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2019 Siena Summer Legal Fellows Reflection
Albany Law School
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August 03, 2019

My experience this summer at Albany Law School has been a very educational and rewarding opportunity. I had the pleasure of working with some of the most insightful and knowledgeable attorneys in the capitol region at the Government Law Center. I am honored to have assisted on the Rural Law Initiative, the project I was assigned to collaborate on this summer. I look forward to seeing the continuous growth and support of the program throughout the community. This summer provided me an excellent introduction to legal research and has assisted me in making my finalized decision to attend law school following Siena College.

The Rural Law Initiative is a pilot program created to support small legal businesses in rural upstate New York. The Government Law Center at Albany Law School offers assistance to small practitioners and free legal education in rural upstate New York. Our assignment was to research various different programs that similarly supported rural attorneys/clients and how they implemented such strategies. Our examination involved interacting with various state bar associations and law schools approved by the American Bar Association throughout the United States to establish patterns of different programs offered through these institutions. I was able to reach out to various different administrators at law schools throughout the country that were very interested in our research. I learned that important information is not always readily available on the internet and that it takes time and effort to gather the correct information from the right contacts. The data we received from staff within state bar associations and law schools was distributed to the New York State Bar Association Rural Task Force for use.

Although our research was a group effort, individually we established our own interests within the Rural Law Initiative. Taier Perlman, Staff Attorney for the Rural Law Initiative at the Government Law Center and Co-Chair for the Rural Task Force brought myself and the other

Siena fellows to a Rural Task Force meeting at the New York State Bar Association Headquarters in Albany, New York. Here we were introduced to many legal professionals throughout the state of New York, many of which who currently reside and practice in rural counties throughout the state and have a dedication to improving the quality of legal justice in these areas. It was inspiring to hear the personal stories of many judges and attorneys describing various qualified attorneys having to leave their hometowns to practice law in bigger cities mainly due to the substantial increase in pay in metropolitan areas. Many of the recent graduates wished to serve their communities, but could not financially afford a lifestyle in their local communities which is a challenge the task force is working on overcoming. There were many different areas that we were permitted to focus our attention towards including increasing broadband & technology in rural New York, strategies regarding funding between attorneys and indigent clients, and identifying law & policy barriers that lead to challenges within legal practice in rural communities. While these subjects are quite interesting, I became the most invested in determining possible solutions to support law practice in rural communities through the efforts of various groups including state bar associations, local bar associations, law schools, community efforts, etc. Our original research served as excellent support for my study on identifying ways to overcome legal injustices in rural communities.

Throughout my investigation, I determined the programs that I believe will be the most successful in overcoming legal barriers in rural communities are legal incubator programs and legal mentorship programs. I used these two programs as the subject of my final policy memo paper. Legal incubator programs provide training and research experience to recent law school graduates who wish to operate a small private practice. The sources I gathered reveal that legal

incubator programs are extremely successful in the areas that they have been implemented, particularly in the state of California. The mentorship program I modeled my policy paper on was a mentorship program sponsored by the Mobile, Alabama Bar Association, which included a panel of experienced lawyers and also 8 free credit hours of continuing legal education for newly admitted attorneys. These young attorneys have the opportunity to ask experienced attorneys various challenging questions and to also expand their knowledge of expertise through this mentorship program which is extremely important for attorneys who wish to operate their own practice and need to be specialized in a variety of areas. My final policy memo and presentation incorporated these programs into a possible solution for overcoming rural legal injustices throughout New York State. These programs would allow young attorneys to replace older, retiring attorneys in rural New York which would diminish the greying bar, which is in part why there are fewer attorneys in rural New York currently. In addition, these programs may incentivize young attorneys to practice in rural communities due to the elimination of fear and or anxiety of operating a small practice as a result of training and educational experiences. I am hopeful that if these programs were implemented in rural New York, they would produce positive change in these areas for both attorneys and clients. The memo and presentation that we submitted are being shared with the Rural Task Force to further assist in their research as well.

During my experience at Albany Law School, I was exposed to many crucial components of working in the legal field. Within one week of my time there, myself and the other fellows were trained on two legal research programs, Westlaw and LexisNexis. Our knowledge of these two programs will be extremely useful for legal research during law school and also for the duration of our careers as practicing attorneys. I was given the opportunity to work with amazing

individuals, first and foremost Jordyn Conway, who helped us feel very comfortable with the school and the resources that it has to offer, Taier Perlman, staff attorney for the Rural Law Initiative who allowed us to share her dedication with us on the Rural Law Initiative, and the Director of the Government Law Center, Andy Ayers who is extremely knowledgeable and passionate about his work for the law school. Aside from those mentioned, I am also grateful I was able to connect with various other smart and educated individuals within the Government Law Center at Albany Law School. This summer was a fulfilling experience and I am appreciative that I was selected to be part of such a great program.