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## Building Bridges to Practice

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# BUILDING NEW BRIDGES TO PRACTICE

engaged in the educational process, and research institutes or clusters will encourage collaborative problem-solving and study.

The Professional Education Project report to Judge Kaye will highlight UB's New Curriculum along with selected innovations at other law schools. It also is likely to include recommendations with respect to continuing legal education, transitional programs for new attorneys, and modest changes in the Bar Exam and admission process. The Report will encourage greater collaboration between law schools and the practicing bar, as well as adequate attention to practice skills and values in law school curricula.

Judge Joseph Sullivan (Appellate Division, First Department) is chair of the Professional Education Project, and the Final Report thus will be referred to as the "Sullivan Committee Report." Haywood Burns of CUNY Law School and Helaine Barnett of the Legal Aid Society in New York City are vice-chairs. Law school members of the Project, in addition to Professor Pitegoff of UB Law, include Professors Curtis Berger and Conrad Johnson of Columbia, Dean Rudolph Hasl of St. Johns, and Professor Randy Hertz of New York University. The committee also includes representatives from the Board of Bar Examiners, experts in continuing legal education, state court judges, and leaders of state and regional bar associations in New York, including Robert MacCrate.

Professor Pitegoff anticipates that the Sullivan Committee Report will be "diplomatic in presentation, with modest recommendations." Among its strengths, says Pitegoff, is that "the Report documents an impressive array of innovative law school programs and continuing legal education opportunities. And, it will help fuel the engine for constructive change in New York's legal profession." ♦

University at Buffalo Law School students are among the first in the nation to benefit from an innovative series of "bridge" courses that emphasize practical knowledge and information to enhance their skills.

The intensive bridge courses are part of the enriched New Curriculum that is now being implemented to better prepare graduates to "cross over" from classroom learning to actual law practice. Students are able to select from an extensive menu of concentrated courses in practice skills, technology and professional issues.

R. Nils Olsen Jr., Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, says the practice-oriented courses were specifically designed to be taken in a three-week period between semesters. The first series was offered in January and February.

First-year law students are required to take one mandatory course from among choices including:

- Counseling
- Mass Tort Litigation
- The Lawyer's Role in Negotiation
- Advocacy for Reform
- Disability Issues
- Regulating Pollution
- Products and the Law
- Real Estate Financing Transactions

Upper division students may select elective bridge courses from among 14 "hot" topics, including:

- Advanced Computers - students learn to use the Internet as an information source, as well as the legal application of hypertext programs, and CPM for lawsuit scheduling.

- Advanced Contracts: Technical Licensing - students analyze recent cases and review rights under patent trademark, copyright, trade secret law and limits to con-

# BRIDGES CONTINUED

tractual rights under antitrust and unfair competition law and treaties such as GATT and NAFTA.

- **Taking and Defending Depositions** - focuses on the rules of conduct, preparing witnesses, making objections, marking exhibits, interacting with the court reporter and questioning witnesses.

- **Forensic Evidence** - introduces students to common forensic tools used in criminal and civil cases, including DNA analysis, fiber evidence, laser and luma light and breathalyzers, and the use of expert witnesses in trials.

- **It's Just a Hearing. Take the File and Run With It** - students study different techniques of representing clients before labor/employment/discrimination administrative agencies.

- **Making Rain and Developing a Law Practice in the '90's** - students learn how to create a personal marketing plan, how to obtain, serve and retain clients and how to become a key person in a private firm.

- **Mediation: An Alternative to Litigation** - emphasizes its use in family and matrimonial law, explores other methods of alternative dispute resolution and involves considerable role playing.

- **Practical Discovery** - examines problems encountered in making and responding to discovery requests; includes the use of motions to compel and protective orders.

Affordable Housing Research Seminar, Criminal Motions, Drafting Municipal Legislation, NAFTA: The Dream and the Deal, Federal Pretrial Criminal Practice, and Computers, Law and Technology are also being taught.

Students are excited about the emphasis on the practical.

"I took Forensic Evidence and Criminal Motions, both of which will be of great value to me in future trial work," says Adam M. Ruben, a third-year law student.

"I received a lot of concrete, practical information in an area in which I want to eventually practice."

Given the positive response from faculty and students, the Law School hopes to expand the numbers and subjects of courses which will be offered in the future. ■

## MAKING THEIR CASE

Research and Writing students end an auspicious year with oral arguments

As the curtain went down on the 1995 academic year, UB Law School alumni/ae played major roles in the mini-drama that was the culmination of the school's new Research and Writing Program.

First-year law students who were completing the inaugural year of the program — designed to develop sophisticated analytical, writing and presentation skills — demonstrated what they learned in a moot-court-style series of arguments. About 50 UB Law alumni/ae and faculty acted as judges and provided feedback.

The alumni/ae participation reflected intense interest in the Research and Writing Program, a key element of the Law School's New Curriculum.

"So much of what we do as lawyers involves research and communication," says Dan D. Kohane '79, a member of the Western New York law firm of Hurwitz & Fine who served as a judge for the arguments. "You really need the ability to find an answer to a problem and effectively communicate it, whether in writing or orally. Those skills are of critical importance to a new lawyer as well as to a more senior lawyer. ... I think this program is a terrific addition to the curriculum."

Professor Lucinda M. Finley, director of the program, noted that although only a small proportion of attorneys will ever have to stand up in a courtroom and deliver an argument, it's important for all lawyers to have that ability.

"Even if someone never winds up being in court," she says, "they may have to present research verbally to a client or to another lawyer. We are teaching students legal reasoning and analytic skills and the ability to think on their feet — to communicate orally in addition to in writing, and to respond on the spot to a probing question."

The cases argued in the end-of-the-year event, Finley says, were "all drawn from and were very closely based on real cases" before the New York State and federal appellate courts. They were:

- A religious freedom/First Amendment case stemming from a U.S. Supreme Court decision that said school districts may not sponsor prayer, but left open the question of what happens when students demand a prayer, for example at a graduation ceremony.

- An argument over whether an injunction that keeps protesters a certain distance away from abortion clinics violates