August 10, 2020

Dear Class of 2023:

Congratulations and welcome to The George Washington University Law School! You have chosen one of the most important times in history to study the law in one of the most influential locations in the world. Here at GW Law, you will have the opportunity to develop your professional identity as you pursue your professional dreams and aspirations. This letter introduces one of the signature programs designed to prepare you to be an excellent attorney: The GW Law Foundations of Practice Program.

**Why Foundations of Practice?** We developed the Foundations of Practice Program to prepare you for the real-life practice of law, which requires far more than what you will learn in the law school classroom. Employers seek to hire attorneys with a wide range of professional skills, including integrity, self-awareness, the ability to relate to clients and colleagues, and a lifelong commitment to professional development. Our award-winning program allows you to signal to employers that you understand the qualities of a successful and effective lawyer.

**What is Foundations of Practice?** This is a yearlong professional development program designed for first-year students. It will help you develop critical professional skills and guide you toward a meaningful and satisfying career that reflects your core values. The program enhances your job prospects while establishing a solid foundation for excellence in your chosen field.

**How Do I Participate?** Attached to this letter please find the requirements for the 1L Foundations of Practice program. **Students who successfully complete these requirements by the end of the 1L Spring semester (2LE Spring semester for part-time students) will be awarded the Dean’s Recognition for Professional Development.** This honor will be recorded on your transcript, and you may note the award on your resume. All program materials and instructions are posted on the law school portal under Foundations of Practice.

**What Do Legal Employers Say About Foundations of Practice?** Employers tell us that the Dean’s Recognition honor influences their hiring decisions by signifying that a student appreciates—and is highly motivated to develop—all of the skills needed to succeed in practice. In the words of Don Smith, Chief Talent & Inclusion Officer, at Crowell & Moring LLP, “At Crowell & Moring, we recognize that in addition to strong academic performance, the possession of professional skills is one of the most direct corollaries to overall career success. Programs like The Foundations of Practice help produce and identify students who understand important professional competencies and possess professional skills like client service, professionalism, and practice management. These students are particularly attractive candidates because they have an established track record of investing in their own professional development and evidence an early commitment to providing the best performance for our clients.”

I encourage you to take full advantage of GW Law’s Foundations of Practice program and look forward to welcoming you to the program and to GW Law this fall.

Sincerely,

Dayna Bowen Matthew
Dean and Harold H. Greene Professor of Law
Requirements for Dean’s Recognition for Professional Development

1. **Attend All Inns of Court Sessions** (students are expected to attend all sessions but they may miss no more than three to satisfy this requirement). Your Inn is your smaller community within the law school. This is the place to make connections with advisors, classmates, and prospective employers, to learn about the critical professional skills needed to succeed in practice and stand out in the job market, and to plan the career that’s right for you.

2. **Two Academic Excellence Workshops.** Academic Excellence workshops are designed to provide GW Law students with the knowledge and skills that are necessary to succeed academically in law school. Some of the topics covered include class preparation strategies, course outlining, and exam preparation. Workshops are promoted by the Dean of Students Office through the MyLaw portal, and at the Inns of Court sessions.

3. **Four Writing Center One-on-One Writing Conferences with Writing Fellows.** These conferences are a great way for you to get feedback on your writing and to develop your ability to assess and refine your own work. Writing Fellows give the writer a "reader's perspective" on a document's organization, structure, and analysis. In this way, they help students develop strategies for recognizing large-scale and small-scale problems in their work, as well as ways to correct those problems and produce more sophisticated documents in the future. You should view four conferences as the starting point and take full advantage of this valuable resource.

4. **Two Career Center Workshops.** The Career Center offers regular workshops throughout the year on informational interviews, résumés, interview skills, cover letters, and job search resources. These are small group interactive sessions during which the career advisor leading the workshop answers individual questions and offers tailored advice. You will learn how to conduct a job search and how to put your best foot forward with employers with well-crafted application materials.

5. **Initial Career Center Counseling Appointment.** In this structured small group appointment, you and your career advisor will discuss your interests, goals, values, and preferences to build a productive ongoing relationship and to inform your individual career plan. You will also examine your reasons for pursuing a law degree, to keep you grounded and goal-directed as you continue to explore the wide variety of options available to you in the law.

6. **Two Career Center Networking Events.** The Career Center holds several events throughout the year where you can meet alumni and other practicing attorneys, including the Practice Area Expo in the Fall and the Public Sector Recruiting Program in the Spring. (Networking events outside the law school may substitute for this requirement with appropriate documentation.) Building professional relationships is a critical skill for career satisfaction and success. This will be important to you as a law student in your job search and as a practicing lawyer for many purposes, such as business development, seeking co-counsel or local counsel, and participating in conferences.
7. **Four Informational Interviews with Different Lawyers Outside of the Law School with a Written Summary and Reflection.** Informational interviews are the most effective way to learn about what lawyers in different types of practice really do day-to-day, to make professional contacts for the long-term, and potentially to be “in the right place at the right time” for job opportunities.

8. **Three Health and Wellness Programs Offered by the Dean of Students Office, the SBA, or Outside Organizations with Approval.** These programs will help you build emotional resilience, manage stress, and empower you to flourish in law school and your legal career. As bar associations and legal employers have discovered, cultivating well-being is not only key to finding meaning in one’s work, it is particularly important to clients and the public because it impacts the delivery of legal services.

9. **Two Cultural Competency programs offered by the Dean of Students Office, the SBA Diversity Committee, SBA Affinity Groups, or Outside Organizations with Approval.** According to the American Psychological Association, cultural competency is "loosely defined as the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own." Becoming culturally competent is a developmental process that can be learned over time. It is critical to effectively serving clients and interacting with cross-cultural colleagues, and to the elimination of bias in the legal profession and justice system. It is also a mandate of the American Bar Association.

10. Students in the Jay Inn will be permitted two years to complete the program requirements.