



Students know all too well the demands of law school—the long hours, the deadlines, the stress. But will they be prepared for the professional world? Texas law schools have put into place transition-to-practice programs for students that make the move into the working world easier—and more beneficial. The *Texas Bar Journal* recently reached out to those institutions to learn more about their initiatives. Here is a snapshot of what they are doing to help the next generation of lawyers.

BAYLOR LAW SCHOOL

ANGELA CRUSETURNER, ASSISTANT DEAN OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The transition to legal practice begins in the first year during orientation at Baylor Law School. This transition is a three-year process of preparing students for practice with a heavily required curriculum, mandatory professional development program, and many other practical and leadership training opportunities. The Career Development team provides numerous group and individualized career counseling sessions throughout law school and offers special programs for third-year students and recent graduates seeking full-time employment. Among these offerings is a new mentoring initiative for third-year students enrolled in our renowned Practice Court course. Our Bridge to Practice program provides a post-graduate fellowship for recent graduates. Baylor Law School also launched the Legal Mapmaker program in 2016 to provide a model business strategy with two goals: help recent graduates start successful law practices and help the public find affordable legal assistance by showing lawyers how to provide services efficiently, ethically, and economically.

SMU DEDMAN SCHOOL OF LAW

JENNIFER COLLINS, JUDGE JAMES NOEL DEAN AND PROFESSOR OF LAW
SMU Dedman School of Law gives students opportunities to gain real-world experience. Our 10 legal clinics turn the Dallas-Fort Worth area into a living laboratory for our students, who in the 2015-2016 academic year provided more than 30,000 hours of free representation to the community under the supervision of experienced faculty members. Our groundbreaking Corporate Counsel Externship Program places dozens of students inside the general counsel offices at companies across the metroplex. Our externships, such as the Federal Judicial Externship Program, allow students to work with nonprofits, courts, prosecutors, and government agencies. Our simulation courses, such as trial advocacy, contract drafting, patent prosecution, and patent litigation, hone litigation and transactional skills. More than 300 students participate annually in our moot court program. The Mustang Exchange flash mentorship program provides access to more than 200 alumni and legal mentors, enabling students to benefit from attorney expertise and experience through one-on-one meetings and networking events.

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE OF LAW HOUSTON

CLAIRE CATON, MANAGER OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

South Texas College of Law Houston perfected “practice-ready” before it was a legal buzzword. Through programs designed to ease new graduates’ transition into practice, STCL Houston emphasizes professional preparedness from a student’s first day. Students employ hands-on skills with actual clients in a variety of legal specialties through 17 onsite

Randall O. Sorrels Legal Clinics. In this real-world setting, future lawyers learn about challenges facing underserved Texans in obtaining access to justice and work with professors and staff attorneys in advising clients. Academic internships at South Texas also provide students with the opportunity to hone their professional skills. "Working in the field helps students to understand the rewards and demands of the profession and identify who they want to be within it. They can try on different roles to see what fits their interests and desired future practice," said Elizabeth Dennis, director of Academic Externships. "The hundreds of judges and attorneys who've supervised our students are invaluable mentors long after the internship semester has ended."

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

MIKE BARRY, ASSISTANT DEAN

St. Mary's University School of Law's Catholic and Marianist mission demands that we provide a legal education that promotes the pursuit of justice and anticipates change. The curricular and extracurricular programs instill in our students the skills, experiences, and professionalism necessary to achieve that goal. Students can gain substantive knowledge and practice skills as well as client-based experience by participating in clinics in civil, criminal, and immigration law. Externship programs provide students with on-the-job opportunities to develop legal practice skills and the interpersonal behaviors required of new attorneys. Award-winning programs in advocacy and negotiation ensure that law graduates develop these competencies before leaving campus, and career-training opportunities expose students to law practice management and client development. Most important, however, is our commitment to helping each student discover a vocation in law—and then ensuring each has the skills to meet client needs both today and tomorrow.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

SUSAN FORTNEY, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR RESEARCH AND PROFESSOR OF LAW
In 2016 Texas A&M Law launched a new incubator program called the Texas Apprenticeship Network. The initiative, supported by a grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, assists recent graduates' transition from law school to solo or small firm practice. Recent graduates are placed in offices of respected solo and small firm lawyers who practice in the communities and fields in which the apprentices want to practice. While working in the supervisors' offices, the apprentices obtain invaluable training and mentoring in law practice management and their respective practice areas, while also cultivating vital relationships in the local communities where they intend to hang a shingle. They also receive coaching from an expert who helps them develop a business plan and tools to prepare them for solo practice. During their time in the program and thereafter, the apprentices commit to performing legal services on a pro and low-bono basis.

TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY THURGOOD MARSHALL SCHOOL OF LAW

NIKKI WRIGHT-SMITH, ASSISTANT DEAN OF CAREER SERVICES

Thurgood Marshall School of Law made tremendous efforts this year to ensure graduates are practice-ready. We provided one-on-one counseling services, targeted professionalism programming, and networking opportunities for our students. The Career Services Office introduced a mandatory professionalism program for first-years, which provides an overview of the profession and teaches how to prepare application materials, search for positions, and network. The Career Services Office and the school's Office of Legal Pedagogy released the results of a study that determined characteristics employers found most important when considering candidates for legal employment, allowing for focused programming to ensure students have the tools needed to succeed in practice. We invite members of the legal profession to speak at most of our programs and offer time after events for students to learn more from attorneys about different practice areas. This personal interaction gives students firsthand knowledge about the legal profession and the expectations of the legal community.

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

ASHLEY LANGDON, DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

The Texas Tech University School of Law produces lawyers who give generously to the profession and their communities. Texas Tech law school offers a robust clinical program that offers students practical skills training in different areas of law by representing clients and delivering professional legal services under close faculty supervision. The Regional Externship Program allows students to work full-time with practicing attorneys or judges throughout Texas. Through the Advocacy Program, students conduct legal research, draft briefs, and compete in tournaments that test client counseling, negotiation, and oral argument skills. The mandatory public service graduation requirement engages students in their professional and ethical duty of pro bono legal service and emphasizes the importance of a lifelong commitment to public service. Professional judgment and ethical decision-making are cornerstones of these experiential programs. Likewise, the close mentoring of students prepares them for the professional obligations they will assume as lawyers.

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER

TIFFANY J. TUCKER, INTERIM ASSISTANT DEAN FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The University of Houston Law Center Career Development Office provides career services to UHLC alumni forever and for free. Third-year students attend the Transitioning Legal Job Search training presentation and are paired with Houston area lawyers through the Upper Level Mentoring Program. Recent graduates continue to receive a full continuum of CDO services (one-on-one career advising, resume and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, and targeted job

search assistance), as well as specialized CDO services, including a designated CDO alumni counselor, access to a post-bar employment fair, graduate resume book distributions, jobs digests featuring entry level positions, the UHLC Post Graduate Job Search Handbook, solo practice support resources, and on-the-job professional development assistance. Other resources include bar support services offered by the UHLC Office of Student Services, free CLEs by the UHLC Office of Law Alumni Relations, and mentoring and networking opportunities by the UH Law Alumni Association Young Alumni Committee.

UNT DALLAS COLLEGE OF LAW

ELLEN PRYOR, PROFESSOR AND ASSOCIATE DEAN OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
The UNT Dallas College of Law's curriculum develops practice-related competencies required for new lawyers and includes legal writing and research. All students take courses in interviewing and counseling, negotiation and conflict management, and the business of law. They must take a one-hour course in accounting and finance principles for lawyers and demonstrate legal technology literacy. Upper level courses require about six segments of writing, research, and other skills that approximate what practicing attorneys perform. All students take six hours of experiential courses, including practicums focused on simulated problems and clinics, which are located in two economically

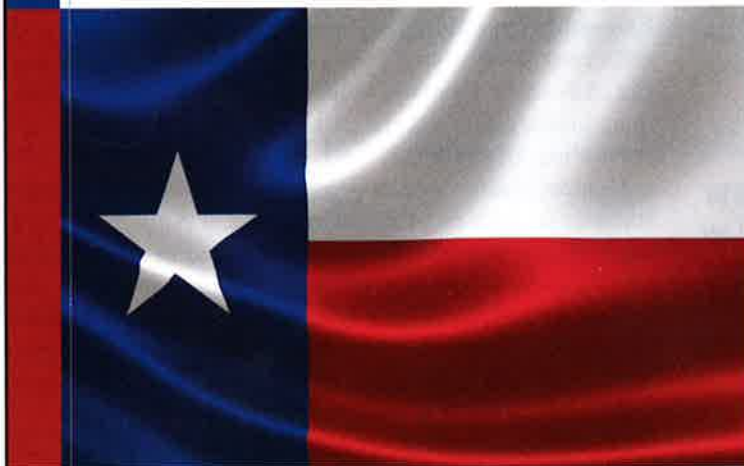
distressed areas of Dallas and provide general legal services overseen by our director of experiential education in partnership with attorneys. Students in practice foundations courses are recorded and reviewed on their interview or negotiation session and written assignments are graded with rubrics. Ongoing feedback and assessment is critical to delivering an education that develops practice-ready competencies.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF LAW

WARD FARNSWORTH, DEAN

At UT Law, our graduates do a huge variety of jobs when they leave. "Transition to practice" means something different for each one and we tailor our efforts accordingly. First, we're big believers in mentoring. We seek to assign every student an alumni mentor, preferably in the student's area of interest and in the place where the student wants to work. Second, we have 15 clinics. By graduation, most of our students have experience representing a real client with a real problem under the supervision of talented lawyers. Third, we have many programs, such as offerings on financial literacy and the business side of law, that allow students to learn elements of professional development not taught in traditional classes. Our approach is the result of frequent conversations with employers about what they want in the lawyers they hire. Readers of this who have views to share are invited to please contact me directly. **TBJ**

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