FIELD PLACEMENT PROGRAMS

Introduction

UMass-Law offers a wide variety of Field Placements and other opportunities for students to enhance their practical understanding of what it means to be a lawyer. We also offer judicial internships, credits for volunteering a few hours a week in law offices concentrating in areas reflecting a subject area being studied in a class, simulation classes in which students hone identified legal skills, and trial advocacy classes. These offerings, described in detail below, provide an excellent way for students to develop professionally by acting as lawyers while being supervised by professors.

Field Placement Program - 3 or 4 credits, enrollment limited to 12; (Law 639)

- Graded High Pass/Pass/Fail
- May be taken twice (details below)
- Pre or co-requisites: Legal Ethics (Law 525); completion of 30 credit hours (60 credit hours are required for Rule 3:03 certification, details below); minimum GPA 3.0 (3.3 for Judicial Placements)

To get a sense of a lawyer’s work, including preparing cases, interviewing and counseling, trying or settling cases, students may enroll in placements in a public or private law office, or a judicial chamber. Students will work under the supervision of a practicing attorney or judge, gaining practical skills in a real-world setting. For the 3-credit option, students must spend at least 130 hours during the semester at the placement; for the 4-credit option, they will be there 170 hours. A weekly seminar permits students to discuss their experiences (while maintaining client confidentiality) and focus on various ethical issues encountered in practice. Class discussions may also encompass setting up a law office, the theory and practice of legal skills such as interviewing, counseling, and professionalism.

Judicial Placements: Students applying for judicial placements must submit a writing sample and, on occasion, letters of recommendation. In these placements, in addition to participating in the Field Placement class, students observe a judge in chambers and court, conduct research, and may have an opportunity to work on judicial opinions.

Advanced Field Placement Program: Students taking the Field Placement Program for a second semester attend some classes and write journal entries. Additional assignments will be determined by the professor teaching the class.

For additional information please contact Crystal Desirey, Clinical Programs Coordinator at cdesirey@umassd.edu.
3:03 Certification: For students working in either non-profit organizations or governmental offices requiring them to appear before the courts of the Commonwealth, Supreme Judicial Court Rule 3:03 approval may be available. Please see the professor to coordinate the application which can be found at http://www.sjccountyclerk.com/pdf/Rule303StudentPractitionerForm.pdf.

Coordinated Field Placement - (Law 599) may be taken for 1 or 2 credits; Graded: Pass/Fail Co-requisite: Enrollment in subject-matter course related to placement; completion of 30 credit hours Permission of instructor required.

A student not enrolled in a clinic or field placement may work with a lawyer who practices in a substantive area covered in a course in which the student is presently enrolled. For the 1-credit option, the student will be at the law office 5 hours per week during the semester (70 hours per semester); for the 2-credit option, the hourly requirement is 10 hours per week during the semester (140 hours per semester). The doctrinal professor and student meet at least three times during the semester to discuss issues of law arising in the placement. Students will submit to their professor journal entries in advance of each meeting as well as weekly time logs. This opportunity is great for students who have already taken the Field Placement Program, one of the clinical offerings, or who are unable to take clinics but would like to acquire real-life law office experience while still in law school. There is no limit to the number of times a student may enroll in this credit option, but participation is contingent on the availability of both an appropriate placement and agreement of the course professor. Due to the limited time spent in the law office, this “co-op” is not approved for Supreme Judicial Court Rule 3:03.

Participation in either of these opportunities requires submission of an application form to the LEC for approval of Professor. Students are allowed to enroll in one clinic or one field placement per semester.