Using Upper Level Legal Research Labs to Develop Marketable Students

2018 SEAALL Conference

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Agenda

- What are they?
- Why are they needed?
- Where to start?
- Course specific examples
- Moving forward
What are Research Labs?

- One credit hour classes that complement and correspond to an already existing class
- Research labs have been taught three times at NCCU Law
Why Research Labs are Needed (Student Focus)

- Makes up for deficiencies in research class taught during 1L year
  - Short duration (5 weeks)
  - Develop context
  - Students often too overwhelmed to dedicate time and effort to research
Why Research Labs are Needed (Librarian Focus)

- Shrinking budgets and shrinking collections necessitate change
- Provides an opportunity for librarians to show their value and contribute
  - Tenure
  - Faculty relationship
  - Job security
Pairing Labs with Classes

- Identified classes we thought research labs would complement
  - Legal Letters (class where students research a problem and prepare client letters, demand letters, etc.)
  - Judicial Opinion Writing
  - Appellate Advocacy

- Identified faculty we thought we be receptive to the idea
Creating the First Lab

- Proposed idea to library director
- Library director mentioned idea to faculty at a retreat, and a Legal Letters (Disability Law) professor was interested
- Submitted a written proposal to the curriculum committee
- First class was taught in the fall of 2016
  - Pass/fail
  - 1 credit hour
Getting Faculty On Board

- Once we had completed the first lab, we planned on “advertising” future classes
  - 5 minute presentation at faculty meeting
  - Doctrinal professor spoke highly of class to other professors
  - Direct emails to faculty

- We were able to teach two labs in the fall of 2017 (Legal Letters, Judicial Opinion Writing)
Legal Letters Fall 2017

- All assignments corresponded to what the doctrinal professor was doing in class
- Example, the client engagement letter

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<tr>
<th>Week Two</th>
<th>Client Interviews Roberta Brown and Cassandra Young; Assigning Engagement Letter</th>
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<td>Week Three</td>
<td>Discussion: “Contents of Engagement letter; counseling, decision making, and ethical considerations.”</td>
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<td>Week Four</td>
<td>Peer review of Engagement Letter, and general class discussion.</td>
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<td>Week Five</td>
<td>Final Engagement Letter due; Assign Interoffice Memorandum; Discussion: “How to Write an Interoffice Memorandum of Law.” Guest: Reference Librarian on resources on legal issues</td>
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Engagement Letter Research Log
(Example of Assignment)

Research Log – Engagement Letters

Find at least five sources with useful information on writing engagement letters. You should spend a MINIMUM of two hours researching this assignment. These can be print secondary sources or example engagement letters found on an electronic database. Factors to consider when writing a good engagement letter include:

1. Developing an emotional relationship with the client. These clients consider themselves victims and often benefit from feeling emotionally supported.
2. Fee schedule. How will you be charging the client? Hourly? Contingent fee basis?
3. How to withdraw. What circumstances could occur that would cause you or the client to terminate the relationship?
4. Tone of your letter. Not condescending, but conveying relevant and necessary information without sounding pompous.
5. Less than five pages long.

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<tr>
<th>Source (Author, Title, database name, etc.)</th>
<th>How was the source helpful? What information did you learn?</th>
<th>How did you ensure the source was current?</th>
<th>Time Spent in Source</th>
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Judicial Opinion Writing Fall 2017

- All assignments corresponded to what the doctrinal professor was doing in class
- JOW Assignments
  - Bench Brief A (Due 9.19.17)
  - Bench Brief B (Due 10.5.17)
  - Opinion of the Court (Draft Due 11.7.17, Final Due 11.28.17)
- Lab Assignments
  - Research Logs
  - CALI Lessons
  - Final Reflection
Bench Brief A Research Log

Name:                                      Time Spent (Must be at least one hour on research):

Cases Research Log- Bench Brief A

Instructions
Find five cases that are NOT included in any of the submitted briefs that may be useful for Bench Brief A.

Provide the following information per source:
1. Citation
2. How you found it
3. BRIEFLY (2-3 sentences) summarize the case.
4. Why it is useful for your assignment?
5. Provide the citator information for the case. (i.e. can you cite it?)
Problems and Pitfalls

- Scheduling
- ABA time requirements
- Assignments can be heavily front-loaded depending on doctrinal professor’s syllabus
- Enrollment issues (students, librarians)
Moving Forward

- Making lab required, not optional
- Getting added to the regular schedule
  - Once we get regularly scheduled, this might make it necessary to get the doctrinal professor’s syllabus earlier
- Utilizing CLIO or some other time management software
- Incorporating into other writing courses
Questions