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10 YEARS IN SPACE LAW: LESSONS IN EDUCATING POST-DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN SPACE
LAW

Abstract

In its tenth year the Space, Cyber, and Telecommunications Law (SCTL) Program at the University of Nebraska College of Law marked several major milestones, from U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) research contracts, to receiving NASA grants, to graduating our 68th post-doctoral student with a degree or concentration in space law. The SCTL program is unique both among law schools and among the other departments within the major research institution we're part of.

There are four major things that make our program distinctive and innovative in instructing postdoctoral students in space law: our military collaborations, our focus on government or private sector funded research, our innovative teaching practices and online classrooms, and our focus on experiential learning. This paper will discuss those core initiatives which set us apart from other legal programs, while also discussing the rarity of doctoral and postdoctoral legal and policy programs focused on space.

The SCTL program is part of a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) with U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). A UARC is a DoD research center associated with a university; the University of Nebraska is one of 17 world-wide. Our partnership is made even more distinctive by including the college of law. The research partnership has been critical to program growth, recruitment, and student outcomes. Further the majority of our on-campus students are active duty Air Force, Marine, Naval, and Army Judge Advocate Generals coming to our program on assignment.

Most law schools put an emphasis on research by requiring their faculty to produce scholarship law reviews – in that way Nebraska is no different. What is unique about the SCTL program is the push to broaden what we consider legal scholarship and break out of the traditional law review mold. Additionally, we bring our innovative vision into the classroom using our synchronous online teaching method that allows distance students to attend class just like those on campus.

An emphasis on experiential learning has become critical for our students. Over the past 10 years we've developed models and methods, which will be explored in this paper, to help students complete real-life experiences to aid them as they begin their space law career.

In sum, this paper will detail what sets us apart from other legal programs focused on space, while also discussing the rarity of doctoral and postdoctoral legal and policy programs that look-up and challenge students to think about laws beyond our earth.