

PLA 4941 LEGAL STUDIES INTERNSHIP

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Course Objectives

The Legal Studies Internship is a cooperative effort between the Legal Studies Program at the University of West Florida and a public or private law-related office. The purpose of the Internship is to give students the opportunity to apply their education to actual work situations. The student intern works under the overall supervision of a licensed attorney in a traditional paralegal internship or other legal professional in a non-traditional paralegal internship.

Specifically, the student will have the opportunity to:

- a. Describe, analyze, and evaluate the organizational structure of the cooperating law office.
- b. Identify the role and responsibilities of the paralegal/legal assistant within the cooperating law office.
- c. Clarify career goals and assess readiness to enter a chosen profession.
- d. Develop a mature approach to establishing an effective rapport with everyone in the cooperating law office, including lawyers, other legal assistants, law clerks, legal secretaries, other legal support staff, and clients.
- f. Integrate the theoretical concepts and knowledge learned in the classroom with real-world employment situations under the direct supervision of a practicing attorney.
- g. Gain confidence in ability as a legal assistant through satisfactory performance of tasks assigned by the placement site supervisor.
- h. Identify, develop, and create solutions to work-related problems.
- i. Gain practical on-the-job experience in a professional legal setting.
- j. Gain work-related references and networking opportunities that will enhance marketability as a legal professional.
- k. Encourage attorneys to delegate work and will educate the attorneys as to the skills legal assistants possess.
- l. Demonstrate to attorneys the economic value of employing legal assistants.

There is an Internship Notebook available for review in the department office; it includes internship opportunities. The Internship Coordinator will be glad to investigate other placement possibilities with you based on your career goals.

Requirements - Student Intern

Qualifications - Students must have 1) the permission of the Intern Coordinator to enroll; 2) a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in the Legal Studies major and a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 as calculated by UWF; and, 3) successfully completed CCJ 3060-Ethics and Justice System, PLA 4263-Evidence, PLA 4204-Civil Procedure and PLA 4103-Legal Research and Writing. There are also several factors considered by the Intern Coordinator in determining whether a student qualifies for a particular internship opportunity. Those factors include, but are not limited to: 1) the number and type law-related courses completed before the semester the internship is scheduled; and 2) the nature of the internship.

Minimum Clock Hours/Maximum Academic Credits - The students must intern a minimum of 200 hours during the semester for three credit hours, 134 hours for two credit hours, or 67 hours for one credit hour. The participating office and the intern agree on a work schedule that maximizes the opportunity to benefit the office and the intern. A student may earn up to, but no more than, six semester hours in internships toward a bachelor's degree.

Process - Students interested in an internship should meet with the Internship Coordinator approximately three months prior to the beginning of the semester the internship is to be scheduled. During the semester prior to the internship, the Intern Coordinator will identify a potential placement site for the student. No intern may serve in an internship placement prior to receiving approval of the Internship Coordinator and completion of course registration.

Interview - The student will immediately contact the internship site supervising attorney to arrange for an initial interview. At the beginning of this meeting, the student should provide the internship site supervising attorney with 1) a copy of this syllabus; 2) your résumé; 3) a proposed work schedule which ensures that the minimum number of hours can easily be completed within the semester; and 4) the internship evaluation form. During this meeting, the student should set up a definite work schedule, discuss the attorney's practice, and develop an understanding of the attorney's expectations and how the attorney views the student's role as an intern.

Résumé - The student must prepare a résumé for the participating office and the Intern Coordinator prior to the first meeting with the legal professional. The UWF Career Center staff can provide guidance, models and assistance with your resume.

Attire - The student intern is reminded that the internship office is a professional environment in which appropriate attire is required. The student should dress in accord with the professional expectations of the organization.

Conduct and Grooming - Generally, a formal demeanor toward personnel in the law office and toward clients is required. Many lawyers are meticulous about a clean appearance and odors. Chewing gum is totally inappropriate. Punctuality and attentiveness are essential. The student is expected to notify the placement site supervisor immediately if absence from work is necessary

and note the absence on the daily log sheet. NOTE: Absences should occur only in extreme emergencies. If an intern is absent, the time must be made up. The intern agrees to comply with policies of the placement site. The intern is expected to represent the UWF Legal Studies Program in a professional and responsible manner. The intern must know and practice the highest ethical standards appropriate to the legal profession. Please review the Florida Rules of Professional Conduct prior to commencing the internship.

Portfolio – At the end of the semester you will turn in a portfolio. The portfolio you complete is to contain the following:

A cover page with your name, agency name, and term of internship (e.g., Fall 2011)

A table of contents identifying the documents included

Résumé

Placement Contract

Your evaluation of the agency

The agency's evaluation of you

Completed daily log sheets

Completed daily journal entries

Paper

Any additional information, forms, projects, etc., that you want to include or that you believe are relevant to your internship experiences (e.g., the results of a project you worked on or a copy of a new brochure you completed). If you would like, please provide a photo of you at your worksite, either by yourself or with your supervisor, for use in recruiting students. The student intern should attach samples of memoranda or computer generated documents, and other material prepared by the student during the internship. The student intern is reminded about the need for confidentiality and must clear inclusion of documents with the placement supervisor. Arrangements should be made to delete any identifying information from the documents.

It is expected that you will prepare a professional portfolio and will take pride in presenting documentation of your internship experiences. **Please do not use plastic covers, only binder clips.**

The portfolio is turned in to Kimberly Crow (85/133B) no later than the last day of deadweek.

Daily Log - The student intern is required to keep a daily log similar to standard time sheets so that there is a basis for the paper that is required for the course. The daily log should be written neatly in ink or prepared on a word processor. The daily log will be turned in at the end of the internship along with the intern's paper. The daily log includes the following information:

Date: the date the task was performed;

Time: the number of hours, or fraction of hours, spent on the specific task; and

Task: a brief description of the assignment and how it was accomplished.

Brief closing: a summary of what was learned from this task.

Journal - Daily journal entries detailing the assignments, projects, and goals/objectives for the day are required. The journal entries should be written daily immediately following the daily placement.

Paper - The paper that is required at the end of the course is a discussion of the tasks performed during the internship. The purpose of the paper is to increase your awareness and command of material presented during your courses in the UWF Legal Studies Program, its relevant application in actual law office situations and the benefits gained from the internship experience. This might include the types of research tools utilized, the type of computer software used, and what was learned from attending court proceedings, depositions or other related activities. The paper is to be typed, double-spaced and of a length commensurate with a full discussion of the student intern's experience in the participating office. The paper should have a cover page showing the 1) student's name, address, telephone number, e-mail address; 2) placement site supervisor's name, firm/placement name, address, telephone number, e-mail address; 3) dates of internship. The paper can also include:

- a. Describe skills used and acquired
- b. Describe the law firm or practice, including descriptions of the personnel and the student's relationship to other personnel in the office, including the supervising attorney.
- c. Evaluate the benefit derived from the assignments in terms of the intern's personal goals. Compare the knowledge and skills actually gained with the knowledge and skills that had been expected. Describe personal performance on different tasks, referencing specific work produced and forms used. Describe any problems that arose while performing assigned tasks.
- d. Describe paralegal billing procedures and minimum billing expectations/requirements.
- e. Discuss the benefits provided to the placement site as a result of the internship program and how these benefits might relate to future employment opportunities.
- f. Evaluate and summarize the internship experience including general opinions, observations, complaints, etc. Address the impact of the internship on career orientation, skills acquisition, human relations, and job improvement.
- g. Assess how the UWF Legal Studies Program prepared the student for the experience and how it might offer better preparation.
- h. Advice that you would give future interns about the internship experience
- i. Include any insights, comments, and/or recommendations.

Transportation - The intern is responsible for transportation to and from the internship placement site.

During the Semester - The student is required to contact the Intern Coordinator regularly for conferences (at least once each month) so that progress and/or difficulties may be confronted in a professional and timely manner. This can be done by telephone, in person, or by e-mail. The coordinator is always available to the student and to the participating office to discuss problems

or other matters, as the purpose of the internship is to benefit both the student intern and the participating office. The intern must notify the Internship Coordinator immediately in the event of termination of the internship or of any significant changes in major responsibilities or learning objectives.

Concluding the Internship - The student intern is required to submit to the Internship Coordinator the internship portfolio by 4:30 p.m. on the Friday *before* Final Exam Week begins.

Grading - The final grade for the internship is based on the paper, daily logs, attached material, résumé, and the evaluation done by the supervising legal professional. The grade will be an “S” (satisfactory) or a “U” (unsatisfactory).

Responsibilities - Placement Site/Supervisor

Goals - The goal of the internship is to provide the intern with meaningful law-related knowledge and exposure. It is recommended to the participating office that an underlying task be given to the student intern so that the student intern will have productive work to do between assignments. The task might include closing files, organizing a complicated file, or a research project. For each task, some initial explanation, directions and expectations should be provided including establishing a timetable for completion of each task. The participating office is encouraged to allow the student intern to observe court proceedings, depositions, and other related activities where possible.

Résumé - A résumé for the student intern is provided to the legal professional before the internship begins. It includes a summary of relevant course work completed at the University of West Florida, as well as any work experience. The résumé also includes a statement of the intern's career goals.

Office Policies - The intern should be provided with a copy of any office policies as soon as possible after commencement of the internship. Each placement site should have policies in place that address the status of the intern and the rights and responsibilities of such a position. A suggested list of policy considerations is attached.

Ethics - A licensed attorney must be named to take primary responsibility for supervision of the intern per Fla. Rules of Professional Conduct 4-5.3. Ethical issues in the legal profession are integrated throughout the Legal Studies curriculum, particularly in the Paralegal and the Legal Professions course and the Litigation course. The Intern Coordinator discusses attorney-client privilege and confidentiality with the student, but it is suggested that this be reviewed in the office.

Evaluation - The student intern will give An Evaluation Form to the supervising attorney. The supervising attorney should evaluate the intern's performance and discuss the evaluation with the intern at the end of the academic term. The supervising attorney must send the Form to the Intern Coordinator at the completion of the internship. The student intern will also evaluate the

Participation by the office, including the staff, is most appreciated, as students gain valuable experience that complements their academic work. Please feel free to contact the Intern Coordinator for further information or assistance.

Portions of this internship syllabus were adapted from Nemeth, Charles P., Paralegal Internship Manual, Pearson Publications Company, 1995; Post, Ruth-Ellen, Paralegal Internships: Finding, Managing, and Transitioning Your Career, West Legal Studies, 1999;

WORKING WITH STUDENT INTERNS - POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Below is a list of items to be considered before agreeing to supervise an intern in your office.

The placement site should address each of these items and written policies should be provided to the intern upon commencement of the internship.

General Expectations

- proper attire

- telephone greeting

- other conduct

Office Holidays/Vacations

Specific Work Area

Availability of Equipment/Resources

- computer network, Westlaw, printer, typewriter, fax machine, copier, other

Training on Use of Equipment

Secretarial Support

Reimbursement

- out-of-pocket expenses, mileage for travel, etc.

Restrictions on Use of Areas

- conference room, law library, other areas

Meetings with Supervising Attorney

Name of Day-to-Day Supervisor

Who Determines Priority Among Competing Assignments?

Additional Sources of Advice and Assistance

- sample forms/documents, computer, other equipment, general guidance, other matters

Who is Responsible for Evaluation of Intern?

Who will Participate in Evaluation of Intern?

Backup Attorneys for Emergency Situations