This year the format was changed to a week-long series of small group workshops (of twelve students each) that met from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Evenings were spent preparing for the next day’s assignment. On Saturday, fifteen jury trials were held, with each student participating as part of a two-person team, and local attorneys serving as judges. The change was instituted both to make the class available to more students and to simulate the intensity, momentum, and stress of a real-life trial situation.

A special faculty of experienced trial practitioners was brought in by Stein for the week. Leading the workshops were Federal Judge Ralph Guy from Detroit and attorneys James Brady and William Jack from Grand Rapids, Allyn Kantor from Ann Arbor, and Robert Krause from Detroit. The daily sessions included lectures, discussions of simulated trial problems, and role-playing. During each session every student performed a trial task, such as direct examination, cross examination, opening statement, and closing argument. Performances were videotaped and critiqued by the small section instructor as well as by the other students and a communications expert, Morleen Rouse, of the University of Cincinnati.

Though most students found the workload heavy and the experience fatiguing, their comments on the course and the instructors rang with enthusiasm: “Fantastic instruction.” “Best course I’ve had in law school.” “Do it again. This should be a required course. I could not imagine being a litigator without first having had the benefit of this excellent learning experience.” “I’m excited about being a lawyer again.”

Encouraged by the outcome of the class, Stein plans to repeat the format next year with a further expanded enrollment and additional outside experts to head the increased number of small groups.

The other popular clinic-type seminar was a two-day, non-credit workshop aimed at developing negotiating skills. Held during the first weekend in March, the course attracted over sixty students, only twenty of whom could be accommodated in the small-group format. The workshop was organized by Professor James J. White, an expert in commercial law and Dr. Andrew S. Watson, a practicing psychiatrist who is a professor in the Law School. First-hand perspectives on negotiating were provided by Detroit attorneys Leonard D. Givens and Patrick J. Ledwidge, who each presented a lecture and led one of the small groups. Within each small group, the students were divided into two-person negotiating teams, each of which negotiated against the other.

Each team was presented with a set of facts regarding a simulated negotiating problem, representing the point of view of one of the parties and differing from that of their adversaries. The task, then, as Watson explains, was “to cross the barrier and negotiate successfully without falling prey to personal emotional responses, prejudices or other character-based behavior that might inhibit the process.”

To facilitate greater insight and self-awareness, students were videotaped as they negotiated. Their performances were critiqued by their peers and professors with regard to such psychological elements as body language, ability to communicate, and interpersonal skills, as well as the logical, analytical, technical, and legal mechanics involved in reaching a satisfactory settlement. “We view this as the first step in a two-thousand-mile journey,” said White of the workshop, which was viewed as a giant step toward the real world by those who took it.

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McCree honored at three spring commencements

Wade H. McCree, Jr.

Among Law School faculty, Wade H. McCree Jr. is one of the most popular commencement speakers and prolific recipients of honorary degrees from colleges and universities. Last spring, the former federal judge and U.S. Solicitor General who since 1981 has been Lewis M. Simes Professor of Law at the U-M, received three honorary titles: a Doctor of Humane Letters from Colgate University, a Doctor of Public Service from Northern Michigan University, and a Doctor of Law from Suffolk University.

Modest about his achievements, McCree has lost count of his awards and has to rely on his secretary for an accurate total of his honorary doctorate degrees, which now stands at 32 and growing. McCree, who in 1982 was appointed Special Master by the U.S. Supreme Court for a case involving the Howard Hughes estate, serves on the visiting committees of several law schools and is a member of a long list of professional, educational, and community organizations.