

How to Use Law School to Help You Become a Lawyer

Professor Susan Bennett

Director, Community and Economic Development Law Clinic

Yet, remarkably, law school is the only professional school that fails to incorporate routinely what you will do as a professional into its required curriculum. Dentists, doctors, clergy, teachers, social workers all at some point in their professional training are supervised in the activity of integrating their classroom-

Places to learn to write (generally):

not a pain. I urge you to select a venue for your upper level writing requirement that will put you in close contact with a professor - an experienced writer - who will force you to submit and will comment extensively on an outline, a bibliography, and at least a first draft. A seminar through which you can fulfill your requirement is absolutely the best place in which to do so. A closely supervised independent study may also suffice, but you will miss the additional feedback that other students in a seminar can and often do provide. As attractive as writing for a law review may be, if it does not offer that kind of scrutiny, it will not help you improve your writing.

Your upper level will solidify your skills in researching with primary and secondary source research, and in analysis and

opportunities you will encounter in the practice of law. These opportunities focus on sensitizing you to what your audience will find most persuasive, and to how to deliver that persuasive message in writing. The opportunities include advocacy on behalf of clients to persuade a trial judge, administrative agency adjudicator or appellate panel. Other, non-litigative advocacy settings include those transactional settings in which you draft contracts for clients (your audience is your client and the other, contracting party, and perhaps some future adjudicator if things go wrong;) and legislative drafting.

advocacy courses, which provide definite skills but do not focus on writing;)

Courses in appellate advocacy (as distinguished from moot court competitions, which do not focus expert attention on your writing. Peer provide your sole opportunity for review.)

iting that your externship supervisor can use in court or in some other advocacy

all the time: in courts and administrative agencies, of course, but also at public

described. But externship and clinical seminars, which integrate rigorous classroom work with fieldwork, offer a laboratory within which to acquire and practice all these skills.

Clinic seminars use re skills such as interviewing, counseling and negotiation, which you carry over into your work with your clients. Virtually all clinical experiences shine a laser light on your writing. Whether you write research memos, contracts, interrogatories,