

ABA Recognizes Exceptional Paralegal Students

The American Bar Association is celebrating 45 years of ABA Approval of Paralegal Programs. Program coordinators from various schools around the country submitted profiles of their star students and four Illinois Paralegal Association members and one member from Western New York Paralegal Association was chosen to be featured. Congratulations to all the outstanding paralegals featured.



JULIANNE DIBENEDETTO

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Paralegal Studies, 2020, College of DuPage,
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As a teenager, Julianne Di Benedetto enjoyed debating with teachers and playing “devil’s advocate” with friends.

“I was told by family members and friends that I should go into law,” she said. “But before enrolling in the program at College of DuPage, I didn’t realize that there were career paths in law other than becoming an attorney or judge.”

In fact, when Di Benedetto initially attended COD, her focus was on foreign language. But she took a hiatus from school when she was promoted at her job in retail. She decided to return to school upon realizing she wanted a career change.

“After doing some research, I found the paralegal career, and it sounded perfect! It combined my interest in law with my skill set—writing, organization and attention to detail,” she said. “Soon thereafter I enrolled in my first paralegal class, and I immediately knew that this was the career for me.”

While COD offered a flexible class, Di Benedetto was impressed that the Paralegal Studies program was approved by the American Bar Association.

“For students pursuing a degree or certificate in paralegal studies, enrolling in an ABA-approved program is crucial,” she said. “The ABA has a strict approval process with the purpose of, per their website, ‘develop[ing]... superior paralegal education programs.’ Since the COD Paralegal Studies program is one of these select programs, students can enroll knowing that they will receive a quality education and that they will be prepared to work successfully in the legal field. Employers recognize the importance of this approval, and many require that an applicant’s degree or certificate

come from an ABA-approved program.”

Di Benedetto earned an Associate in Applied Science degree, graduating with High Honors and a perfect 4.0 GPA in her paralegal classes. She later earned her credential as an Illinois-Accredited Paralegal from the Illinois Paralegal Association. “I owe a lot to the Paralegal Studies Program. Sally Fairbank, program chair, and Linda Jenkins, adjunct faculty, both helped me find my first job at a bankruptcy and tax law firm. This was almost five years ago, and I am still at that firm today as a senior paralegal. I love what I do. The work is fulfilling, and I enjoy helping our clients.”

COD is still a part of Di Benedetto’s life, as she returned to pursue two certificates in accounting. She recently became certified in QuickBooks and is currently preparing to sit for the NALA (National Association of Legal Assistants) Knowledge Exam for her Certified Paralegal credential.

Because of her passion for education and learning, Di Benedetto would like to earn a bachelor’s degree, earn the CORE Registered Paralegal credential from the NFPA (National Federation of Paralegal Associations) and eventually teach a paralegal course to help others prepare for certification exams.

Di Benedetto thanks the faculty of COD’s Paralegal Studies program for their unmatched dedication to students. “The experience that I had was life-changing. Through this program, I found an amazing career and made lifelong friends,” she said.

-Submitted by Sally Fairbanks, Program Director, Paralegal Studies Program, College of DuPage