Teaching in universities has recently focused on developing a wider range of skills in students that are relevant to most workplaces, such as team work and communication skills, and those that are more specifically related to certain professions, such as drafting, client interviewing, negotiation and advocacy skills if the professional destination is to become a lawyer.

Students will not spontaneously develop on their own new learning strategies, including the ability to self and peer assess, which must be taught as part of the curriculum. 'Throwing students in at the deep end' may force them to learn enough to make it through the program, but will rarely produce experts. The Offices project seeks to incorporate skills training into the substantive subjects because 'knowledge' (what is known) and 'skills' (abilities that allow what is known to be used) are interrelated. Each becomes more meaningful by being 'situated' in the other's context.

Guided by student feedback, the authors set out to make the Offices program more relevant to substantive subjects being concurrently studied by students. Several subject-specific Office programs were created. The first semester in the second year used Associations and Trusts as its substantive background which, after client interviews and negotiations, leads to the production of a letter of advice to the client. Second semester in second year used Constitutional and Administrative Law as its substantive background. The Office had to decide whether a person should be in receipt of a pension. This had the effect of placing the students in the position of the primary decision-maker,

leading to a deeper understanding of the administrative decision-making processes. The first and second semesters in third year used Property Law as their substantive background.

In the Associations and Trusts component, students quickly learn that knowledge and skills are interdependent and that they cannot interview effectively without the substantive knowledge. The authors believe that the Administrative and Constitutional Law Office came close to achieving the project's promise as there was a clear and perceivable link between the substantive law and the experiential learning.

The most important lesson that can be gathered from the Offices program is that it is more effective when closely integrated with a substantive law subject, rather than being run independently. While the Offices are teacher-less, the administrative load is large, due to the need for careful planning of office activities, the requirement of detailed written instructions and the marking of written submissions. Class time should be used as briefing and debriefing periods.

A number of issues in the realm of assessment still need to be resolved. Some of the most important lessons learnt in the program are not addressed in the assessment scheme. In particular, the central aim of group work abilities can only be assessed in terms of outcomes, not processes, and at the group and not the individual level.

Collins, Brown and Newman have developed a framework for the design of educational environments such as those created in the Offices program. This structure addresses the content of the learning, the methodology, the sequence in

which competences should be acquired and the social context in which the learning should take place.

Just as being thrown in at the deep end is not the best way to learn how to swim, throwing students together without preparation and without a teacher present is not the best way for them to learn how to be lawyers. However, once they are taught a few basic strokes and how to help themselves and other improve, then Offices can be a powerful part of a wider cognitive apprenticeship.

Computer and internet applications in a clinical law program at the University of New Mexico.
S A Taylor
6 J Law & Info Sci 1, 1995, pp 35-48

For many lawyers the practice of law involves the use of computers, software and telecommunications. To address the apparent educational vacuum in this area, the author had developed clinical law programs that use computers, software systems, on-line research aids, cd-rom legal research tools, E-mail and the internet. The two courses in the program are called Process of Taxation and Tax Practice Clinic.

The goals are to acquire a working knowledge of federal and state income tax laws, a notebook computer, modem and printer, software systems, Lexis and Westlaw, on-line communication links with the taxation department, E-mail, the internet and, importantly, how to apply law and technology to provide legal services to clients.

The course involves students helping the working poor to claim

refundable credits for earned income and child care, and so it is strongly linked to the federal welfare system. The clients are real clients, thus instilling in the students a motivation and responsibility that simulations cannot match. The students work in teams of two and aim their services at those who are unlikely to have had access to professional tax return preparation. The client sites that have been targeted are hospitals, churches, social welfare organisations, Indian reserves, community centres and the local legal aid centre. Each student will handle between 10 and 50 clients a semester, and it is hoped that over 700 to 1000 returns will be submitted.

The article provides a description of the hardware, software, on-line research, cd-rom, local and internet E-mail and internet resources used. Taxation law is particularly suited to a law/ technology clinic. Returns can now be sent via a modem to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and LEXIS provides a daily on-line reporting system, which reports developments within a 24 hour timeframe. The IRS software, TaxWise 1040 Software for the Tax Professional, is used by many lawyers and accountants to calculate a client's federal tax liability or refund.

By making extensive use of technology in a clinical teaching setting, students can learn substantive law, improve their computer literacy, acquire important lawyering skills and gain insights into the legal system.

TECHNOLOGY

[no material in this edition]

WOMEN'S ISSUES

[no material in this edition]

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