



Implementing Best Practices & Educating Lawyers: Teaching Skills and Professionalism Across the Curriculum

Workshop  
2D

The Village Approach to Raising  
Professional Lawyers

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Terri Davlantes is vice dean and associate professor of law at Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville, Florida. She graduated with honors from the University of Florida College of Law and practiced with Rogers, Towers, Bailey, Jones & Gay in Jacksonville, Florida, in health law. Prior to graduating from law school, she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Florida and worked in the coronary care units of several hospitals.

She has earned a Six Sigma Green Belt Certificate and has attended numerous conferences on performance excellence. She currently serves as the process development coordinator for the InfiLaw System, Florida Coastal School of Law campus. As such, she is working with senior leadership to create a dynamic management system focused on achieving desired outcomes through innovative curriculum and programs.

Since she joined Florida Coastal, she has served in a variety of positions, including Lawyering Process Instructor, Legal Writing Specialist, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, and now Vice Dean. She was born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida. She and her husband have four children.

The Village Approach to Raising Professional Lawyers

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The Issue-

- » Bad or inconsiderate behavior was common.
- » Faculty were inconsistent in dealing with the behavior.
- » Staff did not feel empowered to stop it.
- » Students had little or no recourse when they encountered uncivil behavior.
- » The Honor Code dealt primarily with academic dishonesty, not uncivility or unprofessionalism.



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Our Goal

- » Empower faculty, staff and students to react appropriately to unprofessional behavior.
  - Whoever hears it, owns it. Whoever sees it, fixes it.
- » Ensure that we as a school community are modeling professional behavior.
  - What's rubbing on and what's rubbing off your students?
- » Recognize Professional Behavior.
  - What gets rewarded gets repeated.



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### Getting Started

- » Form a Task Force to study the issue.
- » Discuss the problem with the Community to get their input and buy-in.
- » Develop a plan of action.
- » Come up with objective ways to measure our success.



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### Our Plan of Action

- » Obtain Community Buy-In:
  - Faculty
  - Staff
  - Students
  - Local Bar
  - State Bar
  - Judiciary



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### Our Plan of Action

- » Create Four Sub-Committees to Divide Workload:
  - 1. Communications and Other Professional Skills
  - 2. Special Programs and Speakers
  - 3. Curriculum
  - 4. Mentoring and Transition to Practice



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1. Communications and Other Professional Skills Plan

- » Professionalism stressed from the minute students arrive for 1L orientation.
  - Orientation Pledge of Professionalism
  - Messaging from Dean in weekly email newsletter
  - Messaging on monitors around campus



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1. Communications and Other Professional Skills Plan

- » Appropriate computer usage
- » Dress codes for special events
- » Email etiquette



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1. Communications and Other Professional Skills Plan

Student Code of Conduct

- » Sets Behavioral Expectations
- » Leads to Healthy Conflict Resolution
- » Promotes Respect for One Another



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## 2. Special Programs and Speakers Plan

- » 6 Non-course credits professionalism credits required in order to earn JD degree.
  - Role-plays.
  - Local practitioners present hypothetical situations in which attorney's ethics or professionalism are tested.
  - Judges and practitioners speak with students about common ethical problems lawyers experience.



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## 3. Curriculum Plan

- » Recognize the Importance of Experiential Learning Opportunities.
  - Skills Courses
  - Externships
  - Clinical Experiences
- » Revise Professional Responsibility Course.
- » Design and Approve New Courses which Focus on Professionalism.
  - Advanced Practical Professionalism
  - Comprehensive Law Practice
- » Create Hypotheticals for All Core Courses Which Professors Can Use to Infuse Professionalism Lessons.
- » Offer Non-Course Credit Leadership Training Opportunities.



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## 4. Mentoring and Transition to Practice Plan



- » Mentoring Opportunities
- » Shadowing Program



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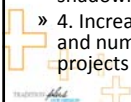
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### Measurement of Success

- » 1. Improvement in LSSSE questions:
  - “To what extent does your law school emphasize the ethical practice of law?”
  - “To what extent has your experience at your law school contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in developing a personal code of values and ethics.”
- » 2. Increase in number of students taking skills courses.
- » 3. Increase in number of students participating in shadowing opportunities.
- » 4. Increase in number of students participating in, and number of hours contributed to, pro bono projects .



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### Make Any Needed Modifications

- » If we don't see a trend towards improvement as measured by these metrics, we will:
  - Hold a focus groups with faculty, staff and students to explore the reasons for this lack of improvement in more depth.
  - Revise our plan of action.
  - Continue to try to meet our professionalism goals.



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### Other Ideas?

- » Thank you for coming!



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