

Media Relations

February 5, 2015

First Ever Evaluation of UNH Law's Daniel Webster Scholars Program Proves Its Graduates Are "Ahead of the Curve"

DENVER, CO – In recent years, legal employers and members of the profession have called on law schools to educate lawyers who are better prepared to practice law and the University of New Hampshire School of Law listened. Now, the school educates law students who are outperforming their colleagues in the field who have been licensed to practice law for up to two years, according to a study conducted by the *Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers Initiative* of IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver.

"The legal profession is consistent in its call for new lawyers who can hit the ground running," said Alli Gerkman, director of Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers and co-author of the report. "Our findings show that this program delivers that. And we believe that the program's success is replicable at other law schools on both grand and small scales."

The Daniel Webster Scholar Honors Program (DWS) at UNH Law is a two-year program that immerses law students in experience-based learning settings complemented by ongoing assessment and feedback. The program culminates in a review of each student by a New Hampshire bar examiner that replaces the two-day bar examination.

"We know this program makes a difference," said Jordan Budd, interim dean of UNH Law. "These students receive two years of intensive, hands-on training that prepares them to practice law effectively from day one, and we know it because they are securing great jobs."

"I am excited to see the program's success recognized by an independent organization," added John Garvey, founding director of the program. "The school's innovative tradition combined with the full cooperation and assistance of the New Hampshire bench and bar has made it possible."

"Along with the opportunity to get hands-on experience practicing law, the DWS program taught us to be good listeners and to value self-reflection," says James O'Shaughnessy, who graduated from the program in 2010. "The program taught me to always ask: am I doing the best job that I can for my client? Even beyond the practice skills, this type of thinking has become a habit and has made me a better lawyer."

The findings of the *Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers* study are published in *Ahead of the Curve: Turning Law Students into Lawyers*. The report proposes recommendations for law schools that want to replicate the success of the University of New Hampshire's program, including integration of formative, ongoing assessment in a practice-based context and building strong collaborations among the bench, the bar, and the school.

"Collaboration was key. This is a state that has fully embraced the idea that legal educators and the legal profession must work together toward meaningful improvements in legal education," Gerkman said. "We hope this report sparks interest in further collaboration between these groups to ensure a system of legal education that trains new lawyers to the highest standards of competence, professionalism, and readiness for practice."

The report can be found here:

http://educatingtomorrowlawyers.du.edu/images/wygwam/pdf_resources/Ahead_of_the_Curve_Turning_Law_Students_into_Lawyers.pdf

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