University of Hawai‘i William S. Richardson School of Law Externship Program

Below are some quick and easy “nuts and bolts” about our Externship Program and respective expectations and responsibilities for Students and Mentors. To be clear, Academic Externships are not to be confused with a Clerkship (summer or other), but are academic exercises through the University of Hawai‘i School of Law curriculum earning, typically 2 or 4 credit hours, and for certain situations, 6 credit hours.

“Nuts and Bolts” of the Externship Program

Academic Externships offer significant academic benefits that are unavailable in the prescribed classroom curriculum. The purpose of the Externship program is to afford opportunities to our law students to observe and learn the panoply of lawyering skills in supportive “real world” settings; students experience "how it all comes together" and how all of the "pieces of the puzzle" fit.

Students and Mentors are paired largely through contacts that Students themselves, initiate. Students are not “placed” in Externships, although those with little or no experience in Hawai‘i and/or those with wide-eyed enthusiasm but unsure where to start, will often meet with the Externship Director and based upon stated preferences, interests and objectives, suggestions as to possible Externship opportunities and Mentors can be made.
As a part of the learning experience, Students make the contacts, secure the Externships and make all arrangements as to start and end dates and days and hours of service within prescribed limits (start at or near the start of classes and complete Externships at or near the end of classes). Students generally apply for Externships with Mentors, submit resumes and if desired, are interviewed, with no guaranteed Externship placements. Externships are secured on Students’ own merit. Once Externships are secured, the administrative obligations and the “classroom” components associated with the Program are commenced.

ABA Regulations oblige that Mentors be licensed attorneys, although in truth, much of the experiential learning is provided by non-lawyers, including knowledgeable staff, not unlike the learning portals of the everyday world. A further important regulation is that Academic Externships must be un-paid, although reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses may be allowed.

**Student Extern obligations**

Students are obliged to disclose potential conflicts based upon prior experiences and to maintain professional confidences that they encounter over the course of their Externships – the base-line intention and goal is to give students a substantive dose of the “real world” to which they aspire, and their commitment to the workings and product of Mentor offices must be demanded. Students submit Weekly Timesheets to the Externship Director – it is the regularity of attendance and exposure that is coveted by the ABA for accreditation purposes, as much as is the experiential learning.

In addition to Timesheets, Students submit Bi-Weekly Journals to the Externship Director, and a Reply is returned to each. Over the years, Extern Journals have regularly included deeply perceptive submissions discussing semesters of discovery, personal and professional exploration and development, validation, trepidation and in many instances "career defining" and/or "life-changing experiences."
Mentor obligations

Once an Externship is secured and a Memorandum of Agreement is entered into by Students and Mentors (a contract, of sorts), thereafter, largely, what follows is a wide-ranging Student/Mentor relationship that is intended candidly, to be of primary benefit to the Students, and secondarily, to the benefit for the Mentor. In this regard, Students can do law clerk level work and past experience has been that Mentors have given Students great responsibilities with gratifying results. In that sense, it’s a “win-win” all around. But the intention is not that the Mentor have an “unpaid law clerk” for a semester.

The real learning is in Students’ exposure to, observation of, and participation in the substantive work of their Mentors. They see, hear, and touch the work of the Mentor, and learn the processes, procedures and techniques of Mentors who teach by example.

Depending upon the number of credits sought, Students arrange to be present at the Mentor’s venues for 8 hours a week (2 credits – 112 hours per semester) or 16 hours a week (4 credits – 224 hours per semester). Regular attendance is obliged, and work hours and days are subject to being worked out to the convenience of the Mentors and the Students. Just about all arrangements are largely flexible to enable the learning experience to be facilitated. Any questions that cannot be resolved by and between Mentor and Student can be directed to the Externship Director.
Mentors prepare two (2) On-line, form-fillable Evaluations: a Mid-Term Evaluation and a Final Evaluation at the end of the Semester. Inasmuch as students register for Externships on a Credit/No Credit basis, the primary goal of the Evaluation is to assure that they have been diligent in attendance and commitment: with permission requested at the end of the Externship, Evaluations are often shared with students to enhance their learning experiences.

Other than these two Evaluations, Mentors are free and encouraged to expose students to as much as they are comfortable in doing, to give a real life experience to the Externs, including attendance at hearings, client meetings, strategy and planning sessions, and "one on one" time.

Truth be told, Externships are also extremely valuable tools for "pre-screening" potential future hires. Externs enjoy Semester long Interviews that allow them to stand out from the crowd, show their mettle and shine. ‘Nothing like knowing the capabilities and capacities of a potential hire through fourteen weeks of good experience vs. an unknown applicant who promises “I’ll be good worker.”
Communications

Mentor communications with the Director of the Externship Program are designed to be confined largely to the Evaluations that are prepared, although subjects concerning Students may be addressed directly as appropriate. Mentors who afford time, or arrange for those in their offices who are able to do so, to introduce and expose Students to as much of their practices/offices are most valued. Ideally, there is responsibility going both ways for Students and Mentors with the end result being the achievement of the academic and practical goals of the Externship Program.

Questions or inquiries may be directed to Dale W. Lee, Chief Operating Officer/Senior Advisor and Director of the Academic Externship Program at the University of Hawai‘i, William S. Richardson School of Law.

Dale W. Lee joined the Law School in 2007 after a distinguished career as a Senior Litigation Partner with the Honolulu law firm of Kobayashi Sugita & Goda where his clients included international and national corporations and Hawai‘i-based companies, families and individuals. He has served as a prosecuting attorney, criminal defense counsel and has represented plaintiffs and the defense in tort and commercial litigation in both State and Federal courts. A member of the Hawai‘i Bar since 1974, he holds an “AV” (highest rating) Martindale-Hubble Peer Rating and has been listed in Best Lawyers of America. He is a former President of the Hawai‘i State Bar Association (2004) and served a term as an appointed member of the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association (2006). This array of experience offers an invaluable teaching enhancement for Students.