

Legal writing

the pen is mightier than the s

The Legal Writing team is dedicated to arming all Marquette law students with one of the most powerful tools any attorney can possess—the ability to clearly, concisely and accurately communicate with a reader using the written word while addressing a range of professional writing tasks.

Professor of Legal Writing Kathleen McManus, (second from left) and her four full-time colleagues (pictured with her below) each teach two sections of first-year students,

who are required to take Legal Research and Writing each semester. During the first semester, students concentrate on objective, predictive writing such as interoffice memos to a senior partner. During the second semester, students' focus shifts to persuasive writing, during which time they conduct research and write memos to a trial court on behalf of their hypothetical clients.

“Our focus,” said Kathleen, “is to teach students to use clear, concise, ordinary lan-



Marti Wronski



Katie McManus
Jessica Price



guage, and to use that language eloquently. We work a lot with precision, which relates directly to the clear thinking that good writing requires,” she said.

The Program

The growth of the Legal Writing Program is a direct result of expectations from the profession. “Practitioners want us to make our students better writers and better advocates,” said Kathleen. “Practitioners expect students to be able to present a well-written and well-reasoned legal proof and to be able to present a compelling argument.” It is the goal of the Legal Writing team to have Marquette Law grads hit the ground running. “When our students get into a law office as clerks, they bring with them a set of writing and research skills that distinguish them from others in a most positive way,” said Kathleen.

While Legal Research and Writing is a formal course for first-year students, the Law School’s research and writing curriculum extends well beyond these two first-year classes. Prior to graduation, each student must take a one credit Advanced Research class and a two credit seminar class, which by definition requires significant research and writing. Most students also expand their writing experience in their litigation courses, workshop courses, judicial internships, supervised field placements, and extracurricular activities such as Moot Court and Law Review.

The Faculty

The first-year writing program is able to give individual attention to each student because of the Law School’s decision to hire full-time faculty to teach in that program and because of the legal writing faculty’s dedication to their teaching mission. Kathleen speaks highly of her colleagues, all of whom graduated from law school with a distinguished record, and had been practicing attorneys—and some have judicial clerkship experience. They are all very committed to the program and to our students and are very generous with their time and expertise,” she said. Our mission as a legal writing faculty is to teach a core set of professional skills

(research, reasoning, advocacy, and writing) in the context of problem solving and the practice of law” said Kathleen.

Quoting the title of a recent legal writing conference, Assistant Professor of Legal Writing Jill Hayford (second from right) describes the nuance of legal writing as “legal thinking in ink.” She believes that Marquette has responded well to the expectations of the profession by enhancing the legal writing program, a program that is a pace setter through its rigorous program and dynamic curriculum, which requires nine credits for legal writing and research training. “These skills serve our students well and distinguish our graduates,” she said. •



Jill Hayford
Alison Julien