Concordia U. School of Law Selected for National Project

BOISE, Idaho — Concordia University School of Law has reached an agreement, along with five other law schools, with The Center for Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction (CALI®), to develop a course kit as a part of the Access to Justice Clinical Course Project (A2J Clinic Project). Other schools selected include Columbia Law School, CUNY School of Law, Georgetown University Law Center, UNC School of Law, and the University Of Miami School Of Law.

“We're pleased that Concordia Law's excellent program is gaining nationwide recognition in legal education in its first year,” Dean Cathy R. Silak said following the announcement. “It is a privilege to partner with schools, like Columbia and Georgetown that have been around for more than 100 years and are universally recognized as some of the very best in American education, and others, like CUNY, which are well known for their excellence in clinical work and practical legal education. This is a great opportunity for all six law schools to work together, building on the excellent work pioneered by CALI and IIT Chicago-Kent School of Law.”

Each participating institution will develop and document a course model that uses A2J Author® to teach its students how technology tools can be used to lower barriers to justice for low-income, self-represented litigants. CALI will use those course models to assist other law schools in establishing A2J Clinical Courses as a permanent part of their law school curriculum.

A2J Author is a software tool developed by CALI and the Center for Access to Justice & Technology at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law to deliver greater access to justice for self-represented litigants by enabling lawyers and law students to rapidly build user-friendly web-based document assembly tools called A2J Guided Interviews®.

Associate Dean of Academics Greg Sergienko and Director of Experiential Learning and Career Services Jodi Nafzger will integrate the A2J model created by Professor Ronald W. Staudt of IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, into Concordia Law’s curriculum to develop an original course offering at the law school. Upon completion of the course, Sergienko and Nafzger will deliver a course kit that includes a syllabus, a list of course materials, and a process for completing A2J Guided Interviews, along with a teacher’s manual explaining their methodology for teaching the course.

“This is a major asset for Concordia Law,” Associate Dean of Academics Greg Sergienko said. “It involves our faculty and students working with first-rate peer institutions around the country in developing innovative clinical programs that can serve people in ways that traditional face-to-face clinical programs cannot.”

Understanding that eighty percent of legal need of lower-income individuals goes unmet each year, the software CALI produces helps create a legal program to turn users’ answers into documents that can be filed in court. This will provide legal help to those who can’t afford lawyers.

“We hope it will help existing providers of legal aid, like Idaho Legal Aid Services, Inc., and we're looking forward to working with them on this,” Sergienko said. “We hope this will also help our over-worked judges by focusing the attention of unrepresented litigants on the legally relevant issues, saving our court system’s time and money.”

The program for students at Concordia Law will launch in the fall of 2013 and Sergienko and Nafzger will begin training on the A2J model in February.

ABOUT CALI and A2J Clinical Project:
CALI®, the Center for Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction, is a nonprofit consortium of law schools whose mission includes promoting “access to justice through the use of computer technology.”

A2J Author is currently used in more than 30 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and Canada. More than 880 A2J Guided Interviews are actively used on the national server, Law Help Interactive. These A2J Guided Interviews have been used by self-represented litigants more than 2,000,000 times. A redesigned A2J Author 5.0 is currently in development, which will allow users to access the software from any Web browser, including a smartphone.

IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law is the law school of Illinois Institute of Technology, a private, Ph.D.-granting institution with programs in engineering, psychology, architecture, business, design and law. The Center for Access to Justice & Technology was established at IIT Chicago-Kent to make justice more accessible to the public by promoting the use of the Internet in the teaching, practice, and public access to the law. The Center conducts research, builds software tools, teaches classes and supports faculty, staff and student projects on access to justice and technology. CAJT developed A2J Author in 2005, in partnership with CALI.

ABOUT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
Concordia University School of Law in Boise, Idaho, is part of Concordia University, a private, Lutheran, liberal arts university based in northeast Portland, Oregon, with a mission of preparing leaders for the transformation of society. Founded in 1905, Concordia University serves over 3,000 students through its College of Education, College of Health & Human Services, College of Theology, Arts, & Sciences, School of Management and School of Law. Concordia University School of Law and the George R. White Law Library opened to the inaugural class of students in the Fall of 2012. For more information visit www.concordialaw.com.

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