

Polsinelli Conducts Renewable Energy Course

Washburn Law students benefit from the experts' on-the-job experience.

By Chris Marshall, BA '09

David Pierce, '77, has taught an energy regulation course at Washburn Law for almost 30 years, but a pair of visiting speakers in 2015 caused him to take a renewed look at the subject.

When Alan Anderson, vice chair of Polsinelli Law Firm's national energy practice, and his colleague, Luke Hagedorn, came to teach a session on renewable energy a couple of years ago, Pierce called it the highlight of the course.

"Students got the chance to learn firsthand from the lawyers who bring multimillion-dollar projects from client concept to the generation of electricity and revenue," Pierce said.

"A course like this would not be possible without practicing lawyers willing to share their time and expertise with our students. Not only do they learn the law and what lawyering is all about, they also witness the pride and dedication that each lawyer brings to his or her particular practice."

The duo's two-hour presentation on wind law left such an impression on Pierce and his students that it led to the creation of an entirely new course, taught primarily by Polsinelli lawyers, titled "Renewable Energy Law: Wind and Solar."

The one-hour course was offered from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on consecutive Saturdays in the fall semester, allowing the attorneys to travel to Topeka and present on their respective portions of the wind and solar development process.

"We worked with David to come up with a course that would be worth taking," Anderson said. "We didn't want to teach something just to teach it. It was a fun experience for us coming up with the components of the class and creating an agenda and curriculum."

Students learned how Polsinelli's attorneys implement the law through planning, procedures, and documents. Lectures also



David Pierce, '77. Photo by Jones Huyett Partners.

covered how financing and related government incentives drive much of the legal component of any major project.

"This is an area we all work extensively in," Anderson said, "so it was taught from the perspective of people who are currently in the field. We have practical advice and war stories we could share from our experiences."

Each phase of the development process was explored in the course by the lawyer who possessed the required expertise, with students examining the law — and the documentation used to implement the law — to accomplish the client's goals.

Polsinelli's national energy practice focuses on laws associated with the development of large-scale wind projects, solar, and other energy-generation projects. The firm has a long history of support for Washburn Law, and several of the company's 900+ lawyers nationwide have come from Washburn.

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