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John Ralston's Post

Bar Prep at RWU: The Future is Here!

Posted by John Ralston on 02/17/2015 at 10:36 AM

In recent years, our administration and faculty have worked hard to enhance the school's practical and experiential learning opportunities in an effort to help our students become *practice ready* by graduation. We now have six clinical externships, three in-house clinics, and even a Semester in Practice Program, which allows students to immerse themselves in a semester-long work experience during the second or third year of school.

These changes have required flexibility by all members of the school's faculty and staff, including those of us in the **Academic Success Department**. Specifically, we have had to find ways to improve our ability to support students who now spend much of their time away from campus. For our Bar Review Program, this has meant making changes to the way we deliver three core services: the Applied Legal Reasoning Course; Bar Readiness Meetings; and post-graduation Bar Exam Workshops.



Applied Legal Reasoning is a two-semester, for-credit bar prep course for 3Ls. We encourage all students who want to get an early start on their bar exam studies to take the course. To accommodate students enrolled in clinics and externships, this semester we began offering an evening section of the course in our Providence facility on Wednesdays. There are currently 26 students enrolled in that section, most of whom come to class directly from externships or

internships in Providence and appreciate the convenience of having class near their offices at a time that doesn't conflict with their work schedules.

We also have another evening section of the course this semester on Thursdays, designed to accommodate our students participating in the Semester in Practice Program. This section has 14 students, two of whom are in the program (one is located in Washington, D.C., and the other is in New Jersey). Using video conferencing software and new hardware installed in Room 256, these students are able to fully participate in class discussions, ask questions, view lecture slides, and take exams.

Even when our 3L students are on campus, their schedules are packed with classes, making it difficult for them to attend office appointments. We have worked hard to ensure that we are accessible to these students by offering them the ability to connect with us by phone or video chat. This is how many 3Ls have opted to conduct their **Bar Readiness meetings**, during which we discuss their plans for the bar exam, including issues relating to their bar applications, study strategies, and time management techniques.

Finally, more and more of our graduates have decided to leave the Bristol area to study for the bar exam, which is why all of our **Bar Exam Workshops** are now available online through a live video feed. So, whether our graduates decide to study for the bar exam in Newport, R.I., or Newport Beach, Calif., they are all able to fully participate in these workshops. These sessions are also recorded for graduates who are unable to attend the live sessions.

Our school is now in its 21st year, and like other millennials, it has seen radical shifts in the landscapes of technology and education during its lifetime. With these changes come exciting opportunities for our students, staff, and faculty. In the Academic Success Department, these changes are always in the forefront of our minds, and we will continue to incorporate new strategies to support our students throughout their three years at RWU and beyond.