

A NEW EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM



For the Law School

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In the fall of 1966, the Law School will institute far-reaching changes which are likely to make the School's educational program the most advanced in the nation. These changes, which are described below, are the result of two years of intensive study by the Faculty.

Foremost among the innovations is a Senior Research Program which will provide each student with an opportunity in his senior year to engage in a major project of investigation and writing under close faculty supervision. Unlike individual study programs previously used in law schools which have provided only a small amount of supervision and little or no credit, the new Northwestern program will permit students to earn up to one-fourth of their senior credits in this way, and frequent faculty consultation will be a key feature.

This program and other steps to be taken rest upon a basic premise endorsed by the Law School Faculty that educational resources, especially at upper-class levels, should be concentrated upon students as individuals, not merely as members of large groups. Believing this to be the most effective way to develop legal understanding, analytical skills, and a sense of professional responsibility, the Faculty is determined that Northwestern law students should be approached as mature graduate students, and that corresponding individual educational responsibilities should be assumed by them.

To carry out this goal and to meet the demands imposed by the increasing complexity and variety of subjects now faced by lawyers, the curriculum for all three years of law study has been revised. The primary change in the first year is the introduction of a "Laboratory Seminar in Procedure" to be given to all first-semester freshmen in groups of about 12. The seminar is designed to meet the need for more immediate experience on the part of freshmen with civil and criminal procedure, and will feature the use of transcripts of record of selected cases, together with lectures and readings.

During the second year, students will be able to select courses which will provide background for intensive individual study in the third year. To facilitate this, the previous practice of prescribing the entire second year has been changed to permit election of courses in both the second and third year.

The new educational program was designed by the Faculty Committee on Objectives and Curriculum through extensive consultation with the Faculty and others during 1964, 1965 and 1966. An interim report of the Committee, which is composed of Professors Coons, Reese, Ruder and Rahl (chairman) was approved by the Faculty in the summer of 1965, and a final report was adopted by the Faculty in the winter of 1965-66.

REASONS FOR CHANGES

A number of important factors converged to make the time ripe for the changes adopted by the Faculty. First was a decision by the Faculty, after extensive deliberation, that the size of the student body should not be increased beyond the present level of about 475, and that every opportunity should be utilized to improve the quality of the School's program. The School has grown steadily since the Korean War in student body, faculty, library, facilities and staff. Its reputation as one of the nation's top schools has been maintained and enhanced. Its alumni have supported it in steadily increasing amounts and ways. The time seemed at hand to concentrate heavily, in the words of the Interim Report of the committee, upon the announced goal of maintaining "as excellent an educational program as can be offered by any law school, without exception, in this country."

Continuing change in the quality of the student body was a second factor dictating change in the educational offerings. At one time it might have been possible to distinguish in important educational ways between a group of students of "Law Review" capability and the remaining members of their class. But today the differences between the top students and the marginal students are not great. The general level of student ability has risen to the point that even in the lower ranks of the class student abilities are consistently high. It is expected that qual-