

# EXTERNSHIPS ALLOW STUDENTS TO *Think ‘Outside the Box’*

**A**li Mohammed Pirali, '11, is grateful for the suggestion that he think “outside the box” for his law school externships. After completing the Interviewing and Counseling course taught by **Shawn Leisinger, '99**, externship director and executive director of the Centers for Excellence, he approached Leisinger about the Washburn Law externship program. Ali was eager to find an opportunity to work in business or immigration law where he could help others in the community. He said Leisinger prodded him to explore other fields for the externship experience, explaining that this would help open up his options for future employment.

“By knowing me and looking at my résumé, he recommended me for a couple of externships, and I considered working at the attorney general’s office. He went above and beyond to help me get that externship.”

Ali completed his first externship in the consumer division of the Kansas Attorney General’s Office in fall 2010, where he worked with supervisor Natalie Hogan and special agents to assist consumers in resolving issues with suppliers. “The oral and written communications work was helpful and transferable to future work,” he said. The externship also allowed him to explore more efficient ways of working and apply his training experience from his previous work as a project manager at Sprint. “I noticed sometimes the work was repetitive. If anything is repetitive, I change it to make it faster.” The result was a short training guide he wrote to benefit future interns and externs.

Washburn Law students must complete a written report at the end of their externship experience that includes the aspects of the externship students found particularly useful to their development as attorneys. Ali in his report

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– Ali Mohammed Pirali, '11



addressed organizational politics and how to avoid its pitfalls. “To avoid office politics, I learned to work toward the goals I was given, listen, and simply do my job.”

Ali also completed a spring 2011 externship at the Kansas Bankers Association, where he researched legal issues for association members and

communicated with legal staff to find resolutions to the issues. He was able to once again apply his knowledge and contribute to a membership manual produced by the KBA legal department under the direction of **Terri Thomas, '88**, senior vice president and legal department director. “She is terrific to work with, and I enjoyed working with the people there.”

In addition to forging lasting friendships with co-workers he met during his externship experiences, Ali said he gained valuable insights by having the opportunity to think “outside the box”—the law school box.

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