

## Third Year Anywhere™

*New option aims to prepare students to practice in the substantive and geographic area they want.*

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Legal education has always had a global focus at the Washburn University School of Law, but third-year law students will now get the opportunity to experience the type of law they want to practice in the geographic location they want to be.

Students who are admitted fall 2019 or later will have the opportunity to complete their final year of law school through the innovative Third Year Anywhere™ enrollment option. Students who participate in this option will increase their practice-readiness by completing an externship in the geographic area where they plan to practice after graduation.

Students will earn academic credit while gaining real-world experience practicing law under the supervision of a licensed lawyer 20 hours per week in one of six sectors: corporate, government, higher education, judicial, law firm, or public interest.

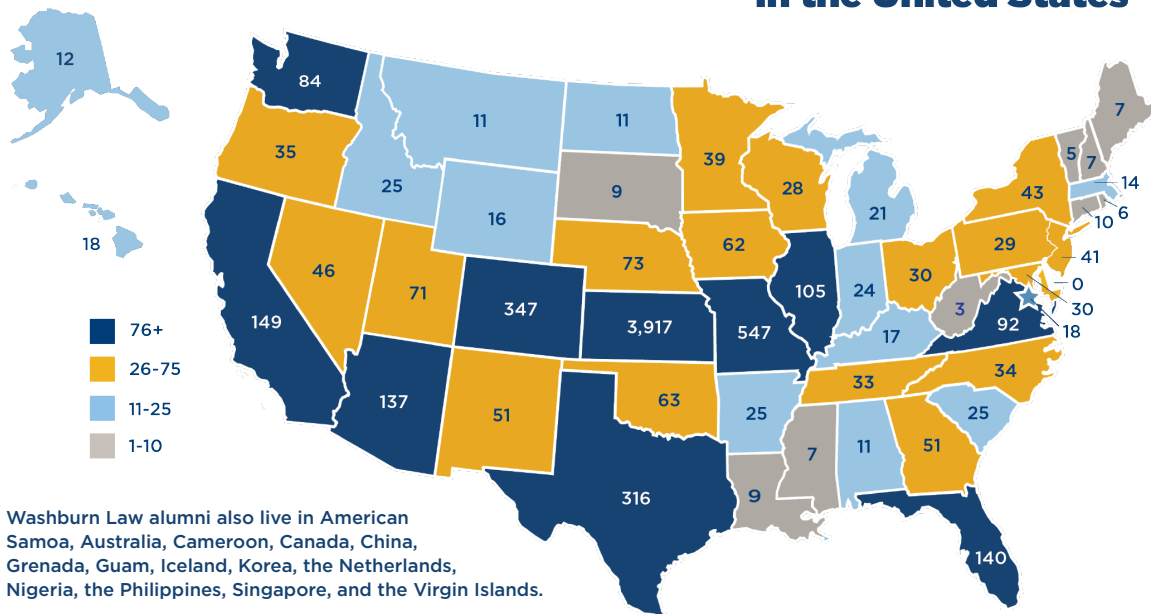
“Washburn has long been known for graduating students who are practice-ready, and the Third Year Anywhere™ enrollment

option will build on that foundation by affording students more in-depth practical experience during law school,” said Carla Pratt, dean of Washburn Law. “Placing students in the legal market where they intend to practice will position them to join the local bar association, network with lawyers who will become their professional peers, and interview for jobs in that market prior to graduating.”

The program was prompted by a change within the American Bar Association guidelines in 2018 on legal education and allowing 30 hours of distance education. As Washburn Law has always focused on providing practice-ready experiences for its students, it was ideally ready to be the first law school in the nation to implement such a program. The move has been applauded by Above the Law, referring to it as “revolutionary,” and preLaw magazine calling it “innovative.”

Shawn Leisinger, associate dean for centers and external programs, and Janet Thompson Jackson, professor of law at Washburn, will oversee the program. Third-year coursework

## Washburn Law Alumni in the United States



Washburn Law compiled alumni locations to showcase areas where students could potentially receive mentoring if they participate in the Third Year Anywhere™ program.

will be completed through substantive online law courses, including a course in law practice competencies which will teach students project management skills, how to use legal technology, how to read financial statements, and other competencies essential for successful law practice.

“The end of the second year, they have taken the core courses and they have figured out how to study,” Leisinger said. “The students are capable of self-motivation and can benefit from a long-distance placement.”

With alumni in 14 countries and American territories, students will be able to focus on international law if interested. While mentors for third-year law students don’t need to be Washburn Law alumni, the law school’s alumni are being very supportive and are offering to help students search their ideal placement. Placement locations will be open based on availability and to ensure student safety and educational integrity.

Opportunities also exist for students to participate in an externship in underserved rural locations which will enhance the rural law initiative at Washburn Law. Today, almost 20 percent of the U.S. population resides in rural areas, but only 2 percent of lawyers work there. Thanks to a generous grant from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, many Washburn Law students can spend the summer practicing with an attorney in rural Kansas. With the Third Year Anywhere™ program, that summer could turn into an entire year.

“The students can go there and live in the community, transition to taking the bar exam, and practice in those same locations,” Leisinger said. “Most of the attorneys are very supportive in these areas because there is a lot of work and it could bring them a potential partner.”

Enrollment in the program is competitive and limited to students the faculty deem best prepared to benefit from an out-of-residence practicum and distance education. Students can be connected with alumni or friends of Washburn Law as mentors in the field where they are placed, with Leisinger noting that alumni live all over the United States and in many different countries.

“Washburn Law has the faculty that care enough about this to put the time and effort into it – this is not the easy way out as our courses have to be restructured and they have to put together online courses,” he said. “We want to do it the right way, and everyone is committed to doing that.”

### *Volunteer Opportunities*

Alumni who would like to volunteer to supervise a student intern in the program should complete the Placement Site Interest form at [washburnlaw.edu/admissions/thirdyearanywhere/siteinterest.html](https://washburnlaw.edu/admissions/thirdyearanywhere/siteinterest.html)