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University of Miami Law School's LawWithoutWalls program extends worldwide

Dawn Geske (/author/dawn-geske) Aug. 12, 2016, 8:14pm

MIAMI – Growing the use of technology in law, the University of Miami Law School has a program designed to give law students real-world application and mentoring of business problems companies face today.

The program Law Without Walls was started by Michele DeStefano, professor of law at the University of Miami Law School, as a way to teach skills to law students that they can't necessarily learn in the classroom.

“When I started as a professor, I recognized there were a lot of skills that weren't being trained in our lawyers - both outside after they graduate and while they were at law school,” DeStefano told the *Florida Record*. “Skills like leadership, cultural competence, technology, project management and business acumen. I also noticed that there were a lot of walls and hierarchy in a lot of markets between law and business,



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between schools of different ranks and between academics and lawyers. I felt there was potential to teach those skills through collaboration, and that's essentially what Law Without Walls is."

The Law Without Walls programs brings together students from schools all over the world. To date, the program has 30 schools participating from as far away as Australia. It has garnered some big name involvement from schools such as Wharton and Stanford.

"Demand grows daily," DeStefano said. "I get reached out to by lawyers all over the world wanting to join, entrepreneurs wanting to get involved and schools every year that want to join."

The program pairs three law and business students from three different schools on a team, along with two lawyers as mentors. The lawyers are differentiated by having one come from a law firm and the other from inside a big corporation. In addition, three more mentors are added to the team with an academic, an entrepreneur and a business professional, making up the team of eight.

As a team, they are given a broad legal topic that is often sponsored by a major corporation such as Microsoft. Together, the group must formulate a solution to the problem and create a business plan that has some of them being taken to market as a real solution and marketable product.

"The topics are sponsored to be real problems or challenges that those industries are facing," said DeStefano. "The team fine tunes the problem and creates a business case to solve it. That business case is a real business plan. It's true innovation at the intersection of law, business and technology."

Some problems the teams have worked on include ACE, an app designed to help tennis players resist the influence of match fixing, and BOND, an online platform that connects law students and academics during the law school application process with the right fit.

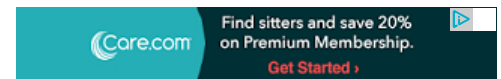
Business cases such as Judgment Pay are being brought to market. Judgment Pay is a website that features a collection of legal judgments that is searchable through social media and a marketplace for the legal

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industry to exchange judgements, providing an eBay-like environment for collection agencies and asset management companies to search and purchase individual judgments.

The next step for the Law Without Walls program is to get sponsorship of the program to help further its growth.

“In order to grow, we need to find the right sponsor,” said DeStefano.
