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Author: Ms. Lauren Bydalek
University of Nebraska, College of Law, United States

UNIQUE APPROACHES IN SPACE LEGAL EDUCATION

Abstract

Celebrating its fifteenth anniversary, the Space, Cyber, and National Security Law (SCNSL) Program at the University of Nebraska College of Law has achieved significant milestones, including a program name change, obtaining grants from NASA, and spearheading the work on the Woomera Manual on the International Law of Military Space Activities and Operations.

Notably, the program has seen an increase in both LLM students and JD students getting concentrations. Within the academic landscape, the SCNSL program is innovative, not only among law schools, but also among other departments within our research institution. This distinction is attributed to four key elements: robust military collaborations, a focus on government or private sector-funded research, a commitment to experiential learning, and offering courses that connect concepts across space, cyber, national security, international, and telecommunications law. This paper delves into the factors that make our program unique and distinguish our program from other legal offerings.

A noteworthy aspect of the SCNSL program is its affiliation with a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) partnered with U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). As one of only 17 such centers globally, the University of Nebraska's inclusion of the College of Law adds a unique dimension to this research collaboration, proving instrumental in the program's growth, recruitment efforts, and overall student success. Additionally, a significant proportion of our on-campus students are active-duty Air Force, Marine, Naval, and Army Judge Advocate Generals, enhancing the program's real-world relevance.

While many law schools prioritize faculty research through traditional law review publications, the SCNSL program distinguishes itself by redefining legal scholarship and challenging the conventional law review mold. Over the years, our students have had the opportunity to participate in a number of different writings and presentations, including the European Centre of Excellence in Countering Hybrid Threats, the U.S. Strategic Command Deterrence and Assurance Academic Alliance, and more.

Recognizing the evolving landscape of legal education, our emphasis on experiential learning has become indispensable. Over the past decade, we have developed models and methods for helping students to find internships in the field to facilitate practical experience for students, equipping them for successful careers in space law.

In summary, this paper provides a comprehensive exploration of the distinguishing features that set the SCNSL program apart from traditional legal offerings in the realm of space law. It also sheds light on the rarity of legal and policy postgraduate programs that focus on laws governing activities beyond Earth.