An International Partnership

Washington University Law is launching a Transnational Law Program, a first-of-its-kind offering for students in both the United States and Europe. This program expands upon the law school’s ongoing partnership with Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Beginning in fall 2008, the new four-year combined degree program will be offered in association with four prestigious European universities: Utrecht, Queen’s University Belfast, University of Trento (Italy), and Catholic University of Portugal.

HE NEW TRANSNA-TIONAL LAW PROGRAM allows United States students to study at both Washington University Law and Utrecht University. Initially, these students will spend five semesters acquiring a solid foundation in United States law with an emphasis on international and transnational law from an American perspective. They will then undertake three semesters of study in Utrecht, acquiring an appreciation for European law and enhancing their understanding of international and transnational law. Faculty and students from the other three European partners will contribute to the strength of the program.

Upon completion, the United States graduates will earn a JD from Washington University and an LLM from Utrecht. European participants will pursue a complementary course of study; after earning their degree from Utrecht, they will enter the LLM Program at Washington University.

“There is a growing need for lawyers who understand both American and European law, can identify legal issues, and know reliable sources in the United States and throughout Europe,” says Kent D. Syverud, dean and the Ethan A.H. Shepley University Professor.

“Many American law schools are expanding their international curricula and study-abroad programs. Washington University Law and Utrecht University are now taking international legal education to the next level.”

(left) Utrecht University will host the European component of the Transnational Law Program.
Unlike traditional international dual degree programs, Washington University’s Transnational Law Program will be the first to offer a targeted, integrated curriculum developed with partner institutions. Other highlights include internships with United States and European corporations, law firms, courts, enforcement and administrative agencies, and nongovernmental organizations; ongoing faculty exchanges among the participating schools; and related courses co-taught by partner and Washington University faculty.

“We are excited to offer this unique new program that will benefit both our students and faculty, and students and faculty at our partner schools,” says Leila Nadya Sadat, the Henry H. Oberschelp Professor of Law, director of the Whitney R. Harris World Law Institute, and a member of the program’s faculty advisory committee. “The integrated aspect of the curriculum makes it unlike any other offering at our peer institutions. Both our American and European graduates will be prepared for rewarding professional lives in an increasingly globalized world.”

Dorsey D. Ellis, Jr., the William R. Orthwein Distinguished Professor of Law and chair of the faculty advisory committee, notes: “While program graduates will receive degrees in both Europe and the United States, their education will be more than the sum of these two systems. The Transnational Law Program’s focus reflects the new reality of a legal environment that transcends national boundaries.

“Financial and commercial transactions, for example, cross borders every minute of every day; environmental impacts know no national borders; and family law cases, as well as criminal prosecutions, more often have transnational dimensions. Firms, businesses, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations increasingly need lawyers trained in transnational systems.”

Charles Burson, retired executive vice president and general counsel at Monsanto Company and a member of the law school’s National Council, observes that the program will help train law students for the demands of international business.

“This bold program provides law students a platform from which to launch into the new reality of our global market. Participation in the program will open up new and exciting opportunities for students, to the benefit of their future employers and clients,” says Burson, who is of counsel at Bryan Cave LLP in St. Louis and is serving as a visiting professor at the law school.

Similarly, Thomas Lowther, JD ’62, National Council member and partner at the Stolar Partnership in St. Louis, notes: “In today’s shrinking world, any lawyer with a commercial practice will sooner or later encounter an international transaction. The power of this program is that it exposes students to legal systems that differ from ours, making them more alert to legal issues in cross-border transactions.”

Adriaan Dorresteijn, dean of the University College at Utrecht, notes that the new Transnational Law Program is a natural fit: “This unique program builds upon our very successful partnership with Washington University, including the Summer Institute for Global Justice and other faculty and student exchanges. The new four-year degree program addresses an obvious need for students and faculty at both universities.”

The highly popular summer institute was launched in 2005 by Sadat, Case Western Reserve University Professor Michael Scharf, and Utrecht Law School Professor Tom Zwart. Focusing on international justice, that program draws distinguished faculty and students from around the world.