

More Law Schools Offer Practical Legal Training

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Here's a very interesting article about some long-needed changes in established law school programs, focusing on practical training and clinical work. The article is a bit long, but it's worth looking at.

Read the whole article at [LawJobs.com](#)...

Reality's Knocking as Law Schools Provide More Practical Training

by Karen Sloan

Washington and Lee University School of Law has thrown out its traditional third-year curriculum and replaced it with a series of legal simulations meant to prepare students to practice law in the real world.

First-year students at Duke Law School and the new University of California, Irvine School of Law will take a yearlong course examining different legal careers and the ethical and professional issues associated with those career tracks.

A new LL.M. program at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Law is designed to give recent law school graduates the skills their predecessors would have developed as starting law firm associates.

The movement to incorporate practical skills into legal education isn't new, but legal educators and researchers report that the floundering economy is increasing incentives for law schools to revamp their curricula to prepare students for the realities of the legal profession.

"A lot of the changes are in response to the marketplace," said David Van Zandt, dean of Northwestern University School of Law. "Students are concerned about getting jobs, and everybody wants to be relevant."

Graduates face stiff competition for law firm positions, and clients are balking at footing the bill to train new attorneys. Consequently, law school leaders consider it more important than ever to send students into the profession armed with practical skills, not just extensive knowledge of case law and legal theory. More law schools are modifying coursework and adding practical classes to help students develop the skills past graduates have had the luxury of learning on the job. In that vein, a growing number of law schools are emphasizing teamwork, leadership, professional judgment and the ability to view issues from the clients' perspective.

"I think we are at a moment of historical change across the landscape of legal education," said Washington and Lee Dean Rodney A. Smolla. "When we look back at this period in five to 10 years, we will mark it as the time when the whole mission of law schools made a fundamental turn."

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