Certified Legal Intern Process

Students in some clinical courses will have the opportunity to appear in State Court and assume the role of a practicing attorney as a Certified Legal Intern, supervised by an approved licensed attorney. All Certified Legal Interns must have completed legal studies amounting to at least 48 credit hours and be registered in a Clinic or Externship. Additional requirements and the process for becoming a CLI are outlined below:

To become certified a student must:

A) Register with the Florida Bar Board of Bar Examiners with either a Student Registration or a Certified Legal Intern Registration. The Florida Board of Bar Examiners will conduct an investigation into the student’s character and fitness. Students are urged to start this process their first year of law school to allow the most time for investigation to be completed and the least expensive fees. On average, this process takes 6 to 8 months and may require the student to submit additional information. Although the process is sometimes completed in less than 6 months, it can also take considerably longer. More information can be found at http://www.floridabarexam.org/.

B) If the Florida Board of Bar Examiners determines there is nothing in the applicant’s background that would necessarily preclude admission to the Florida Bar, it will issue a letter of approval to the applicant sometimes referred to as a “letter of clearance” or “notice of registrant clearance.” Once the student receives the “notice of registrant clearance,” the student may be provisionally placed in a clinical course that requires certification. The student must then complete an Application for Certification which will be provided to them upon notification that they have been provisionally selected. The application requires the student to certify:

a. That he or she has completed legal studies amounting to at least four semesters or six quarters for which the student has received not less than 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours of academic credit or the equivalent if the school is on some other basis;

b. That he or she has read and is familiar with the Rules of Professional Conduct;

and

c. Whether there is something that might reflect adversely on their character.

If there is something the student needs to disclose they will have to provide a statement for the Court, including the specifics of each incident, with dates and dispositions, and a signed verification that all information provided is true and accurate, (all disclosures made in law school applications, to any state bar, and the Application for Certification should be consistent) and the supervising attorney from the hosting agency will receive
a copy of the disclosure and a form they will complete indicating that they have reviewed the disclosure and if they agree to supervise the student.

The student must also attach a copy of the Notice of Registrant Clearance.

The completed Application, any disclosures, and a copy of the Notice of Registrant Clearance must be turned in to Zoraya Ledesma at the Clinical Program Office RDB 1010. Ms. Ledesma will then obtain the Dean’s certification letter to attach to the package.

Zoraya Ledesma will then forward the Applications for Certification, any applicable disclosures and the accompanying Agreement to Supervise forms, copies of the Notice of Registrant Clearance, and Dean’s Letter to the Florida Supreme Court.

Upon review and acceptance from The Florida Supreme Court they will then issue a letter to Florida International University College of Law designating qualified students as CLIs.

Additionally, Rule 11-1.9 allows students, upon graduation, to be certified to "make appearances for any of the same supervisory authorities under the same circumstances and restrictions that were applicable to students in law school programs pursuant to this chapter..." This is often referred to as a "post-graduate certification." Please note, in order for a student to qualify for certification post-graduation they must have completed a "law school practice program." Thus, in order to be approved under this section, a graduate must have participated in one of the qualifying live client clinics or externships while a student.

Many state attorney and public defender agencies in Florida prefer to hire graduates who can qualify for post-graduate certification. Therefore, if your career interests are in these areas of public service, you should try to participate in one of the qualifying live client clinics or externships while you are an FIU College of Law student.

Although there are several steps involved in the certification process, most students who receive their “Notice of Registrant Clearance” before applying for a clinic are successfully certified as legal interns by the Florida Supreme Court. Many of the “offenses” which must be disclosed do not prevent a student from participating in a clinic. Disclosures should be consistent with law school and bar applications.