

The Program

The GPP consists of four courses, one each semester in the second and third years of law school. The program is limited enrollment and individual courses feature no greater than a 1 to 16 faculty/student ratio.

The courses may include:

- GPP I, Fall Second Year – Domestic Relations
- GPP II, Spring Second Year – Real Estate Transactions, Environmental Law Transactions, and Commercial Transactions.
- GPP III, Fall Third Year – Business Planning and Employment Law; Pre-trial Litigation; Criminal Law
- GPP IV, Spring Third Year – Advanced Transactions, including Bankruptcy, Personal Injury, Education Law, and Estate Planning, Landlord/Tenant, Mediation

For complete course descriptions, please refer to the VLS Catalog or to www.vermontlaw.edu/academic/acagpp.cfm.

A General Practice Program Certificate is awarded to students who have successfully completed all four GPP courses. Students may, in lieu of GPP III or GPP IV, enroll in a clinical placement such as the South Royalton Legal Clinic, a Semester in Practice, or an internship. Students who do not wish to receive a certificate may enroll in the individual GPP courses if space is available.



For more information please contact:

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photography: Jon Gilbert Fox

VERMONT LAW SCHOOL



GENERAL
PRACTICE
PROGRAM



The General Practice Program will enable you to
"... hit the ground running."

– Greg Shelton '97, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

VERMONT LAW SCHOOL

P. O. Box 96
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South Royalton, VT 05068



Experience Matters

A substantial gap can exist between what law school students learn and what they will need to know as graduates. Vermont Law School's General Practice Program (GPP) bridges this gap with a comprehensive set of practice-oriented courses, which help students become more confident and effective lawyers.

Director Susan B. Apel explains, "The GPP creates a learning experience that simulates the circumstances encountered in a general practice. Students learn by doing the things that a practicing lawyer does on a daily basis. Classes are structured to operate as a law firm, with professors, in the role of senior partners, providing instruction and supervision for the student 'associates.'"

Students are taught, and have the opportunity to practice, the skills of counseling, drafting, interviewing, mediation, negotiation, oral argument, and pre-trial preparation. Substantive areas typically include bankruptcy law, business planning, commercial transactions, criminal law, domestic relations, education law, employment law, estate planning, and real estate law.

Courses are taught by a mix of regular faculty and experienced practitioners. The level of interaction that GPP students have with practicing attorneys is one of many program highlights. Students have ample opportunity to develop their practice styles through exposure to experts in diverse legal disciplines.

Gregory Shelton '97 is an associate in the Manhattan office of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP. Skadden Arps has offices worldwide and is the largest law firm in New York. "The GPP," says Shelton, "really set me apart from other associates."

"I was able to hit the ground running," Shelton recalls. "I already had exposure to things. For example, through the tort litigation section of the GPP, I had already drafted a complaint, drafted an answer, done interrogatories and document requests, and basically had to work through a case. Having known all of this, and having done it before, I was already four to five steps up on the learning curve ahead of my colleagues."



Gregory Shelton '97

Another GPP graduate, Rhonda Sheffield '98, maintains, "Without the GPP, I don't think I'd be where I am today." Sheffield, who serves as deputy states attorney for Vermont's Windsor County, was initially attracted to the program because she knew that it offered hands-on learning.

"The GPP gave me more confidence and helped me grow as a person," Sheffield continues. "The program offers a 'group dynamic,' with people working together. It allowed me to hear how others might solve a problem."

What Distinguishes VLS's Program

Vermont Law School's General Practice Program is substantially different from general practice specializations or concentrations at other law schools. The program is distinguished by its format, its comprehensive nature and length, and the opportunities that it presents to students.

The VLS program is simulation-based, in contrast with other general practice programs that are based on the clinic model. Clinical general practice programs restrict students to whatever cases happen to "walk in the door," which limits the variety of legal issues that students can explore.

VLS's simulation-based program allows for a greater range of possibilities. Assistant Director Cathryn Nunlist '90, a GPP graduate and a practicing attorney, notes, "A simulation-based format allows us to cover issues that we know will be of importance to our students. It also provides flexibility from year to year, allowing the program to be geared toward particular topics or skills as needed."

Some law schools offer programs featuring general practice courses that are one or two semesters in duration, while others have concentrations that consist of required courses and recommended electives, which stem from the school's regular course offerings.

In contrast, Vermont Law School offers a complete program, which extends over two years. The GPP includes four courses that,



taken together, form a comprehensive whole. Students also have the option of taking individual courses as electives.

R. Jeffrey Lyman '93 is an environmental and real estate partner at Goodwin Procter LLP, where he is involved with many of the most significant commercial development projects in Massachusetts. Previously, he served as Massachusetts Assistant Secretary of Environmental Affairs and Massachusetts EPA (MEPA) Director.

Lyman took just one GPP course, GPP IV, which he says "went very well. I thought it would be worthwhile because of the format, the ability to do a mediation, the ability to argue a motion, and the ability to engage in an active, real-life negotiation."

An attorney who clearly enjoys his work, Lyman believes that his positive experience in the GPP foreshadowed his current job satisfaction. "I enjoyed the GPP, and that's not simply a reflection of the program being run in a pleasant way. The program was designed to replicate or anticipate what real-world law practice is like. If you enjoy the program, then it gives you some degree of confidence coming out of law school that you'll enjoy law practice."