

Alumni Mentors -- Health Law Semester in Washington D.C.

Since health care law is a legal subspecialty, recent law school graduates must have the right combination of education and experience to secure employment in the field. As the premier health law program in the country, the Center for Health Law Studies at Saint Louis University School of Law recognizes that educational experiences in health law must exist both in and out of the classroom. Building on our successful health law externship program in St. Louis, the Center has established its *Health Law Semester in Washington D.C.*

The practice of health care law is complex and fast paced. The health care industry is highly regulated, with substantial regulation occurring at the federal level. In Washington D.C. law students will clerk in a health-related federal agency on a nearly full time basis for an entire semester. Students will gain significant practical experience working with complex health care regulations. Additionally, they will begin building a network of contacts within the federal government and in Washington D.C. in particular.

Students participating in the Program are eligible to earn 12 to 14 credits through a combination of experiential and course work. They will work 30, 33, or 36 hours per week for a full semester at an assigned externship placement to earn 10, 11 or 12 credits, respectively. Additionally, each student will enroll in a complementary 2-credit course offering instruction on law practice within an agency, addressing both professional responsibility issues that arise in agency practice and advanced topics in administrative law.

Offered annually during spring semester, this Program is available to students enrolled in the health law certificate program, health law dual degree program or in the health law LLM program. Additionally, each student is required to have successfully completed Administrative Law, Health Care Law, and Professional Responsibility prior to his or her semester in Washington D.C.

The *Health Law Semester in D.C.* Program relies on licensed practitioners employed at the federal agencies where students are placed to act as the supervising attorneys. The supervising attorney will oversee the student's work, assuring that it serves both the educational purpose of the placement and the agency's needs. The supervising attorney will also train the student as needed, address issues of professional responsibility that might arise in the course of the student's work, and communicate with the Center about the student's performance. In addition to placement supervising attorneys, the Program relies on an adjunct professor based in Washington DC with suitable experience and teaching ability to lead the weekly two- credit companion course.

Finally, the *Health Law Semester in D.C.* Program provides an additional layer of professional and career support by matching each student in the Program with a D.C.-based mentor. Mentors are selected from SLU Law alumni working in Washington D.C. The placement supervising attorneys and adjunct professor are not be eligible to also act as any student's mentor. An attorney-mentor will be expected to meet with her assigned student face-to-face several times throughout the semester, to communicate regularly with the student, and to provide a means by which the student can contact the mentor directly and easily. The mentor provides an invaluable service to the Program by ensuring students are having a positive experience; by alerting the Center to challenges a student may be having; and, by providing career and professional guidance to students as they work in a professional environment and near the completion of their formal legal training.

For more information about the Center for Health Law Studies and the Health Law Semester in D.C., contact Semester in DC Program Director Amy Sanders at amy.sanders@slu.edu or (314) 977-8176.