by their attorney instructors to discuss “hot button” legal topics as practice in developing those necessary people skills.

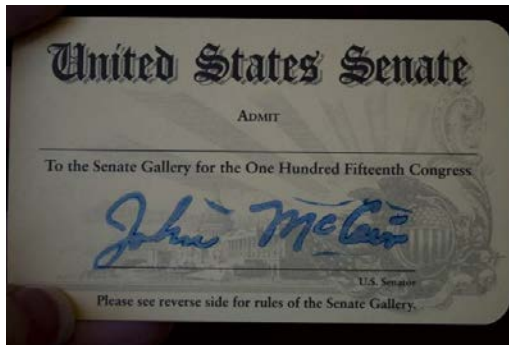
From the All Staff Meetings sprung the concept of putting together a student club, similar to a paralegal organization or association available to working paralegals. As a result, we formed the Bryan University Student Paralegal Association (BUSPA) and every paralegal student is a member automatically upon enrollment. BUSPA meets once a month and sponsors guest speakers, special presentations, or workshops pertinent to the legal profession and career development.

Last year, BUSPA decided to visit Washington D.C. as a group, as many of our paralegals had never visited D.C., or even flown on an airplane. Student paralegals provide their own transportation to D.C. but BUSPA paid for students' lodging, meals, tours, through fundraising efforts and contributions by faculty, friends, and family. In October 2017, 8 students, and several instructors made the journey for 3 days. The highlight was attending a Supreme Court oral argument, and meeting with one of the Justices!



Student Paralegals Approaching the U.S. Supreme Court

It was an amazing and enlightening journey for our paralegals. They now have a connective experience with their nation's capital, and a greater appreciation for our country's systems of legislation and justice, thus strengthening their bond with the legal community.



Students Attended Senate Hearings

By designing our program around a highly simulated real working environment we have seen our students exhibit increased confidence in their abilities and a strong commitment to the legal profession. Students develop a real sense of belonging and inclusion in the practice of law, resulting in greater student satisfaction and student commitment as well as better employment opportunities and outcomes for our graduates.