

DELTA COLLEGE  
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES  
**ADMINISTRATIVE / OFFICE ASSISTANT**

Salary Range: \$20,430 - \$42,530 annually

Personal Interests: Communicating with people, organization and routines

Work Environment: Clean, well-lighted, indoor office atmosphere

**Description**

As technology continues to expand in offices across the nation, the role of the secretary has greatly evolved. Office automation and organizational restructuring have led secretaries to assume a wide range of new responsibilities once reserved for managerial and professional staff. Many secretaries now provide training and orientation to new staff, conduct research on the Internet, and learn to operate new office technologies. Although many changes have occurred, the primary responsibilities have remained the same: performing and coordinating an office's administrative activities and ensuring that information is disseminated to staff and clients.

Secretaries are responsible for a variety of administrative and clerical duties necessary to run an organization efficiently. They serve as an information clearinghouse for an office, schedule appointments, provide information to callers, organize and maintain paper and electronic files, manage projects, and produce correspondence. They may also prepare correspondence, handle travel arrangements, and contact clients.

Specific job duties vary with experience and titles. Executive secretaries and administrative assistants, for example, perform fewer clerical tasks than lower-level secretaries. In addition to greeting visitors, arranging conference calls, and scheduling meetings, they may handle more complex responsibilities such as

conducting research, preparing statistical reports, training employees, and supervising other clerical staff.

Some secretaries, such as legal and medical secretaries, perform highly specialized work requiring knowledge of technical terminology and procedures. Other technical secretaries who assist engineers or scientists may prepare correspondence, maintain the technical library, and gather and edit materials for scientific papers.

**Working Conditions**

Secretaries usually work in offices with other professionals in schools, hospitals, or in legal and medical offices. Their jobs often involve sitting for long periods. If they spend a lot of time typing, particularly at a video display terminal, they may encounter problems of eyestrain, stress, and repetitive motion, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

Office work can lend itself to alternative or flexible working arrangements, such as part-time work. In fact, one secretary in five works part-time and many others work in temporary positions. A few participate in job sharing arrangements in which two people divide responsibility for a single job. The majority of secretaries, however, are full-time employees who work a standard 40-hour week.

**Training, Other Qualifications**

High school graduates who have basic office skills may qualify for entry-level secretarial positions. However,

employers increasingly require knowledge of software applications, such as word processing, spreadsheets, and database management. Secretaries should be proficient in keyboarding and good at spelling, punctuation, grammar, and oral communication. Because secretaries must be tactful in their dealings with people, employers also look for good interpersonal skills. Discretion, good judgment, organizational ability, and initiative are especially important for higher-level secretarial positions.

Secretaries acquire skills in various ways. Training ranges from high school vocational education programs that teach office skills and keyboarding to 1- to 2-year programs in office administration offered by business schools, vocational-technical institutes, and community colleges. Delta College offers certificate programs in Office Assistant and Office Specialist. The Administrative Assistant program results in an Associate in Business Studies degree. Specialized training programs are available for students planning to become medical or legal secretaries or administrative technology specialists.

Secretaries generally advance by being promoted to other secretarial positions with more responsibilities. Qualified secretaries who broaden their knowledge of a company's operations and enhance their skills may be promoted to other positions such as senior or executive secretary, clerical supervisor, or office manager.

### **Job Outlook**

Job openings should be plentiful, particularly for well-qualified and experienced secretaries, stemming from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave this very

large occupation for other reasons each year. Overall, however, a slight decline is expected between 2004 and 2014.

	2004 Employed	2014 Projected	% Change	Annual Openings
National	1,934,000	1,887,000	-2.5	268,000
Michigan	65,203	59,859	-8.2	1,249

### **Earnings**

Average annual earnings from May 2006:

	Annual	Range
National	\$28,460	\$17,560 - \$41,550
Michigan	\$30,700	\$20,430 - \$42,530
Bay City	\$27,840	\$18,710 - \$39,300
Detroit	\$33,120	\$23,880 - \$44,290
Grand Rapids	\$30,240	\$21,030 - \$39,710
Lansing	\$32,660	\$20,850 - \$45,070
Saginaw	\$29,690	\$19,300 - \$44,550

### **Related Occupations**

Bookkeepers, Receptionists, Personnel Clerks, Stenographers, Typists and Word Processors, Paralegals, Medical Assistants and Medical Record Technicians.

OfficeAssistantprofile.doc MD 11/2003 updated 9/07  
Sources: Occupational Outlook Handbook, MI Occupational Information System, and Delta College Catalog.

Career Center, D 132  
Bay City/Saginaw: (989) 686-9072  
Midland/Auburn: (989) 495-4000, Ext. 9072  
Frankenmuth, Birch Run, Reese & Vassar: (989) 758-3400, Ext. 9072  
<http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

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