

LAW AND EXPERIENCE



LAW
CASES

HEMERA/THINKSTOCK

U OF T PROGRAM PREPARES FOREIGN-TRAINED LAWYERS

The University of Toronto Faculty of Law offers the Internationally Trained Lawyers Program (ITLP), which opened its doors to students in May 2010 to assist foreign-trained lawyers seeking to practise law in Ontario.

The 10-month program combines academic training with an unpaid internship and prepares qualified students for the National Committee of Accreditation (NCA) exams and educates them about the licensure process.

Program director Gina Alexandris says that many foreign-trained lawyers arrive with qualifications but not that all-important Canadian experience. “Many of them have not been in a classroom setting for years because they’ve been practising in their home

jurisdictions and, in addition, many of them have learned in a very different format and a different way of teaching and learning.”

The goals of the program are twofold, explains Alexandris. “On the one hand, it’s to support them with their academic preparation for the challenge of exams. The other element is the career support; getting to know what to expect in a Canadian legal environment, developing a network and getting some of that Canadian experience. So we have an internship for our students and they get to actually be in a workplace setting; this year it’s three months, so



Dinah
Bal

they actually get to engage in law work here in Ontario that they might not otherwise have exposure to.”

Dinah Bal explains some of the challenges she experienced coming to Canada as a lawyer from the Philippines.

“Having had no in-depth prior knowledge of what the Canadian substantive laws are, and what actual legal practice entails, I was like a sponge, trying to soak up as much as I can about the legal practice and the legal concepts of Canada, in general, and Ontario, in particular.

“Hearing first-hand accounts from the panel about their own journey and the real challenges that each had to face inspired me to forge ahead despite my own fears and the demands of raising a family and holding on to my current job.”



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PHOTO

COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

- \$4-million grant from the government of Ontario in June 2009.
- Three-month internship at workplaces to give students exposure to critical “Canadian experience.”
- Fifty different partner law firms provide internships and mentoring.
- NCA accreditation exam takes foreign-trained lawyers to the equivalent of a Canadian graduate.
- Program prepares students for the licensure process, commonly known as the bar exam.
- Students are trained for Canadian application, resumé preparation and interview process.