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All in the Family: New Program for Excellence in Family Law Expands

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Professor Susan V. Mangold counsels a student.

All in the family
New Program for Excellence in Family Law expands

From teaching to research, policy work to practice opportunities, a new UB Law School program coordinates several diverse strands in family law and is looking to extend its reach into the community.

The program builds on the Law School’s longtime strength in domestic violence law – Suzanne Tomkins, clinical associate professor and director of the Family Violence Clinic, is one of its faculty advisers – and incorporates as well other aspects of family law practice, such as matrimonial and law guardian work.

Professor Susan Vivian Mangold, who directs the school’s academic Family Law Concentration, says the new program seeks to integrate the teaching, training and consulting that she, Tomkins and other faculty and students have been doing on issues constellating around family law.

“If you are a student who is interested in family law, we have taken the time to organize all of this for you,” Mangold says of the initiative, of which she is also faculty adviser. “You can see the many different opportunities available to do work in the family law area, broadly defined. You do not have to go to individual professors and ask them what they are working on.”

Mangold also points with pride to what are expected to be annual Educational Institutes. The inaugural institute was held from April 23 to 25 this year at the Law School and in downtown Buffalo. It addressed domestic violence law.

“This is truly a remarkable event in many ways,” Mangold says. “The Educational Institutes are an example of the collaborative relationships fostered by the Law School and community advocates in the family law area.” Especially noteworthy, she says, is that students graduating in the Family Law Concentration were able to present their final research projects not to the usual small audience of Law School faculty, students and attorneys, but as keynote presenters at the well-attended conference, which offered CLE credit.

Another possible project, Mangold says, is a proposal to provide end-of-life legal services to people with terminal conditions, under a requested National Institutes of Health grant to determine whether providing such services would be part of improved patient care.

Currently operating is an initiative, funded by the federal Department of Justice through a New York State STOP grant, to provide information on domestic violence issues by telephone to practitioners and other interested parties throughout the wide-ranging 8th Judicial District in Western New York. It is an expansion of Tomkins’ efforts to serve as a resource throughout that area, and it is hoped that the service can be expanded to include not just domestic violence issues, but other areas of family law as well.

The service, called Resource Link, is a dedicated phone line at which inquiries can be left. Tomkins and others working on the project respond quickly by phone or e-mail. Responses also are posted to an e-mail listserv that goes out to interested parties, further disseminating knowl-
Thinking globally

Master of laws program will draw students the world over

A new LL.M. (master of laws) program being developed at UB Law School promises to bring more international students to O'Brian Hall. Building on the Law School's existing LL.M. program in criminal law, this comprehensive LL.M. program will be targeted initially toward individuals in other countries who already hold a law degree but want further study in the theory of law and the American legal system.

Following the anticipated approval of the new program by SUNY, the New York State Education Department, and the American Bar Association, it is expected that the first students would enroll in fall 2004.

"This is an attempt to reach out internationally to a new body of students," says Vice Dean Peter R. Pitegoff. "The LL.M. is a flexible vessel that can involve a variety of legal disciplines and interdisciplinary pursuits. We have found both demand for the degree and also an opportunity to attract some very strong students, particularly from abroad. Rather than a narrow focus for the program, these LL.M. students will have the opportunity to concentrate in any number of substantive areas." Though it initially targets international students, the program is expected eventually to include U.S. students as well.

The new program extends the Law School's already-strong core of dual and collaborative degree programs. "UB Law School has had dual degree programs for a number of years," Pitegoff says. "It is central to our interdisciplinary signature. We have found, particularly in recent years, that dual and collaborative degree programs are a good mechanism to draw stronger students, and we have also found that they are of significant benefit to our graduates in their career planning."

Among the graduating Law School Class of 2003, nearly two dozen students earned dual degrees. Currently, close to 85 law students are also pursuing Ph.D. or master's studies in communications, computer science, economics, geography, philosophy, political science, sociology, management, social work, library science, or education. Most of the combined J.D. and master's programs take four years to complete.

"It enriches the intellectual community of the Law School to have multiple disciplines involved," Pitegoff says. "These students bring important perspectives into the classroom. When I teach law school courses, I welcome the broad perspective of students who are also studying in other areas."

Johanna Oreskovic, director of post-professional education, will administer the new LL.M. program. "Stu-

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