

# INSTITUTE FOR *Law Teaching and Learning*

Washburn Law and Gonzaga University School of Law co-sponsor the Institute for Law Teaching and Learning. The Institute was established to assist law teachers in providing a learning environment that helps students achieve the highest academic standards and prepares students to assume their responsibilities as effective, moral attorneys. The Institute is co-directed by Washburn's Michael Hunter Schwartz and Gonzaga's Gerry Hess.

The Institute publishes *The Law Teacher* newsletter, and provides teaching ideas and full-text resources through its website, [www.lawteaching.org](http://www.lawteaching.org). The Institute also hosts an annual conference on law teaching. The 2009 conference, "Implementing Best Practices and Educating Lawyers: Teaching Skills and Professionalism Across the Curriculum," was held June 23-24 at Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane, Wash.

## BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS: IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING

During the conference, participants explored various concepts relating to teaching skills and professionalism in law school. The ultimate goal of the conference was to help the participants improve their teaching and their students' learning, and to further their schools' efforts to better prepare students for practicing law.

## CONFERENCE STRUCTURE: TAILORED TO SUIT INTERESTS

The conference included eight workshop sessions. During each session, five workshops ran simultaneously. Participants were able to tailor the conference to fit their individual interests by choosing which workshop to attend during each session. The workshops dealt with:

- Innovative teaching materials
- Alternative teaching methods
- New educational technology
- Ways to enhance student learning in all types of courses
- Ideas and tools for restructuring legal education to foster healthy, productive lawyers

Washburn Law Professor Aida M. Alaka presented "Phenomenological Practitioner Research: How to Study Your Students' Problems to Improve Your Teaching." Phenomenological research explores the lived reality of subjective experience and helps investigators identify problems encountered by research subjects in achieving their goals. This type of research can provide insight to instructors who are interested in discovering problems students are experiencing in their courses so that they may improve their teaching practices. After an introduction to phenomenological inquiry, workshop participants designed a plan of phenomenological inquiry, focusing on problems they believe are important in their own classrooms or institutions. Workshop participants considered how to draft pertinent questions, select appropriate subjects, collect and analyze data, and draw practical conclusions.

Washburn Law Professor Rory Bahadur presented "Everything We Need to Know About Teaching We Learned in Pre-school: Active Learning and How to Not Teach to Engage Students." This workshop was designed for professors who wish their upper-division students were as excited and enthusiastic in class as those new, incoming, bright-eyed and eager 1Ls. The workshop tangibly explored an active learning-based, alternative pedagogy that maximizes law student engagement in the classroom. Session participants were exposed to the pedagogy as it is currently utilized both in an upper-division and in a first-year course. Participants precisely articulated any learning strategies identified, hopefully rethinking the relationship between teaching and learning. Participants left the workshop prepared to implement the techniques in their own classes.



Summer Conference of the Institute  
for Law Teaching and Learning  
"Teaching Law Practice Across the Curriculum"  
June 16-18, 2010 • Topeka, Kan.

[www.lawteaching.org](http://www.lawteaching.org)