

*WIDENER UNIVERSITY*  
**DELAWARE LAW SCHOOL**

**ORIENTATION 2016**

*Program Description  
and  
Syllabus for Introduction to  
Professional Skills*

Students attending Widener University Delaware Law School are permitted to use these materials. Any other use or distribution of these materials is prohibited.

## **Program Description**

Many students find law school very different from other school experiences. The subject matters may be new, the workload is heavy, and the vocabulary used in law school seems alien. Even the testing and grading processes in law school are often different from processes employed in other education settings.

The Introduction to Professional Skills program (IPS) helps prepare students for some of the unique features of a law school education.<sup>1</sup> The program provides a common body of knowledge for all students in the first semester. In addition, the IPS classes provide opportunities to discuss and practice skills essential to a successful performance as a law student and as a member of the legal profession. You will continue to develop those skills in doctrinal classes and the Applied Learning Labs during the first semester.

## **Reading Materials**

The required materials for IPS are the following: (1) Tracey George & Suzanna Sherry, What Every Law Student Really Needs to Know: An Introduction to the Study of Law (2d ed. 2016), and (2) the Introduction to Professional Skills Course Materials Supplement (2016). You may purchase the George & Sherry text from the bookstore on campus or from an online book vendor. The link for the Course Materials Supplement is posted on the Delaware Law School web site under Prospective Students/Orientation/Office of Student Affairs.

You should read chapters 1 through 5 of What Every Law Student Really Needs to Know before the IPS classes begin on Wednesday, August 17. We also recommend that you have access to a law dictionary, such as Black's Law Dictionary, to assist you with the new vocabulary you will encounter throughout your law school career.

## **Attendance**

Faculty will take attendance for each Orientation session by passing out an attendance sheet at the beginning of each session and having each student initial next to the student's name on the sheet. Your initials will be the only record we have of your attendance. Please remember that the School of Law's Code of Conduct applies to entering information on attendance records. Please do not be late for the Orientation classes. Coming into a class late is unprofessional, disruptive, and distracting both to other students and to faculty. Anyone repeatedly late will be counted as being absent.

## **Preparation for Class**

Competence is a foundation of the practice of law as a profession, and competence requires thorough preparation. Accordingly, you are expected to read the materials assigned for each class and to prepare to address those materials in class. It is not too early to begin preparing the assigned readings on the syllabus below. As noted above, the workload in

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<sup>1</sup> A required session on Financial Aid also is included in addition to the class sessions described below.

law school is heavy and managing the time to handle that workload is a skill you can begin to develop now.

## **SYLLABUS FOR INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSIONAL SKILLS, AUGUST 17-18**

### **Wednesday, August 17**

#### **Preparation for the Day**

What Every Law Student *Really* Needs to Know: Chapters 1 through 5.

Introduction to Professional Skills Course Materials Supplement (2016): Sections I and II.

In addition please review the Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook. You will find the Handbook on the DLS website under Current Students/JD Academics/Office of Student Affairs.

#### **Professional Character Standards and Personal Ethics<sup>2</sup>**

This class will address what it means to be a member of a profession and the relationship between professional and personal standards of conduct. The class discussion will include a review of how your conduct before and during law school can affect the character and fitness assessment you must pass to be admitted to practice.

#### **Title IX Training**

Widener University requires each student to receive information and training on compliance with laws prohibiting sexual harassment. This class fulfills the requirement for new students

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<sup>2</sup> Please note, due to issues of time management, the order in which classes will be held on a particular day will depend on the section to which a student is assigned. For example, this class will be the first class on August 17 for students assigned to Section M and the third class on the schedule for students assigned to Sections S or W. Please remember to follow the Orientation schedule placed in the folder you received when you checked in with the Admissions Office on August 16.

## **Thursday, August 18**

### **Preparation for the Day**

What Every Law Student *Really* Needs to Know: Chapters 1 through 5.

Introduction to Professional Skills Course Materials Supplement (2016): Sections III through VI. Try your hand at creating case briefs for the court opinions in Section IV.

### **American Legal Processes, Judicial Opinions, and Case Briefing**

Many law school subjects are taught through reading and discussing judicial opinions (“cases”). This class introduces students to active reading strategies and techniques as means for reading cases effectively. The class will focus on the *process* of creating a case brief, an active reading process students will continue to hone throughout the first year of law school. A case brief provides a framework for extracting and sorting important information from an opinion. The skills developed in creating case briefs are vital for class preparation, exam preparation, and for much of the legal analysis lawyers do.

For the class exercise with case briefs, we use several court opinions addressing the concept of claims arising from the “same transaction or occurrence.” That concept plays a role in several key parts of Civil Procedure, including modern claim preclusion and party joinder. The class also will introduce students to sources of law other than the common law as well as the role of underlying public policies in the application of rules of law.

### **Pulling It All Together: Taking Notes and Outlining in Law School**

Attending classes and being fully engaged in classroom discussions are crucial steps in the learning process for law students. Being fully engaged requires taking effective notes. This class will provide proven techniques for creating exceptional notes, as well as an overview of the essential types of information you should include in your notes.

Successful law students prepare for final exams all semester. A critical step in the exam preparation process is the creation of course outlines. If done correctly, the process of outlining will help you understand and retain the large amounts of information on which you will be tested.

We will use the cases assigned for the class on case briefing to address note taking and outlining.

### **Effective Time Management and Use of Resources from the Student Perspective<sup>3</sup>**

No one doubts the novelty and complexities of the first year of law school require effective time management and an understanding of available resources. In this session successful students will lead a discussion of what worked for them and respond to questions you have about how to excel -- and not merely survive – during the first year of law school.

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<sup>3</sup> This will be the third class on August 18 for students assigned to Section M.

## **Glossary of Terms**

Please familiarize yourself with the following terms before classes begin.

Appellant

Appellate court

Appellee

Cause of action

Civil liability

Common Law

Complaint

Constitution

Criminal liability

Defendant

Dictum

Dissent

Federalism

Issue

Holding

Jurisdiction

Motion

Plaintiff

Precedent

Prima Facie Case

Relief

Remedy

Respondent

Separation of Powers

Stare decisis

Statute

Torts

Trial court