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Digital Lawyering
08.23.2012 | Students, Law, Faculty

Heading to the law office for legal advice could become a thing of the past. Law students have taken classes online for years, but practicing law online once they become attorneys is gaining traction. A pioneer in online lawyering will offer one of the nation’s first free digital lawyering programs for University of Dayton law students this fall.

Stephanie Kimbro, who has won the American Bar Association's Keane Award for Excellence in eLawyering and wrote Virtual Law Practice: How to Deliver Legal Services Online, will conduct two, six-week sessions starting Sept. 5 and Oct. 22.

The first session will give students the tools to work with a variety of technologies used to manage an online law practice. In the second session, students will focus on social media practices and how they may be used to grow a client base and professional network. Both sessions require students to develop technology and social media policy and procedure manuals for their future practices.

The sessions, sponsored by the University of Dayton School of Law Office of Career Services, are not for credit and are not part of the general curriculum. They are not open to the public.

"The sessions give students another skill set to highlight on resumes and in interviews. Technology is becoming a more integral part of the legal process. It’s important we give students the skills to keep up with changes in technology," said Tim Swensen, director of the School of Law’s Office of Career Services. "This also helps our students keep pace with recent changes to the American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct."

Last week, the ABA said “to maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology.” Other updates deal with how lawyers handle online marketing tools.

The School of Law has long been active in areas of virtual, online and distance learning.

With Harvard University, Vermont Law School and others, the School of Law is designing best practices for distance learning, which it will recommend to the American Bar Association. The ABA is in the process of redefining rules on distance learning in legal education.

In addition to this fall’s digital lawyering non-credit program, the School of Law has offered online courses for credit.

Kimbro, a University of Dayton School of Law graduate who operates a Web-based virtual law office in North Carolina, also teamed up with the School of Law this summer to teach an online course on alternative legal service delivery.

Other School of Law faculty who offer or have offered online learning opportunities include Vernellia Randall, Andrea Seielstad, Dennis Greene, Jeannette Cox, Sheila Miller, Pamela Laufer-Ukeles and Susan Brenner.

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