

[Interns Thrive in 'Boot Camp'; Colorado Law trains them in tech business basics.](#)

The National Law Journal

August 18, 2014 Monday

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THE NATIONAL
LAW JOURNAL

Section: NATIONAL NEWS; Pg. 1; Vol. 36; No. 51

Length: 812 words

Byline: KAREN SLOAN

Body

University of Colorado School of Law student Kate Armstrong spent her 10-week summer internship at technology consulting firm Ciber Inc., sitting in on business deals, observing the general counsel's interaction with other executives, researching overseas laws and writing draft agreements.

"I had been thinking that going inhouse might be right for me, but I really wasn't sure," the third-year student said recently. "I'm a lot more confident in that direction now, and I've made some valuable connections."

Armstrong is one of 15 inaugural students in Colorado Law's Tech Lawyer Accelerator, designed to teach business skills and technology industry fundamentals before the students begin legal internships at technology firms.

Dean Philip Weiser had found that teaching students how to think like lawyers and develop practical legal skills wasn't enough. They also needed subject-matter expertise and basic business skills including teamwork and client interaction to be attractive to legal employers.

Under guidance by Bill Mooz, a former in-house lawyer at Sun Microsystems Inc. and now a scholar-in-residence at the law school, the Colorado program combines a four-week, on-campus "boot camp" with 10-week internships at technology firms that pay a minimum of \$20 an hour.

"We're committed to sharing this model," Weiser said. "We think that this is the future of legal education, and we want to help other institutions figure out how to make it work for them." There's no reason, he said, the idea wouldn't work for other areas of the law such as real estate or natural resources.

A WORKING PROTOTYPE

The initiative got a major boost in July, when student-loan provider Access Group Inc. pledged \$100,000 to help Colorado export the model to other interested law schools, Weiser said.

"This is just a working prototype, but I'm very excited about it, said Indiana University Maurer School of Law-Bloomington professor Bill Henderson, who advocates for legal education reform. "This program can potentially get employers excited about hiring law students, and there is also a quality-control element that you don't have in a typical internship. I think this will drive some real, positive changes within legal education."

Colorado carefully selected its first class, focusing on students who want to work in the technology sector. Just days after the spring semester ended, the students headed back to the classroom to learn how technology firms operate, the fundamentals of business and the practical skills they'd need in-house, often directly by general counsel.

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Then they began their internships at 13 technology companies. Many of those employers had never hosted an intern before but had relationships with Colorado faculty. Cisco Systems Inc.; data storage firm NetApp Inc.; and emergency response technology provider Intrado Inc. were among the participants.

"We showed them the bootcamp curriculum and told them, 'This is what we're teaching the students-this is how we're preparing them.'" Weiser said.

Nick Budor, associate general counsel at Ciber Inc., was an early proponent, serving on a law school career development committee last year that helped create the program. "The idea is that the multiweek bootcamp gives students a little bit of an acceleration in terms of their understanding of business concepts. You get someone who is a little more prepared to take on the tasks," Budor said.

Helen Parker, general counsel at social-media marketer Wayin Inc., said her intern, Otto Hanson, was unfazed on his first day when she gave him a nondisclosure agreement to work on- he'd covered such agreements in the bootcamp. "That's what's innovative to me-the idea that you train these young law students about technology, both the business and legal side, before they come in, so they can hit the ground running."

Second-year student Greg Garcia landed at Rally Software Development Corp.-a technology company that designs software used by other software developers. He reviewed and drafted contracts, analyzed real estate deals and got to know the company's business leaders. "I don't think I could have asked for anything more," said Garcia, who has extended his internship into the fall. "In speaking with classmates who had more traditional internship experiences, I'm certain I got a great deal."

Garcia had doubted his military and art background would position him for a legal job in the technology sector but now is convinced he's on the right path. "This is the kind of work I want to do and the kind of people I want to work with," he said.

The real test, however, is yet to come, Weiser said. "The proof will be whether the participating students end up getting off to promising careers that are aided by this. We are bullish on that point," he said. "I am convinced this program will put them ahead of other law students."

Contact Karen Sloan at ksloan@alm.com

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: LAWYERS (91%); LAWYERS (91%); CORPORATE COUNSEL (90%); CORPORATE COUNSEL (90%); GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (90%); GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (90%); APPRENTICESHIPS & INTERNSHIPS (90%); APPRENTICESHIPS & INTERNSHIPS (90%); LEGAL EDUCATION (90%); LEGAL EDUCATION (90%); STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (90%); STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (90%); LAW SCHOOLS (90%); LAW SCHOOLS (90%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (79%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (79%); EDUCATION REFORM (78%); EDUCATION REFORM (78%); AGREEMENTS (78%); AGREEMENTS (78%); TEACHING & TEACHERS (78%); TEACHING & TEACHERS (78%); STUDENT LOANS (74%); STUDENT LOANS (74%); STUDENT FINANCIAL AID (74%); STUDENT FINANCIAL AID (74%); LAW FIRM ATTORNEY RECRUITMENT (74%); LAW FIRM ATTORNEY RECRUITMENT (74%); RECRUITMENT & HIRING (67%); RECRUITMENT & HIRING (67%); QUALITY CONTROL (50%); QUALITY CONTROL (50%)

Company: CIBER INC (91%); CISCO SYSTEMS INC (84%); ORACLE AMERICA INC (69%); ACCESS GROUP INC (65%); NETAPP INC (60%)

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Organization: UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO (91%)

Ticker: CBR (NYSE) (91%); CSCO (NASDAQ) (84%); NTAP (NASDAQ) (60%)

Industry: LAWYERS (91%); LAWYERS (91%); CORPORATE COUNSEL (90%); CORPORATE COUNSEL (90%); GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (90%); GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (90%); LEGAL EDUCATION (90%); LEGAL EDUCATION (90%); LAW SCHOOLS (90%); LAW SCHOOLS (90%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (79%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (79%); REAL ESTATE (75%); REAL ESTATE (75%); LAW FIRM ATTORNEY RECRUITMENT (74%); LAW FIRM ATTORNEY RECRUITMENT (74%); CONSULTING SERVICES (73%); CONSULTING SERVICES (73%)

Geographic: COLORADO, USA (95%); COLORADO, USA (95%); INDIANA, USA (79%); INDIANA, USA (79%)

Load-Date: August 18, 2014