While the law school is known for its ability to be at the forefront of meaningful curricular reform, a new required Negotiation course for first-year students during Intersession is among its latest additions. While successful negotiation is basic to almost every kind of law practice, only a few schools nationwide provide this kind of required introductory training.

The Negotiation course lays the foundation for upper-level courses that have negotiation components, like Pretrial, clinical courses, and advanced negotiation and mediation courses. “Our program recognizes that lawyers must be well versed in negotiation, problem-solving, collaboration, and creative dispute resolution to practice successfully in today’s world,” says Karen Tokarz, the Charles Nagel Professor of Public Interest Law & Public Service and director of the Negotiation and Dispute Resolution (NDR) Program.

C.J. Larkin, senior lecturer in law and the NDR Program’s administrative director, was one of five faculty members, including Tokarz and Dean Syverud, who taught the first-year Negotiation course in January 2012. “Law is a highly experiential profession,” she observes. “Introducing the students to negotiation skills helps to anchor all that they are learning in their other classes, connects them to the real practice of law, and demonstrates the critical importance of focusing on their professional skills and judgment throughout their law school career.”

Law student Noah Mullin observes: “I believe the course will make me a more well-rounded attorney. It gave me a new skill-set that will allow me to more effectively advocate for my clients.”

For upper-class students, Intersession brings in top attorneys from around the world to teach short courses providing intensive study in topics pertinent to students’ interests and career goals. Bankruptcy, housing, intellectual property, migration and citizenship, property, and tax law are among many subjects these courses explore in depth. The winning combination of a traditional legal education with experiential and targeted courses ensures that students graduate with the right skills.

Climate of Failing Law Schools

All these efforts take place within a broader context of upheaval in legal education, which Brian Z. Tamanaha, the William Gardiner Hammond Professor of Law, has laid out with unflinching honesty in his latest book, Failing Law Schools.

Tamanaha, a renowned jurisprudence scholar and an expert on law and society, details the realities of the world facing new law school graduates today, after the 2008 economic collapse sent shockwaves of lawyer layoffs through firms. (Indeed, not all the blame can be placed on the recession; he cites one study showing that law firm employment plateaued in 2004, and in the four years following that, the profession shed 20,000 jobs.) Tamanaha notes that according to the National Association for Law Placement, only 64 percent of 2010 law graduates had full-time law jobs, and starting salaries had dropped 20 percent. In a nation with about 20,000 law jobs available each year, law schools are producing more than twice that many graduates, he says. Still, the American Bar Association continues to accredit new law schools—10 of them since 2006, he observes.

For newly minted lawyers, the tough employment market is compounded by the debt with which most graduates leave law school. For most young lawyers, finding good, remunerative positions is not just a matter of personal and professional fulfillment, but of financial necessity.

Tamanaha hopes his book will provoke much-needed soul-searching among law faculties and law school administrators. But law students and recent graduates should find in it an affirmation of their concerns and the reassurance that a leading scholar is paying attention, arguing their case, and looking for creative solutions.

In addition to its innovative approaches to student preparation and job placement, the law school is taking to heart the serious issues being confronted by law schools nationally. Facing the economic climate head on, the school has worked to become more efficient, while reducing budgets and yet still offering top-tier programming. Among the strategies to address these tough issues in the delivery of legal education, the school has made concerted efforts to shrink the size of the incoming first-year class over the last two years. Additionally
the school launched a scholarship initiative aimed at increasing philanthropic support for financial aid.

Among his leadership roles to address these issues nationally, Dean Syverud has been serving as chair of the Board of Directors of Access Group, a student loan originator and service owned by accredited law schools. The group is transitioning to a foundation, while seeking innovative solutions related to student debt and loan access.

New Legal Environment

The new legal environment that Professor Tamanaha also describes in his book is the focus of a conference on “The Law School in the New Legal Environment” planned for the law school’s Alumni Weekend in October 2012. The Becker Symposium, named in honor of veteran law Professor David M. Becker, will feature speakers, including current and retired state supreme court justices, respected academics from across the country, and the presidents of the Association of American Law Schools and the Law School Admission Council (see page 53).

The symposium will examine issues such as affordability and access to legal education, the future of law faculty, preparation for practice, placement, and the possibilities for online legal education and how it will change traditional law schools.

Dean Syverud will bring this perspective to bear beyond the campus in his new role as chair of the Council of the ABA’s Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. The council, under the authority of the U.S. Department of Education, oversees national law school standards and policies. It also manages the accreditation process for new law schools and reaccreditation for the nation’s 202 approved law schools.

“There are a great many people who care deeply about American legal education,” Syverud observes. “I look forward to working with everyone dedicated to improving legal education in America and thus to helping improve the quality of justice obtained by all.”

(opposite) Law faculty, students, alumni, and practicing professionals are key stakeholders in the law school’s strategies for addressing the new legal environment.

Faculty Leaders

LAW FACULTY MEMBERS
ENGAGE in numerous leadership roles with national organizations. Below is a sampling of recent affiliations.

Annette Appell, Professor of Law and Co-Director, Civil Justice Clinic
• Member, Board of Directors, National Coalition for Child Protection Reform
• Member, National Advisory Board for the Family Defense Center
• Past President, Clinical Legal Education Association

Susan Appleton, Lemma Barkeloo & Phoebe Couzins Professor of Law
• Member, American Law Institute (ALI) and Secretary, ALI Council
• Member, Board of Directors, American Bar Foundation

Kathleen Clark, Professor of Law
• Former Special Counsel, Attorney General of the District of Columbia
• Associate Reporter, American Law Institute’s Principles of Government Ethics

Marion Crain, Vice Provost, Wiley B. Rutledge Professor of Law, and Director, Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Work & Social Capital
• Chair, Labor Law Group

Gerrit De Geest, Professor of Law and Director, Center for Law, Innovation & Economic Growth
• Advisory Board Member and Past President, European Association of Law and Economics

Rebecca Dresser, Daniel Noyes Kirby Professor of Law and Professor of Ethics in Medicine
• Member, Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee, National Institutes of Health

Michael Greenfield, George Alexander Madill Professor of Contracts & Commercial Law
• Fellow, American College of Consumer Financial Services Lawyers (ACCFSL) and Member, ACCFSL Board of Regents

Rebecca Hollander-Blumoff, Professor of Law
• Member, Executive Committee, Association of American Law Schools Section on Civil Procedure

Peter Joy, Henry Hitchcock Professor of Law and Director, Criminal Justice Clinic
• Member, Accreditation Committee, ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
• Member and Past Chair, Executive Committee, Association of American Law Schools (AALS) Professional Responsibility Section
• Member and Former Chair, AALS Section on Clinical Legal Education
• Board Member, Society of American Law Teachers
• Past President, Clinical Legal Education Association

Pauline Kim, Charles Nagel Distinguished Professor of Constitutional Law and Political Science
• Advisor, American Law Institute’s Restatement of Employment Law

Robert Kuehn, Associate Dean for Clinical Education; Professor of Law; and Co-Director, Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic
• Past President, Clinical Legal Education Association
• Member, Association of American Law Schools Section on Clinical Education and Past Member, section’s Executive Committee

David Law, Professor of Law and Professor of Political Science
• Member, Executive Committee, Law and Courts Section, American Political Science Association

Janet Laybold, Associate Dean of Admissions, Career Services, and Student Services and Lecturer in Law
• Member, Board of Trustees, Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and Former Member, LSAC Nominating Committee
• Trustee Liaison, LSAC Audit Committee and Investment Policy Oversight Group and Trustee Liaison, LSAC Test Development and Research Committee

Stephen Legomsky, John S. Lehmann University Professor
• On leave serving as Chief Counsel, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
• Founder and Past Chair, Association of American Law Schools Immigration Law Section

Ronald Levin, William R. Orthwein Distinguished Professor of Law
• Public Member, Administrative Conference of the United States