The third-year curriculum at W&L Law is unique in legal education. The course of study consists entirely of practice-based simulations, real-client experiences, and advanced explorations into legal ethics and professionalism. The curriculum builds upon and expands the lessons of the first and second years of instruction, moving students from a passive classroom role into one more closely connected to the world of legal practice. Every W&L graduate shares a set of experiences that helps him or her develop the judgment and habits of mind of legal professionals. These experiences include two skills immersions, one focused on litigation practice and the other transactional practice, and simulations of a wide array of practice environments. In addition, each student acquires real practice experience through a clinic or an externship. Along the way students make the transition from thinking like a law student to truly thinking like a lawyer. They learn to work in teams, to prioritize projects and meet multiple deadlines. And they continue to learn the law, but they do so the way practicing lawyers do, in the process of solving problems for their clients. But they don’t do it alone. Our students receive instruction from some of the finest members of the bar and bench in addition to W&L’s stellar faculty. The students commit substantial hours each week to their practices and receive extensive mentoring and feedback. In this safe environment, they take their first steps, and make their first mistakes, as lawyers, so that when they get to you, our students are PREPARED FOR THE PROFESSION.
Think Like a Lawyer

Practice opportunities available to students during Washington and Lee's innovative third year span the range of legal practice areas, both litigation and transaction based. These experiences include practice simulations, six legal clinics, and an array of externships in law firms, government offices, corporations and international organizations. The result is an impressive list of work product and activity any lawyer would be proud to have in his or her portfolio.

From the Participants

Rachel Vargo ’11L
Associate General Counsel
BrightPoint, Inc.

I use the negotiating, drafting and strategy skills I learned at W&L every day as a practicing transactional attorney. While new challenges arise each day, the Third Year Program helped me build a foundation for actual law practice.

Hamza Chaudary ’10L
Associate
Adler Pollock & Sheehan

I regularly draw upon a number of experiences I had as part of the Third Year Program. The negotiation and deposition practice I engaged in over the course of my third year have proven invaluable in my current job, and I feel prepared for the challenges I regularly encounter as a practicing attorney.

Patrick Chamberlain ’10L
Appellate Court Attorney
NY State Supreme Court

W&L gave me the chance to practice— in the context of real cases—researching, drafting motions, advising clients, and working on a team. I graduated with greater confidence in my lawyering skills and a better understanding of what I was capable of in my post-law school career.

Kristina Joyner ’10L
Assistant Public Defender
Baltimore, Maryland

As an assistant public defender, I often have clients in uncomfortable circumstances with limited options. The interview techniques and client consultation experience I gained during my third year at W&L have helped me to be a stronger advocate.

Client
Practicum Summaries

APPLETATE ADVOCACY
Prepare briefs for and argue cases currently on appeal to Supreme Court of Virginia and study appellate advocacy up-close in key settings including the U.S. Supreme Court.

BANKING LAW
Engage in in-house practice under the direction of the General Counsel for a regional bank during a time of financial crisis and facing the most comprehensive financial reform legislation since the Great Depression.

BUSINESS PLANNING
Advise business leaders on the best organizational structure and financing plan for a bio-tech venture and prepare an actual operating agreement for the deal.

CIVIL LITIGATION
Litigate an asbestos exposure personal injury lawsuit from start to finish, including the filing of pleadings, preparation of discovery requests, taking depositions, arguing motions and preparing experts for trial.

CORPORATE COUNSEL
Serve as counsel to affiliated group of corporations and LLCs and advise on corporate structure, products liability, real estate, insurance, indemnity issues and the sale of a business.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND SHAREHOLDER DERIVATIVE LITIGATION
Experience the life cycle of a shareholder derivative litigation from filing of the derivative demand notice and the complaint to resolution of the dispute through mediation, while advising clients on principles of corporate governance and the fiduciary duties of officers and directors.

CRIMINAL PRACTICE
Serve as either defense or prosecuting attorney through the stages of a criminal case, including making charging decisions; drafting an indictment with presentation at grand jury or preliminary hearing; pretrial release and detention; developing client relationships; investigations, discovery and theory development; pretrial motions; plea negotiation; jury instructions; trial; and sentencing.

CROSS BORDER TRANSACTIONS
Conduct international cross-border transactions, principally in a mergers and acquisitions setting, with a focus on buyers issues and sellers issues, as well as joint venture and shareholders agreement issues, and various other cross-border considerations.

E-COMMERCE
Draft End User License Agreements for video games and social networking sites, draft electronic sales agreements, and explore the novel legal issues raised by the growing commerce of online marketplaces and virtual worlds.

FAILING BUSINESSES: BANKRUPTCY
Represent and develop solutions for the debtor and creditor sides of a failing business including the preparation of bankruptcy pleadings for presentation in court.

FAMILY LAW
Follow the progression of a relationship that begins with marriage and ends in divorce by providing the range of services to individuals contemplating marriage or divorce, from drafting an initial prenuptial agreement to filing of a divorce petition through settlement proceedings to settle the couple's financial and custody arrangements.

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATION
Delve into Federal regulation of the electric utility and nuclear power industries and in a practice-oriented setting explore how law firms and corporate law departments interact with government regulatory bodies.

FIDUCIARY LITIGATION
Act as counsel to both trustees and trust beneficiaries and engage in many of the research, drafting, and counseling activities typical of the growing field of trusts and estates litigation.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
Pursue the private enforcement of copyrights, with an emphasis on misappropriation of marks or product configuration, false advertising, and trademark infringement in both the traditional markets as well as on the internet.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
Apply primary international and regional human rights treaties to real-world human rights problems, teaming with international non-governmental organizations based in the U.S. or domestic human rights organizations based in Africa to promote human rights and seek redress for human rights violations.

LAW, POLITICS, AND PUBLIC POLICY
Explore the federal and state legislative process while acting as a lobbyist for various clients and constituencies concerned with pending legislative issues facing the Commonwealth of Virginia.

MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS
Follow the life of an M&A transaction from client intake through initial transaction/project development, drafting and negotiating key documents, researching and advising the client on key issues that arise in the transaction, and post-closing dispute resolution.

PATENT LITIGATION
Engage in a trial over a patent dispute representing both the patent holder and the alleged infringer, with particular focus on the costs and benefits of litigation.

SECURITIES FRAUD
Advise clients about litigation options, including the possibility of a class action suit, when individual or institutional investors believe their investment decisions have been based upon fraudulent statements by a public company or upon the company’s omissions of material facts.

WEALTH TRANSFER PLANNING
Consider the principal tax and asset-management issues encountered in a sophisticated estate planning practice, with an emphasis on planning and drafting to accomplish tax-efficient inter-generational transfers of wealth.

Visit our website at law.wlu.edu to learn more about Washington and Lee University School of Law