



## The Future of Legal Education is Here

### Anthony Niedwiecki takes the reins of John Marshall Law School's Experiential Learning Program

**A**cross the United States, legal education is in transition with the focus shifting towards skills-based training for future attorneys. Gone are the days when new lawyers would spend their first weeks or months on the job in training.

Employers are demanding new hires who can draft complaints and legal memoranda, who can assist in discovery, who can submit documents to the court and who use modern legal technology.

A legal education based solely on theory or history can't meet those employer needs, and the move towards more experiential learning is developing. The trend is nothing new at The John Marshall Law School, where hands-on learning has long been part of the culture.

As other law schools are beginning to catch up, John Marshall is going even further and making experiential learning a part of the curriculum. And, to demonstrate the importance of hands-on learning, Dean John E. Corkery has recently named Professor Anthony Niedwiecki associate dean for Skills, Experiential Learning and Assessment.

Beginning in Fall 2013, incoming students are required to complete a three-credit-hour course during the last half of law school that puts them to work in a clinical setting or an externship.

#### **Working with clients**

There has always been a wealth of opportunity for John Marshall students to gain hands-on experience in a variety of options like the Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic or the Veterans Legal Support Center & Clinic, to name just a few. But this is the first time the law school will require that every student perform legal work with real clients before they graduate. This step puts John Marshall in an exclusive group of law schools that not only provide students with practical experience but require it as a condition of graduation.

Niedwiecki, who continues as director of the school's Lawyering Skills Program, is quick to note the link between the program's success and efforts to make John Marshall graduates ready to get down to work on the first day of their first legal job.

"There's always been a strong emphasis on being practice-ready and the faculty has realized how important good writing is to being a good lawyer," Niedwiecki said.

In fact, John Marshall students take four semesters of Lawyering Skills where most other schools offer just two semesters.

#### **Students are 'great writers'**

"I constantly hear from employers that our students are always prepared, they're great writers," Niedwiecki said. "They're always able to do things that students from other law schools cannot do."

During Niedwiecki's tenure as head of the school's Lawyering Skills Program, the John Marshall program jumped to No. 2 in the *U.S. News and World Report Best Graduate Schools* rankings.

John Marshall already offers a host of hands-on training experiences to its students, but it will be expanding the offerings to accommodate all students. Niedwiecki expects there will be more opportunities for students to work with underserved communities, which fits within John Marshall's mission to provide legal services to those who can't afford a lawyer.

"We are acting on the trends we see in the marketplace and stepping forward to give our students the advantage," Niedwiecki said. "John Marshall students have always received instruction in the theory and the practice of law. We are taking that one step beyond by giving all of our students hands-on experience before they graduate."

  
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JOHN MARSHALL LAW SCHOOL