



The Paralegal Education Program at Auburn University Montgomery

[By Devon Pryor]

In the heart of Alabama, the capitol city of Montgomery boasts a university with the largest and most affordable paralegal studies program in the state. According to its website, Auburn University Montgomery has been offering an American Bar Association-approved Paralegal Certificate program for nearly 20 years. Offered through the university's Department of Justice and Public Safety, three ABA-approved certification options are available to students interested in legal careers.

The Bachelor of Science in Justice and Public Safety-Legal Studies is the first of these options. This track requires students to complete a four-year, 120-semester-hour program, which awards each graduate with both a bachelor's degree and a Paralegal Certificate. Like most bachelor's degree programs, the Bachelor of Science in Justice and Public Safety-Legal Studies track at Auburn University Montgomery requires students to complete general education, or GE, classes in addition to their legal studies coursework. The curriculum for the legal studies track includes classes in business organization, legal research, legal writing, civil litigation, court and judicial administration, alternative dispute resolution, legal ethics, computer applications in law, and business and professional writing, as well as six relevant electives. Internships completed by students enrolled in the program are considered electives.

Auburn University Montgomery also offers a Master of Science in Justice and Public Safety. Graduate students can choose from two track options, both of which provide instruction in management and administration. Graduate courses are offered during the day, at night, and on weekends. The first of the graduate tracks is the Judicial Administration option (M.J.L.). This track is ABA-approved and, according to the program website, is designed to "produce extremely competent

and well-rounded individuals" with advanced preparation for careers as paralegals or court or justice administrators, as well as for admission to law school. It requires students to take courses in legal research and writing, human resource management, computer applications in the law, and administrative instruction. Students who complete this track also earn ABA-approved Paralegal Certificates.

The second track within the master's degree program is the Justice and Public Safety option (M.J.P.). This track offers coursework that provides students with the skills necessary to succeed in several areas of the criminal justice field, including planning, management, and ethical skills in specifically targeted areas such as law enforcement, security, corrections, and juvenile justice. This option does not offer a Paralegal Certificate, but students who decide to pursue the M.J.P. do earn master's degrees in a field relevant to any legal career.

Admissions requirements for both of the master's degree programs at Auburn University Montgomery are possession of a bachelor's degree (or its credit equivalent) from an accredited university and satisfactory performance on either the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). If an applicant's undergraduate grade point average is below 2.75, the GRE or MAT must be taken before the screening committee will give any

consideration to the student. The MAT is offered through the psychology department at Auburn University Montgomery. For those who are unfamiliar with the MAT, this test is, according to the MAT homepage, a "high level mental ability test requiring solutions of problems stated as analogies" designed to measure verbal comprehension and analytical thinking.

A competency evaluation is also associated with the Master of Judicial Administration (M.J.L.) program at Auburn University Montgomery. In order to satisfy the competency evaluation requirement, each student must choose one of the three evaluation options. The first of these is the comprehensive examination, which is taken by students during the final semester of enrollment at Auburn University Montgomery. Instead of taking the exam, students can elect to fulfill the specialization option, which requires an additional six hours of coursework and is available only by permission to students with GPAs of 3.5 or higher. The third option for students is writing a thesis; thesis topics must be pre-approved, and theses are subject to strict guidelines and evaluations.

All faculty members of the Department of Justice and Public Safety at Auburn University Montgomery have experience in their fields. They work or have worked as prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement administrators or officers,



security administrators, and corrections and juvenile administrators. They often have consulting experience in their fields, as well.

Auburn University Montgomery takes full advantage of technological tools to benefit its students. The university uses WebCT, the number-one integrated Internet learning system for higher education.

This service provides email, online chat and discussion board services, and other e-learning resources. The university has also implemented a web-conferencing tool called Horizon Wimba, which provides an array of collaborative and communicative possibilities, including video, audio, slide

show, document-sharing, and other capabilities. Whether enrolled in the Paralegal Education Program or any of the university's other programs, students at Auburn University Montgomery have the full gamut of resources necessary to ensure a quality education at their disposal.

ON THE NET

Auburn University Montgomery's Paralegal Education Program
www.aum.edu/Academics/Schools/Sciences/Departments_and_Undergraduate_Programs/Justice_and_Public_Safety/index.aspx?id=3754&SearchType=AND&terms=paralegal%20program

Miller Analogies Test

harcourtassessment.com/haiweb/Cultures/en-US/Harcourt/Community/PostSecondary/Products/MAT/mathome.htm

Horizon Wimba at Auburn University Montgomery

www.aum.edu/Academics/Horizon_Wimba/index.aspx?id=6228