

A Model Program

Established 16 years ago by Director Joanne Harvest Koren, the Academic Achievement Program (AAP) at Miami Law has become one of the model academic support programs in the country. The AAP involves students, faculty, and the law school administration in a collaborative effort to promote and enhance the academic environment of the law school. The program's focus is improving student learning and performance with the goals of developing analytical and examination skills and integrating first-year students early into the law curriculum.



Robert Shawn Hogue

First-year law students are given the opportunity to study under exemplary upper-level students known as Dean's Fellows. The Dean's Fellows are some of the "best and brightest students" who are trained to use interactive learning exercises geared toward different learning styles. They work with professors, attend all classes and facilitate two separate weekly study group sessions. Through these efforts, 1L students become acclimated to the study of law much more quickly.

"The Academic Achievement Program is hugely beneficial for the faculty, hugely beneficial for the Dean's Fellows, and obviously hugely beneficial for the students," said Dean Patricia D. White. "It is a win-win-win program."

Since its inception, 806 law students have served as Dean's Fellows.

"Being a Dean's Fellow has been a phenomenal experience," said UM Law student Jennifer Hammitt. "Our students come from all sorts of backgrounds, but they have one thing in common — this is the first time they are experiencing law school. As a recent 1L, I can remember what it's like to be scared and overwhelmed, so I can relate."

Approximately 90 percent of first-year students regularly participate in the study groups. What makes UM Law's Academic Achievement Program so unique is that the program is open to every student, and so many second- and third-year students wish to participate as a Dean's Fellow.

"Our Dean's Fellows enrich and support the Law School's vision," said Koren. "They are very supportive of our students and they show by example and inspiration."

DEAN'S FELLOWS PROFILES

Third-year law student **Robert Shawn Hogue** chose to become a Dean's Fellow because "I know how daunting and intimidating the first year of law school can be. I felt like many of my Dean's Fellows not only did an excellent job reviewing the course materials with us, but were incredibly approachable, and a constant source of support."

During his time at Miami Law, Hogue has served as a Dean's Fellow for Visiting Professor Gary Lowenthal's Criminal Procedure class and Professor Elizabeth Iglesias's Elements class. Additionally, he currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of the *University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*, volunteers in the STREET LAW program, and is a legal research assistant for Professor Francisco Valdes.

Hogue's most memorable experience as a Dean's Fellow occurred last spring. "A student approached me in tears because of her disappointment in her first semester grades. I made it a point to always encourage this student, listen to her, and address her specific concerns. She ended up turning her grades around."

Hogue hopes to clerk for a United States federal judge after graduation.



Mallory Gold



Jennifer Hammitt

Mallory Gold is a 3L who has served as a Dean's Fellow for three semesters. Last year she worked with Visiting Professor George Schatzki's students in Civil Procedure and with Professor Zanita Fenton's Constitutional Law class. This year she is a Dean's Fellow for Visiting Professor Kenneth Kettering's Contracts class. She is an elected member of the Honor Council and is an intern for the Miami STREET LAW Program. Gold wanted to become a Dean's Fellow because she felt the Academic Achievement Program played an integral role in her success as a 1L and she wanted to pass on that positive experience to the next class.

"The most gratifying part of being a Dean's Fellow is being an accessible mentor to the 1L students," said Gold. "Joanne Koren often refers to the Dean's Fellows as being on the 'front lines' — the first people 1L students approach seeking all sorts of information. I could not agree with this more. I very much enjoy being able to share my experiences in guiding students to work and study in a manner that maximizes their success."

After completing her law studies, Gold plans on staying in Miami and practicing civil litigation. A devoted 'Canes fan, she hopes to be around to see the Hurricanes win their next National Championship.

Jennifer Hammitt is a 3L who has served as a Dean's Fellow for Professor A. Michael Froomkin's Torts class and Professor Frances Hill's Constitutional Law class and is currently serving as a Dean's Fellow for Professor Froomkin's Torts class again. She is a member of the *University of Miami Law Review* and is a Soia Mentschikoff Scholarship recipient. She is currently working for Judge Martinez in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

She chose to become a Dean's Fellow because she felt indebted to previous Fellows who made transitioning to law school much easier.

"The feeling of finally 'getting it,' of understanding a difficult concept or grabbing onto a new piece of doctrine was exhilarating, and I hoped that I could continue to share some of my enthusiasm for law school with first year students," explained Hammitt.

Her funniest experience in her role as a Fellow occurred last Halloween when ten of the first-year students dressed up as Professor Froomkin — bow tie and all. "It was a great show of affection and humor that the students were bringing to the class."

This past summer, Hammitt worked in Washington, D.C. in the Office of the General Counsel of the Environmental Protection Agency.

A Model Program

Asra Chatham is a 3L who has served as a Dean's Fellow for the past three semesters. She has worked with Professor Gerald Wetherington's students in Torts and worked with students in the Academic Achievement Program Exam Workshop last spring and again this fall. She is a member of the Moot Court Board and a student mentor for Miami Law Women. She served as a student intern for the Children & Youth Law Clinic and was an associate in the Miami law firm of McDermott, Will & Emery this past summer.

Becoming a Dean's Fellow provided Chatham with "a good opportunity to work with and develop relationships with faculty members, and contribute to the law school community. The best part of being a Dean's Fellow for me is being able to help and support other students so that they can be more successful in law school."

Chatham has enjoyed her time at Miami Law, especially "being a Dean's Fellow and interning with the Children and Youth Law Clinic." She plans on joining McDermott, Will & Emery's trial department as an associate after graduating in May.



Asra Chatham

Jordan Fishfield is in his third year of the combined J.D./M.B.A. program. He has served as a Dean's Fellow for two semesters in Professor Terence Anderson's Elements class. He is the Articles and Comments Editor for the *Inter-American Law Review* and President/Treasurer of the Jewish Comparative Law Society. This past summer, he interned at the Fort Lauderdale office of MassMutual Financial Group.

Fishfield became a Dean's Fellow because "it was one of the organizations on campus that has an actual impact. Dean's Fellows help 1Ls acclimate to a difficult situation, and they really helped me when I was a first-year student."

The best part of being a Dean's Fellow is "reading the evaluations at the end of each semester. So far, the students have been pretty positive," says Fishfield. "I enjoy helping 1Ls understand Elements, because it can be a difficult, abstract topic. It really has been an enjoyable experience."

After he finishes his fourth year, Fishfield hopes to work in New York City in a major investment house.



Jordan Fishfield