Course Description

SEMESTER-IN-PRACTICE EXTERNSHIP
Enrollment limited. Open to 3L J.D. students and 2L J.D. students in the spring of their second year.

This externship allows third-year and qualified second-year law students to spend a semester working full-time under the direction of an approved attorney-supervisor in a government, non-profit, or corporate in-house law office located outside the St. Louis area. This externship offers students a supervised professional experience in a different geographic area while also allowing them to focus on a field of practice that builds on classroom experiences. Through observation, participation, and reflection, students will improve their legal knowledge and professional skills, making possible a more rapid and successful transition to practice in their post-graduate careers.

Students who are interested in this semester-long externship must complete an application. The application must explain how the placement fits into the student’s overall educational program and why a comparable learning opportunity is not available in the established curriculum. Where a placement office has not been previously approved, proposing and obtaining approval of that office is part of the student’s obligation. Ultimately, the placement site also has to accept the student as an extern and agree to certain conditions.

The School’s approval process for a placement office includes a review of the nature of the work the student would perform and of the attorney who would be the student’s field supervisor. The office must commit to the educational goals of the externship, to providing the student with relevant work assignments and on-going feedback, and to communicating throughout the placement with the faculty supervisor.

In addition to the work commitment at the placement office, students are required to participate in tutorials or other meetings (usually via electronic means) with the faculty supervisor during the placement, to submit reflective journal entries, and to provide regular reports of their hours and activities. At the end of the semester, the student must complete an evaluation of the placement. There is a mandatory pre-semester orientation.

Final selections will be based on the application, an interview, faculty references, and demonstrated academic abilities, as well as the suitability of the proposed placement site. Students must complete the School’s ethics requirement prior to beginning the program.

Students will receive one (1) hour of course credit for each 4 hours of work per week during the externship (11 credits total). Grading will be credit/no credit.

[Note: Credits from this course count toward the 19 maximum credits a J.D. student can take in non-law classes and in law classes without a classroom component (such as other externships but not clinics taught by law school faculty).]

[A student can earn the necessary additional credit to be full-time by doing a directed research project with a member of the faculty, taking a weekend mini-course or one in the Intersession, or taking a course at a law school near the placement location.]
Semester-in-Practice Externship

Frequently Asked Questions
Fall 2013 - Spring 2014

Q: What is the Semester-in-Practice Externship?
A: The new Semester-in-Practice (SIP) Externship is an innovative program that empowers second- and third-year law students to gain hands-on professional experience anywhere outside the St. Louis area. Through the externship program, students earn academic credit by spending a semester working full-time for a nonprofit, government, or in-house corporate law office in the location of their choice. Students work directly with an attorney/field supervisor at their placement site and will receive oversight at the law school from a faculty supervisor. Additionally, CSO has pledged to identify a suitable attorney (for each placement) to support the student’s networking efforts and to visit the placement once during the semester.

Q: How many credits can I earn in the SIP Externship?
A: For 14 weeks of full-time (40 hour per week) work, students earn 11 credits.

Q: How can I earn the extra credit needed to be a full-time student?
A: To be a full-time student in any fall or spring semester, you must be taking a minimum of 12 credits. A student can earn the necessary additional credit during the semester by doing a directed research project with a member of the faculty, taking a weekend mini-course or one in the Intersession, or taking a course at a law school near the placement location.

Q: What are the requirements for participating in the SIP Externship?
A: The externship is available to students during their third year or second-semester of their second year of law school, who have completed the first-year curriculum and taken a class from the ethics curriculum.

Q: What is the application process for the SIP Externship?
A: Students must complete the SIP Externship application and submit a resume, writing sample, and unofficial transcript. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, but for fullest consideration submit your application by April 8, 2013. The placement site must also be approved. More information on that process is provided below.

Q: How are students chosen for participation in the SIP Externship?
A: Enrollment in the course is limited. Final selections will be made based on the information provided in the application, faculty recommendation(s), writing sample, and demonstrated academic achievement.
Q: How do I obtain approval of my proposed placement site?

A: First, talk to your potential field supervisor and obtain tentative agreement to accept you as an extern student or identify a placement site that has an established externship program and application process. Alternatively, the School may be able to help identify a suitable placement, as it knows of some offices interested in hosting Washington University law students.

Second, complete the application. After completing the application, Professor Perry will contact you to set up a time to discuss the proposed placement site.

Third, if the student is selected for the externship, the proposed field supervisor at the placement site must then submit: 1) a description of the nature of the work the student would perform in the proposed externship; 2) the name and title of the attorney who would be the student’s immediate field supervisor; 3) a statement of commitment to the educational goals of the externship and to providing the student with appropriate legal assignments and on-going feedback on the student’s work; and 4) an agreement to discuss the student’s performance with the faculty supervisor both during and at the end of the semester, confirm the hours the student worked, and complete a written evaluation of the student’s performance at the end of the placement. A form will be provided to assist placement sites with this process, but completion of the form does not guarantee approval of the placement site or acceptance of the student into the externship.

Q: What are the requirements of the course besides working at the placement?

A: Students must participate in a mandatory orientation before the placement begins. During the semester, students must also participate in biweekly conferences with their faculty supervisor at the Law School; complete weekly reflective journal entries; and regularly report hours and activities. Virtual class meetings with other SIP students may also be required. At the end of the semester, the student must complete an evaluation of the placement.

Q: How is the course graded?

A: Credit/no credit.

Q: Can I get paid and take the SIP Externship?

A: No, the American Bar Association does not allow a school to award academic credit for participation in an externship program for which the student receives compensation. A student can obtain reimbursement from the placement site for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses related to the externship, but few placement sites will likely provide this monetary assistance.

Q: Who can I contact if I have further questions?

A: The director of the Semester-in-Practice Externship, Professor Mary Perry at mlperry@wulaw.wustl.edu.