



# SPECIALTY PROGRAMS EARN HIGH MARKS

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What makes the University of Maryland School of Law so special? Ask anyone associated with the School, and you will hear a wide variety of answers. Ask Tom Perez, Diane Hoffmann, Robert Percival and many others, however, and you are likely to get the same answer from each: It is the specialty programs that make the law school distinctive. The directors of the three specialty programs are understandably proud. The Environmental Law, Law and Health Care, and Clinical programs are nationally acclaimed and attract students and faculty from all over the country.

"In 2001, all three of our specialty programs were ranked in the top five in their categories by *U.S. News & World Report*," reports Alan Hornstein, associate dean. "We are the only state law school in the country to accomplish that." He believes it is the combination of theoretical classwork with the experience of actual legal work that attracts not only the attention, but the students as well.

The specialty programs offer opportunities that many other schools are not able to provide. "The Environmental Law Program and the Law and Health Care Program prepare students for work in two of the hottest fields of practice and combine classroom time and legal theory with the actual practice of law," Hornstein explains. "The Clinical Program allows students to actually practice law under the supervision of an experienced lawyer and then bring it back into the classroom to learn how to learn from their experiences." In addition, the School of Law commits a significant amount of resources toward the specialty programs. They provide the School with numerous opportunities to translate real-world experience into innovative and interdisciplinary scholarship.

The community service component is equally important. "The Clinical, Environmental, and Health Care programs all provide



*Pictured from the left: Tom Perez, director of the Clinical Program, Robert Percival, director of the Environmental Law Program, and Diane Hoffmann, director of the Law and Health Care Program*

legal services to those who would otherwise have difficulty securing representation,” Hornstein attests. All totaled, the specialty programs and the School provide more than \$3 million in legal service to clients within the state of Maryland—ensuring not only superb legal education for the students, but also representation for many who might have gone without.

#### **CLINICAL PROGRAM**

“Essentially, we are Maryland’s largest public interest law firm,” says Clinical Program Director Tom Perez, who joined the School of Law faculty this fall. “The School’s commitment to experiential learning is helping us develop a cadre of lawyers who are public-service oriented, regardless of what type of lawyers they eventually become.”

This is personal for Perez, who earned a master’s degree in public policy and a law degree, both from Harvard. “My first clinical experience as a law student was the highlight of my education. I felt exhilarated and empowered by the opportunity to help,” he remembers. “The aid our clinics

provide allows the students to better understand the overall needs of poor people in today’s society and makes them better lawyers.”

Perez’s focus on public service began with that first clinical experience and has evolved over the course of his professional career, which includes stints as director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; deputy assistant attorney general for civil rights, U.S. Department of Justice; and special counsel to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.).

The Clinical Program’s focus on public service has evolved over the course of the long history of this program. When the program first began more than 20 years ago, it was like most clinical programs in law schools across the country, stressing litigation for those who could not afford it. Over the years, it became apparent that the Maryland community and the students would be better served if the program broadened its scope.

“There is often an overlap of interests in a client’s case,” Perez explains. “For instance, if a client has an asthma problem related to the lead paint in his apartment, he not only needs help getting health care, but the possibility of litigation arises in addition to certain environmental law aspects. People’s problems are not easily compartmentalized, so litigation—while an important tool—is not the only tool. Equally important is the ability to be a problem solver.”

This overlap allows more interdisciplinary collaboration among the different schools within the University System of Maryland. Perez feels these partnerships with other branches of the University have helped to bring the Clinical Program the national recognition it currently enjoys. “There are few schools that offer as much. People from other institutions are usually surprised not only by the depth of our clinical programs, but by the breadth of them as well.”

And the breadth is impressive. The Clinical Program includes clinics that address criminal law, housing, community development, environmental law, civil rights, AIDS law, appellate advocacy, health, elder law, immigration, social work, mediation, and juvenile/children’s law. Again, the emphasis is not always on litigation. Often, it is empowerment and resources that allow people to help themselves.

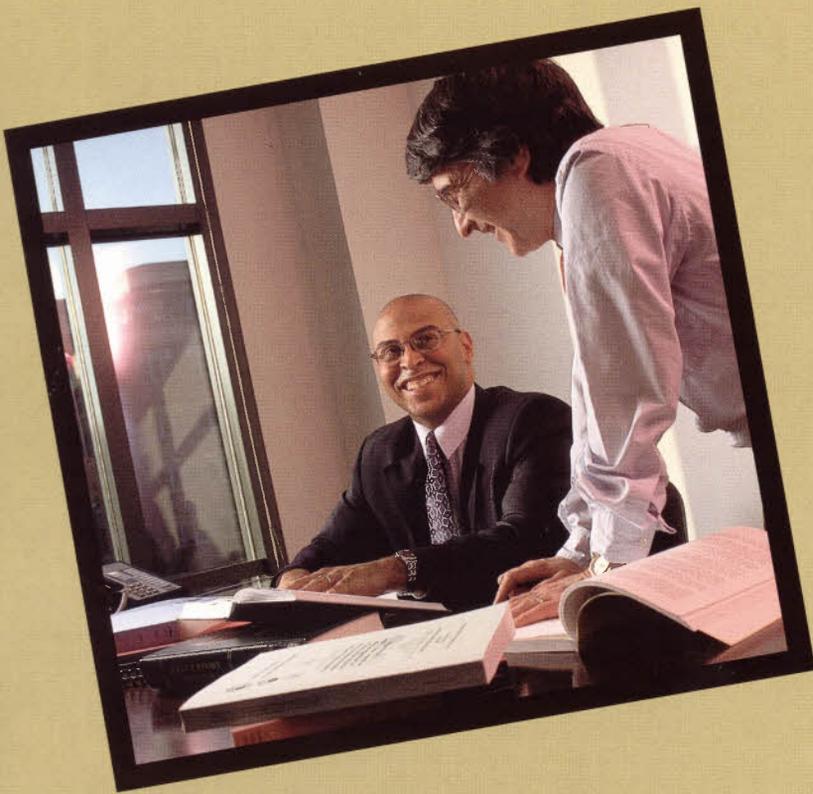
“For example,” Perez continues, “a clinic could assist in the incorporation of a community group that would provide the organization the ability and legal recognition to handle neighborhood issues.” He believes that a client’s legal needs frequently have an underlying social compo-

nent that cannot be solved through litigation, and addressing that social need can be more helpful than filing a lawsuit.

Perez hopes to continue the growth in this area during his tenure as director. “I would like us to become a statewide presence,” he explains. “Over the next two years we hope to assist communities all over Maryland. There has been a huge growth of immigrant communities in several counties outside of Baltimore, and we would like to be a part of those.”

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# “Our clinical and externship programs graduates to hit the ground



*James Benjamin '01 helps National Wildlife Federation (NWF) attorney Glenn Sugameli write a brief in an environmental case during his externship at NWF.*

## **LAW AND HEALTH CARE PROGRAM**

“Cutting edge” are the words most used by Diane Hoffmann, the newly appointed director of the Law and Health Care Program, when asked about her specialty program. “How many times can I say ‘cutting edge?’” she asks, laughing.

Plenty, but rightfully so. Although she is new to the director’s chair, Hoffmann has been involved with the program as associate director for more than 10 years and works hard to ensure that the curriculum mirrors the current issues in the field of health care law. “The students are very demanding regarding the type of courses they want in this program,” she explains. “More and more students are coming to this School specifically for this program.”

The faculty are challenged to create courses that address these expectations. “There has been an evolution of the curriculum over the years as we stay on the cutting edge of the important issues,” Hoffmann continues. To illustrate her point, she begins a list of curriculum items that sounds as if it were pulled from the front page of today’s newspaper: “We have had courses or seminars in managed care, elder care, health care financing, fraud and abuse, ethical issues in research, care for persons with disabilities, conflict resolution in the health care field, care for children with special needs and we are moving into areas of biotechnology that include intellectual property rights and other ethical issues.”

But these cutting-edge, real-world issues are not relegated to the classroom experience exclusively. The Law and Health Care Program also helps students to experience these issues firsthand through the use of practicums, externships and clinics. The Health Law Clinic provides students, under faculty supervision, with the opportunities to represent real clients in real cases involving health care problems.

The Health Law Practicum and Externship programs give students the chance to work in the very agencies and organizations that are directly confronting the rising tide of health care problems, issues and legislation. Placements have included the U.S. Attorney General’s Office, the National Institutes of Health, Johns Hopkins Health Systems Corp., the Federal Trade Commission, the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging, the Maryland Health Care

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running,” says Percival.

Commission, and state and federal legislative offices. Hoffmann believes that the clinics, externships and practicums give students the real-world experience that many employers find so impressive in graduates of this program.

Hoffmann is proud of other program components, including the focus on empirical research and the partnership projects. Her own background in health policy has underscored the importance she places on empirical research and has affected the program as well. “One way our empirical research helps to shape our program is by making us eligible for special grants.” Other schools that have little or no focus on such research are not able to obtain this type of funding.

The partnership projects also bring real-world issues to the School. For instance, the Law and Health Care Program, together with the Environmental Law Program, is part of the Center for Tobacco Regulation working with the state of Maryland to reduce minors’ access to and use of tobacco products. Also, faculty in the program are working with Johns Hopkins University to help draft legislation that would ensure all residents of Maryland have health care.

Hoffmann believes the ability to do this research and participate in these partnerships adds depth to the program and has led to its national recognition.

Looking toward the future, Hoffmann sees the opportunity to remain cutting-edge. “We will continue to grow and continue to strive to attract students interested in these issues,” she says. Expanding the already excellent full-time and adjunct faculty and moving into more partnerships with other groups will allow the program to stay one step ahead and always moving forward.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL LAW PROGRAM

Like the directors of the other specialty programs, Environmental Law Program Director Robert Percival is proud. “We provide an extraordinarily rich full-service program in environmental law. It combines an extensive environmental curriculum with top externships and a full-time clinic all directed toward students earning their first law degrees.”

Formed in 1987, the Environmental Law Program sought to provide specialized education in a rapidly growing field. As the field expanded and the laws and regulations became more numerous and complex, the program evolved—as did the students. “Originally, nearly all the students who came to this program were out to save the world,” Percival recalls. “Now the students are not all environmentalists, but they realize how important the field has become and the high demand for good environmental lawyers.”

The demand is high because the work is complicated. Percival compares the myriad rules and regulations to tax laws in their levels of complexity. “There is hardly a field of law that does not incorporate some aspect of environmental law,” he continues. “Many commercial law, bankruptcy law, criminal law and real estate law cases require knowledge of environmental law.”

To ensure the students have not only the knowledge but also the experience to meet this challenge, the program emphasizes experiential methods as well. “Our clinical and externship programs enable our graduates to hit the ground running,” says Percival. “Many employers see our graduates as already highly experienced in environmental law.”

And, indeed, many are. By the time they graduate, students in this program have not only studied environmental law, they have been on the front lines. Students in the Environmental Law Clinic have argued cases before the Fourth Circuit. They have helped community groups and ordinary citizens protect themselves against environmental hazards in a variety of contexts. The externship program has placed students at the EPA, the National Wildlife Federation, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Defense Council, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for Maryland, and the U.S. Department of Justice, and other agencies and organizations.

Over the years, the School’s commitment to environmental law has had a profound effect on the program. “The better our program has become, the better the students we attract,” explains Percival proudly. “The quality of students seeking out this program continues to go up every year. These students work hard and after they graduate I know they will help improve the world.”

After students graduate and go out into the world of environmental law they are not forgotten, Percival adds. “We have a newsletter, yearly parties, a listserv for alumni and a network of past graduates so they can share what they’ve been working on,” he explains. “We’re always interested in what our graduates are doing.”