Abstract

It is an accepted fact among legal practitioners that lawyers fresh from law school have few, if any, of the skills needed to carry out the practice of law. Decades ago this dilemma was remedied by law firms taking in large swaths of first year associates and subjugating them to robust training programs over the course of one to three years. Those days are now a distant memory. With clients’ unwilling to pay for junior associate work, and an ever increasing number of lawyers graduating to a decreasing number of job openings, recent graduates of law schools are left without the resources necessary to develop the skills they need to be successful in their careers. The IP-Colab seeks reduce, if not eliminate, that problem.

The IP-Colab represents an opportunity for law students to engage in skills based training, while at the same time, providing services for Northeastern University’s Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. By simulating a law firm environment, the IP-Colab provides students with the same or similar assignments, interactions, and instructions that a first year associate would receive. As compared to other law students, Students who complete the IP-Colab have greater confidence in their legal abilities and more practical training in common issues facing IP counsel. The IP-Colab is the embodiment of experiential learning and represents an opportunity to solve a one of the many problems facing young lawyers.

Method

By using a combination of skill development exercises and genuine client interaction, the IP-Colab engages and trains student members to identify potential intellectual property issues and apply legal research skills to develop courses of action that reduce or eliminate clients’ concerns. Student members of the IP-Colab receive six hours a week of topic specific practical training on different matters facing clients. These training sessions include: drafting and reviewing non-disclosure agreements to aid in obtaining trade secret protection, analyzing the eligibility of a name for trademark protection, and identifying the owner(s) of a potentially patent eligible innovation to determine who may, or may not, have rights in the work.

Each exercise is derived from an actual client issue brought to the IP-Colab and allows student members to practice applying the legal analysis required to solve the issue, before developing the final work product for the client.

Further, and unique in the study of law, the IP-Colab directly tasks student members with sourcing, recruiting, and developing their own clients. Student members must seek out members of Northeastern’s Innovation Ecosystem, find individuals who potentially have issues or concerns with their intellectual property and present those prospective clients to the other members of the IP-Colab.

Every client matter is staffed by at least one student member of the IP-Co-lab, and every project undertaken is completed.

Conclusion

The IP-Colab produces Practice Ready graduates who’ve completed at a minimum 4 work products for entrepreneurs, start-ups, or other on-campus groups. Student members average 105 billable hours over 11 weeks, 72 of which can be directly traced to educating and empowering clients to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Student members report increased confidence in their legal abilities, reduced levels of stress when contacting clients, and a profoundly deeper understanding of intellectual property law than what was gained solely from attending doctrinal courses.

Further, while there is still far too little data to make a definitive statement in comparison to a peer group, graduates of the IP-Co-lab have experienced remarkable success in the job market after the completion of their degrees.

References

For more information please visit: https://www.northeastern.edu/law/experience/clinics/ip.html