When Angela Masciulli married into the military, she didn’t immediately realize the limitations it could place on her career. Employers often rejected her because of the likelihood she could leave the job if her husband was relocated. However, the aspiring lawyer persisted and eventually welcomed an opportunity to serve as a paralegal.

This experience shifted her trajectory permanently, as she found she enjoyed the paralegal profession. She became certified and logged hours. Years passed and she kept practicing. Still, Angela found that any time the military caused her family to move, she had to fight for every new position. Education became her weapon of choice in this continual battle to stand out from the pack.

“The term ‘paralegal’ means so many things,” Angela said. “There is only one state in the country that requires paralegals to be certified or take continuing legal education courses. So for the majority of paralegals, education is voluntary. For me, in order to be considered the best, I try to achieve the maximum level of education and knowledge in the field.”

Leading in Her Field

In a field where earning an advanced degree is not imperative, Angela continues to stand out. She currently serves as a project manager, paralegal and support analyst at an independent firm where she’s respected as an expert. Her authority extends even further, with national paralegal organizations inviting her to participate in webinars and paralegal blogs welcoming her as a guest writer.

“Things like that maybe wouldn’t have happened had I not gotten that extra level of education,” Angela said. “And I certainly command more in earnings, so that definitely helps! With a master’s degree, you’re really seen as a leader in your field.”
Unexpected Perk of Paralegal Work

With nearly 20 years of experience as a paralegal, Angela has pinpointed what makes the work continually rewarding and worth the added effort of pursuing higher education. It ties back in with prioritizing family above all else.

“For me, the most memorable and gratifying experience in the legal profession is doing pro bono work, where you get to help families through certain legal situations that improve their lives,” she said.

The Need for Prestige

In her quest to raise employer eyebrows, Angela knew she needed a specialized degree from a school that lawyers would respect. She also needed the degree to be mobile, in case she moved again mid-education. At the George Washington University, she found all she required in the Master’s degree in Paralegal Studies online program.

“I think we’re still at a point where some people might question whether an online program is of quality or rigor,” Angela said. “I knew with a name like GW, someone would see my degree and not question the quality or rigor of the program.”

Highly disciplined, Angela balanced her school, work and family responsibilities by approaching life day by day. She soon discovered rewarding aspects to the online program beyond the expert faculty, career resources and meaningful practicum experience.

“Learning online really ties into preparing for today’s workforce,” she said. “So much is reliant on cloud technology, communicating effectively via email and setting your own deadline. The ability to complete your course online really translated to the job that I have now.”

Visit [ParalegalStudiesMasters.online.gwu.edu](http://ParalegalStudiesMasters.online.gwu.edu) or call [1.888.989.7069](tel:1.888.989.7069) for more information about the George Washington University’s Master’s degree in Paralegal Studies online program.

© 2016 The George Washington University