



West Virginia University College of Law, Morgantown, WV

[By Heather Jung]

West Virginia University (WVU) College of Law, located in Morgantown, WV, has a long tradition of helping those in need and prides itself in its devotion to public interest work. Taking its cue from the West Virginia Bar, which has a long history of handling pro bono cases, the WVU College of Law established the Appalachian Center for Law in the Public Interest.

Although students are not allowed to provide pro bono service until after they have been admitted to the bar, the program allows participants to help in a variety of ways by assisting those in the community with topics ranging from tax law to family law. The Public Interest Advocates (PIA) works to promote student interest in becoming a public interest lawyer. Through the PIA, 1L and 2L students are able to work with public interest law firms throughout the state.

WVU College of Law opened its doors in 1878 as the first professional school in West Virginia. It is home to the fourth-oldest law review in the country, the *West Virginia Law Review*, which was founded in 1894.

The school boasts a high success rate. 95% of the class of 2005 reported finding jobs within nine months of graduating. Graduates have gone on to join law firms in 46 states, as well as in Egypt, Hong Kong, and Italy, and to represent corporations such as Coca-Cola, Lockheed Martin, Goodyear, and Bayer. The career services office (CSO) is dedicated to ensuring that graduates are thoroughly prepared for their job searches and strives to help each student identify and pursue his or her ultimate career goal. The CSO offers on-campus interviews twice per year, career fairs, job postings, and a resume collection and mailing service.

WVU does not offer specializations within the J.D. program, but it does offer two joint degrees: a J.D./M.B.A. and a J.D./M.P.A. The J.D./M.B.A. program allows students to combine law with banking, financing, entrepreneurship, international business, or other facets of business. The J.D./M.P.A. is for students who are interested in public administration, including the nonprofit arena.

WVU's website labels the school "an ideal community for learning." Faculty members pride themselves on being approachable. The faculty strives to make students feel at ease by maintaining an open-door policy. The 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio helps to ensure personal attention for each student. It is

not uncommon for faculty and staff to know the names of new students by the second week, as they are sent a composite image of the incoming class before the school year begins. In order to make WVU an ideal learning environment, peer advisors and mentors are on hand for students, as well. Each 1L is assigned to an advising group of approximately 20 students that is led by a faculty member and two peer advisors. In addition to being assigned to these small groups, students can request one-on-one mentoring. Mentors are available to answer questions and provide support for students during difficult transitions in their lives.

WVU provides several unique programs that allow students to learn outside of the classroom. Each summer, the school offers a three-week study abroad program in Brazil. Through this program, students learn about the legal system and process of another country by attending lectures and seminars taught by both WVU and Brazilian faculty members. Students may also attend clinics geared toward specific law practices. Clinics offered by the school include a civil clinic (which focuses on family law, social security and supplemental security income, and consumer debt relief), a tax clinic, a business law clinic, and an immigration clinic. The Advocacy Certificate Program is a three-week seminar that focuses on child abuse and neglect cases, dealing with the legal issues and procedures that come with assisting children. At the end of the seminar, students receive certificates that allow them to practice child advocacy.

Law students looking for a way to unwind after a long day of classes or a long night of studying don't have to look far. West Virginia is consistently rated one of the top destinations for outdoor activities such as mountain biking, skiing, snowboarding, and rock climbing. Nearby parks and trails are frequented by students looking for physical release. Morgantown offers several options for students who love to shop. There are more than 100 shops and 40 restaurants in the thriving downtown area and additional shops and restaurants in the Wharf District. WVU's Evansdale campus is home to the Creative Arts Center (CAC). With more than 500 performances and monthly art exhibits, the CAC is the core of cultural events in Morgantown.

If students want to unwind but don't feel like straying far from campus, WVU's student recreation center is available. The \$34-million, 77,000-square-foot facility is home to a rock wall, seven basketball/volleyball courts, an indoor track, fitness and weight equipment, three racquetball courts, two swimming pools, a cafe, and an outdoor recreation center where students can rent sports and outdoor equipment.

ON THE NET

West Virginia University College of Law
www.wvu.edu/~law

Campus Life
www.wvu.edu/%7Elaw/Prospective_Students/Student_Life.htm

Morgantown, WV
www.morgantown.com