

Why become a CCLS?

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You've thought about taking the CCLS exam, but you've always come up with a reason why not to-- it's too hard, I don't have the time, my boss won't care, or I'm not a legal secretary so I don't need to. All of those reasons were mine, and especially the last one, because I've worked in the legal field for over 30 years, but I've never been a legal secretary. My career started working in the attorney service business for over 25 years, and for the last five years I've been working as a Docket Clerk. I can't say that I never thought about being a CCLS, but I just wasn't sure if it would be of benefit to me.

Attending my first LSI annual conference in May 1993 was an overwhelming and incredible experience, but what I remember most is when these people were being acknowledged for passing the CCLS exam. Everyone got up on their feet and applauded these ladies for their accomplishment, and they all received beautiful corsages to wear for the weekend. I asked those around me, what was this CCLS exam and what did you have to do to achieve this status. When I heard it was a seven part exam that took all day to take it, I was very impressed and thought right then it was something that I would like to do someday.

Several times I was approached about joining a study group, at one time I even had a roommate who was part of one, but I always said not now. Finally in May 2005, my fellow co-worker, Allma Gilligan, CCLS told me she was starting a nineteen week study group, and it would be held in our Walnut Creek office. For me this sounded perfect, I worked in our San Francisco office, but on Wednesdays my supervisor let me leave early, so I get to class on time, and since I lived in Concord meant that I didn't have a long ride home after class. My woman's intuition told me it was time, everything was in place, and I had no more excuses.

Now that I work in a law firm (for the first time in my life) that practices a variety of fields, I wanted to be exposed to other areas of law besides litigation, and studying for the exam was going to provide that for me. I was excited about learning such things as corporate law, probate terminology, and yes, to even learn what some of those Latin terms mean, like *sua sponte*.

One of my strengths is that when I commit to something, I do everything that I have to do to accomplish the goal. So here I am in a study group every Wednesday night, doing homework assignments every week between classes, and at the same time I'm President and Governor of San Francisco LPA.

Taking the exam for the first time, I was feeling anxious that morning, and I was just hoping that I would pass at least four sections. Six weeks after taking the exam, I received the e-mail that told me that I was close, but I didn't pass. My first reaction was to be upset, and then I realized that I had passed four sections, so I only three more to go. I was very lucky to have a lot support to keep going on, so I did.

By the time I took the exam for the last time, I will say *The Gregg Reference Manual* became my best friend, which is what everyone told me would happen. Then the day came, November 21, 2006, I received the e-mail that started out with, "Congratulations!" It was the best day of my professional career and, passing the exam gave me such confidence that I didn't think it would. This past May I got to live my dream, I was in front of the room receiving the applause and the corsage, but what I remember was I didn't do this alone. Without Alma's support and encouragement, the support from my LSI friends, and my family I couldn't have done it.

In passing the exam, my supervisor saw me grow as a person and as a professional, and she admired the commitment and dedication that I showed to it. She has since then given me a promotion and encourages me in expanding my role at my job.

To those of you who are legal professionals, but not necessarily a legal secretary and use the excuse that you don't need to become a CCLS, because you're not a legal secretary, I say you're wrong. The exam is for everyone that is a legal professional. It provides the opportunity of expanding your knowledge, and it provides the opportunity to learn more about yourself as a person.