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### Practical Opportunity

Katie Ball  
ktball@uidaho.edu

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## A PRACTICAL OPPORTUNITY

Katie Ball

*University of Idaho College of Law*

This month, 13 students from the University of Idaho College of Law will travel to the Treasure Valley to spend their final semester of law school in the semester-in-practice program. Through this program students receive law school credit for working in externships at various agencies and institutions, such as the federal and state district courts, the Idaho Supreme Court, county prosecuting attorney and public defender offices, Idaho Legal Aid Services, and the Idaho Attorney General's Office.

In past years, the externship students have worked only in public sector placements. This Spring semester we will have one student in a private corporate placement, working under the supervision of the legal department at Boise, Inc. We hope this cooperative work with private sector attorneys will continue to foster the externship program's goal to bridge the gap between theory and practice for advanced law students by affording them the opportunity to work on a close, personal basis with judges and practicing attorneys.

The externship program not only provides students with practical experience and the opportunity to develop professional values and skills under the supervision of well-respected members of the Idaho Bar, it also benefits the supervisors. Jim Dickinson with the Ada County Prosecuting Attorney's Office describes the externship program as "a valuable program" for his office. The students who work at the prosecutor's office assist with research and writing projects and also appear in court. As one student in the inaugural semester-in-practice class explains: "The externship was a win-win for everyone involved: I got a chance to obtain some practical/real-world experience, while at the same time helping to take a few items off of the long to-do list/backlog of [the judge's] cases."<sup>1</sup> These sentiments are echoed by a student in the most recent semester-in-practice course: "The externship program provides the finishing touches that a law school education cannot give. It offers an environment in which one can comprehensively utilize all the research, writing, and legal knowledge gained in law school without some of the stresses that our first 'real' jobs will have."<sup>2</sup>

In an effort to better prepare the students for this real world experience, the law school is trying something new with the

semester-long externships — the students will be divided into subject matter seminars for the course work associated with the externships. Six students will participate in the first judicial externship seminar with classes taught by judges and career law clerks, designed to help train the students to work as law clerks.

The semester-long externship course is just one of three externship programs the law school offers. Some students participate in externships during the school year in the Moscow area. Most of our students, however, participate in the summer externship program. Last summer we had 54 students working with attorneys in Washington, California, Alaska, New Mexico, Washington D.C., Madrid, and throughout Idaho. Next summer we plan to commence a natural resource/water law externship course for our students who are seeking concurrent degrees in the Water Resources Program or participating in the natural resource concentration program. This targeted externship course will include classes taught by government lawyers who specialize in natural resource and water law.

We are always interested in providing new externship placements for our students. For more information on how to become a supervisor in the program, please visit our website at <http://www.law.uidaho.edu/default.aspx?pid=65565>, or contact Katie Ball at [ktball@uidaho.edu](mailto:ktball@uidaho.edu).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Katie Ball** is the Externship Coordinator for the University of Idaho College of Law. She also works part-time at the federal court as a law clerk to the Hon. Ronald E. Bush.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This comment was provided by Angela Sellman, a tax attorney with Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP in New York and a member of the Idaho State Bar.

<sup>2</sup> Sean Beck graduated from the University of Idaho College of Law in May, 2008, and currently works as a law clerk for the Honorable Michael Wetherell at the Fourth District Court in Ada County.

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