

A Tradition of Excellence

Oregon Law's LRW Program Celebrates 30th Anniversary

BY ALISON WAYNER

Thirty years never looked so good as Oregon Law's Legal Research and Writing program celebrates its beginnings and looks forward to the future.

The LRW program was formed in 1978 when Professor Emerita **Mary Lawrence** was hired to initiate the groundbreaking new curriculum. Since its inception, the program has garnered numerous awards and accolades. Most recently, the program was ranked 10th in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report's* 2009 edition of *America's Best Graduate Schools*. The ranking is among all 193 American Bar Association approved law schools located throughout the country.

Professor Lawrence created a program with a major focus on legal analysis, and emphasis on statutes and agency regulations. The unique LRW program combined Professor Lawrence's training in both English and law to teach writing as a "thinking process" with emphasis on self-editing skills. At that time no texts existed that taught legal writing in such a way, so Professor Lawrence developed her own, which other schools later adopted.

Caroline Forell, currently the Clayton R. Hess Professor of Law, was a first-time instructor at Oregon Law when the LRW program was launched. She remembers facing a class of 83 law students, many of whom were her age.

"That first year was like nothing I've ever experienced before or since," Forell recalls. "Two hours of credit was way too little for what we had our students do. Both the students and the instructors truly walked through the snow in our bare feet — I learned an immense amount about writing, research, analysis, teaching, and myself."

Forell credits Professor Lawrence's hard work and dedication as establishing the foundation for the LRW program's future successes.

"Mary was a rock," Forell says. "She truly was a pioneer woman. I was amazed at how hard she worked during those early years and how she fought for the



Suzanne Rowe

program against a lot of resistance."

Professor Lawrence led the program until 2000 and remains active in legal writing organizations nationally. She currently is the senior editor for the *Journal of the Legal Writing Institute*. Associate Professor **Suzanne Rowe** took the reins as director of the LRW program following Professor Lawrence's retirement, and continues the program's tradition of excellence.

Over the past eight years, Professor Rowe has remained proud of how well the program prepares students to practice law. She

stresses this excellence would not be possible without a strong lineup of highly qualified professors.

"We have amazing LRW professors," she notes. "Their experience in law practice is diverse and extensive. Each one is committed to a career teaching this subject, and each has invested enormous time in understanding the pedagogy of writing."

These faculty members have shaped an LRW program that teaches students the skills necessary to research legal sources, analyze the law, apply law to a client's facts, organize a legal argument, and communicate that argument in writing. The program emphasizes precision and accuracy in legal writing as well as conciseness, clarity, and flawless demonstration of critical ideas.

While this description may seem more frightening than exciting to first-year law students, many are pleasantly surprised by the small class sizes, personal attention from faculty, and opportunities for tutoring and peer mentoring by second and third year students.



Chapin Clark: Oregon Law Visionary

If it were not for Chapin Clark, Oregon Law's dean from 1974 to 1980, the Legal Research and Writing program most likely would not be celebrating the successes of a 30-year tenure in 2008. Clark, who passed away in 2002, hired Professor Mary Lawrence and charged her with creating an innovative LRW program that would be taught by fulltime professors rather than upper-level students or part-time teachers, as was the norm.

In addition to the LRW program, Dean Clark, who wrote extensively on western

water law, was instrumental in building the school's Environmental and Natural Resources program. Shortly after arriving at Oregon Law as a faculty member in 1962, he began drafting and administering the first comprehensive student conduct code in the United States. Clark retired from teaching in 1992, but remained active and in residence at the law school as a professor emeritus.

To read more about Dean Clark, visit <http://www.law.uoregon.edu/ol/docs/OL2002.pdf>.

It seems resources are limitless for students looking to perfect their legal writing chops — and that’s exactly what they’re doing.

Coming into law school, third-year student **Dale Fujimoto** didn’t have much of a writing background and struggled with the assignments in his first LRW class. “I felt that my legal writing skills were underdeveloped and inadequate.”

With the help of LRW Professor **Joan Malmud** and her tutors, however, Fujimoto was able to gain the confidence and skills he needed to write effectively.

“Professor Malmud and her three tutors provided me with in-depth feedback on each assignment,” Fujimoto says. “They taught me how to properly analyze the law and research effectively. I exited the program with confidence, knowing I had a solid foundation on which to build my legal career.”

Fujimoto is now an LRW tutor and credits the writing and analytical skills he developed with securing him a position as a summer associate at the firm of Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt in Portland.

Professor Malmud says witnessing students improve is one of the most fulfilling aspects of her work along with being a part of the lighter moments in the classroom. “I wish people could see both the laughter and the work that goes on in my classroom. That combination makes my job tremendously rewarding.”

The first-year LRW course is often the first time students get their feet wet as attorneys. After submitting an appellate brief in the spring semester, students present an oral argument in front of volunteer judges and attorneys from Eugene and across the Northwest. Many of the volunteers are Oregon Law alumni who come back year after year to observe the evolving quality of the law school’s first-year students.

“The students have always done a good job, but lately it seems the level of arguments has been very high,” says **Patrick Hadlock** ’83, an attorney with Ringo, Stuber, Ensor & Hadlock, P.C., in Corvallis, who has

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**LRW Professor
Joan Malmud**

volunteered at the oral arguments for 25 years and plans to return once again this spring.

“It’s intellectually challenging and stimulating to help the students work their way through the oral argument of an appellate issue. The LRW oral argument is one of the first experiences students get as ‘real attorneys,’ so it’s fun to help them with that.”

Students begin to hear about oral argument when the Oregon Supreme Court visits the law school each year. The Court hears some of the best advocates in the state argue actual cases in front of LRW students — an event that began with Professor Lawrence. Students engage in question-and-answer sessions with the justices during this visit and get a first-hand look at the importance of legal writing skills.

This year, the LRW program is building upon its excellent reputation with the addition of Visiting Professor **Tenielle Fordyce-Ruff**. An Oregon Law graduate, Fordyce-Ruff co-authored the recently published book *Idaho Legal Research* with Professor Rowe. Fordyce-Ruff’s appointment further reduces student-teacher ratios in the first-year LRW course and allows the program to offer more upper-level writing and research courses.

Professor Fordyce-Ruff says she is looking forward to putting the insights she gained as a student to use in her classes.

“Like most students, my experience with the LRW program involved growing pains,” she recalls. “I hope that as a former Oregon Law student, I can give my students valuable insight into student life here.”

As for the future of Oregon Law’s LRW program? In the short term, Professor Rowe would like to offer more advanced courses in legal writing, research, and additional lawyering skills.

In the long term, she wants to continually update and enhance the quality of the curriculum, but notes that forecasting the future is never easy.

“It’s hard to predict where we’ll be in the next 30 years — who knew 10 years ago how pervasive computers would be today,” she remarks. “We’ll have to be dynamic and innovative to stay on the cutting edge.”

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Patrick Hadlock ’83

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