

From the Dallas Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/dallas/blog/2016/01/smu-program-embeds-law-students-with-dfw-companies.html>

SMU program embeds law students with DFW companies' in-house legal teams

Jan 22, 2016, 12:49pm CST

My cover story and a series of Q&As in this week's *Dallas Business Journal* explore trends, challenges and opportunities in corporate legal departments across North Texas. A major issue general counsel faces is recruiting qualified young lawyers to fill in-house positions.

Although the in-house career path has traditionally started at a law firm, there are signs that this is changing, as companies fill in-house slots with more junior lawyers, according to Stephen B. Yeager, assistant dean for Student Affairs at **Southern Methodist University's** Dedman School of Law.

SMU is seeing more of its graduates hired directly out of law school for in-house legal positions, Yeager said. Some companies, particularly large ones, have the resources to train recent law school graduates, and prefer to tailor their legal talent to the company from the outset.

"They prefer to interview, hire and train attorneys they identify, and cultivate the technical and professional development of that attorney," said Yeager, who teaches a course called "Role of the General Counsel" and is a former general counsel himself.



Stephen B. Yeager, assistant dean for Student Affairs at Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law, teaches a course called "Role of the General Counsel," and co-wrote a book on the topic.

SMU's Corporate Counsel Externship Program, which Yeager led development of in 2013, allows students to see what it's like to work in-house and lets corporate legal departments tap next-generation legal talent.

Students in the program clock at least 120 hours — about 10 hours a week — working in-house. They also take a weekly class that explores corporate governance, ethics and areas of the law including employment, securities and intellectual property.

The program just completed its third year with 50 corporate placements, and has been highly successful in giving students a glimpse of in-house legal work, Yeager said.

It's one of the first and largest programs of its kind, although other schools are beginning to follow suit with similar legal externship programs, he said.

SMU has a geographic advantage, Yeager said.

"We are fortunate to be surrounded by so many corporate headquarters," he said.

"The seasoned in-house attorneys who work with our students have done a fabulous job training our students, providing them with feedback on their work product, and allowing them to observe board meetings, conference calls and hearings."

It's experience that simply can't be duplicated in the classroom, Yeager added.

"I have had many students tell me that this was their favorite class in law school," he said." And many of my former students are now working in-house."

Bill Hethcock

Staff Writer

Dallas Business Journal

