FROM THE MEXICAN BORDER TO THE HALLS OF CONGRESS, the controversy over immigration law has intensified and become more critical to U.S. policymakers. Virginia’s Immigration Law Program allows students to explore the key legal and public policy issues affecting this debate, including whom the United States should admit, who should qualify for political asylum, what should be done about the undocumented, and the impact of immigration on the economy or on national security.

Learning from experienced faculty, students consider issues posed by immigration and build practical skills through an immigration clinic and pro bono efforts offering aid to clients. The program also brings in expert speakers on immigration law, including leading attorneys and policy advocates, immigration judges and government officials.

Scholars and former government officials recently gathered to discuss more stable and sustainable approaches to immigration control during a symposium at UVA Law. “The Future of Immigration Enforcement,” sponsored by the IMMIGRATION LAW PROGRAM and the JOURNAL OF LAW & POLITICS, was presented in honor of PROFESSOR DAVID MARTIN, who formerly served as the second-highest-ranking lawyer at the DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY and the general counsel of the IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE.

DORIS MEISSNER, senior fellow at the MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE and former commissioner of the INS, delivered the keynote address.

COURSES AND SEMINARS

CORE COURSES
Citizenship and Group Identity
Immigration Law
Refugee Law and Policy

RELATED COURSES
Administrative Law
Antiterrorism, Law and the Role of Intelligence
Foreign Relations Law
Governance and Control of the Multinational Business Enterprise
Human Rights, Public International Law and the Scholarly Process
International Human Rights Law
International Human Rights Law Clinic
International Law
International Law and International Relations

COURSES AND SEMINARS

CLINIC
Immigration Law Clinic

Labor Law
Legislation
National Security Law
Presidential Powers
Race and Law

These courses represent the 2013-15 school years. Not all courses are offered every year.
HUNTON & WILLIAMS PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP

Attorneys from the Richmond-based law firm Hunton & Williams work pro bono with the assistance of student volunteers to represent indigent clients in the areas of immigration, asylum and family law.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND PRO BONO PROJECTS

Outside of the classroom, the Immigration Law Program provides students with numerous hands-on learning experiences.

HUNTON & WILLIAMS PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP

In partnership with the Charlottesville-based Legal Aid Justice Center, the semester-long IMMIGRATION LAW CLINIC allows students to work with multiple clients to gain hands-on experience in immigration matters. In one of the cases, CHRISTINE GILLELAND ’14 (middle) and SARAH ALLEN ’15 [right] helped win asylum for a Rwandan filmmaker who relocated to Charlottesville out of fear of retaliation for her political beliefs. Allen also helped a Mexican immigrant who suffered domestic abuse attain a U visa, and EMILY SCHIRMER ’14 helped a man from Ghana attain permanent U.S. residency after he was abandoned by his American wife.

MIGRANT FARM WORKER PROJECT

Run by the student group the Latin American Law Organization, the Migrant Farmworker Project works with the Legal Aid Justice Center’s Immigrant Advocacy Program to assist an isolated population often in need of legal counsel. The program represents immigrants and farmworkers throughout the state. Although the center handles mostly employment law cases, it also takes housing and discrimination cases. Student members of the Migrant Farmworker Project visit migrant farm labor camps and inform workers about their rights. The project also seeks to increase awareness about the substandard treatment of immigrant workers and conditions in which they live and work in Virginia. Students do not need to speak Spanish to participate.

IMMIGRANT JAIL OUTREACH PROJECT

In conjunction with the Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights Coalition, law student volunteers are trained to help CAR Coalition attorneys in their work at local jails in Virginia housing hundreds of immigrant detainees. Students may assist in know-your-rights presentations, interview detainees to screen for those who may have claims to immigration status, and conduct initial case development with follow-up interviews and legal research. CAIR then attempts to place cases in their pro bono network or refers to outside counsel those with legitimate claims to status who lack the resources to fund their own defense.

A bill championed by graduates JULIANNE JAQUITH ’14 and ROXANA MILLER ’14 to protect unsuspecting immigrants in Virginia from immigration consultant fraud recently became law in the state.

“We hope that our contribution in this area will create awareness among residents of the Commonwealth and help protect innocent victims from unscrupulous individuals,” Miller said.

The students said the idea to work on the legislation began as an assignment for their Public Interest Law and Advocacy Skills class.

PROFESSOR KERRY ABRAMS recently explored how immigration and citizenship law decides who receives rights of parentage in her paper, “Immigration’s Family Values,” which was co-authored with KENT PIACENTI ’12. Abrams has written numerous articles on the intersection of immigration law and family law, the history of immigration law, and the marriage equality movement.

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