

## Students Get "Clinical" Training At NCCU School Of Law

While more and more law schools are emphasizing courses in such areas as business and corporate law, a number of students at North Carolina Central University's School of Law are still opting to take courses in the school's clinical program where they provide a much needed service to indigent clients.

The clinic gives students the opportunity to put the law into actual use after two grueling years of studying legal theory, rules and case law. According to Professor T. M. Odana Ringer, director of the Clinical Program, "The clinical experience is a combination of gaining confidence and of acquiring the technical background to practice law. A student does exactly what a lawyer does. The only difference is that our students don't get paid."

The clinic consists of preliminary courses in the rules of evidence and trial practice with mock trials and oral argument. Third-year students may represent indigent clients under the supervision of a practicing attorney. They represent clients in such diverse areas as divorces, wills, landlord-tenant problems and all phases of criminal practice under the supervision of a practicing attorney.

"If a student wants to practice law, a clinical experience is extremely valuable. After all, doctors have an internship. Fledgling lawyers don't have that. The clinical experience is the closest thing that we have to an internship," says Ringer.

Only indigent clients are represented in the law school's civil clinic, one of the relatively few in-house

law school clinics in the country. Students work under supervising attorneys on cases referred by the Durham Office of the North Central Legal Services Corporation. Professor Ringer points out that since legal aid programs are understaffed, "we provide services that otherwise might not be provided."

In the criminal area, students are assigned either to a district attorney's office or to a criminal defense attorney's office where they work from 12 to 20 hours per week preparing memoranda and other legal documents, interviewing clients, and appearing in the courtroom.

Raymond Jacobs, a recent graduate who took most of the clinical courses offered, says that one of the difficulties students have is relating to clients in a way that makes them trust you. "The client knows that you do not have a degree, but he's still relying on your skill and knowledge of the law," he says.

He also found that some of his beliefs about what goes on in the courtroom were a little misconceived. "I found that judges are fallible because they sometimes misconstrue the law." "Moreover," Jacobs observes, "a lot of the practice of the law does not take place in the courtroom. It goes on in the back room between the D.A. and defense attorneys when they try to work out a just solution."

### Site Plan

(Continued from Front) said that he wanted the money so that students of low income would be taken on a trip to Carowinds.

One of the easiest things to do is to start an argument and one of the hardest things to do is to stop one.

## Black Patent Lawyer At N.C. Central University A Rarity

tion of their intellectual property interests." Professor Smith is currently writing a textbook on the Fundamentals of Trademark Law for Clark Boardman Company, Ltd., a major legal publisher.

"The project should take about 1 1/2 years. . . I am really excited about working on the book," says Smith. Smith came to NCCU after teaching two years at Golden Gate University Law School in California

and working in corporate practice for five years at Xerox and for the Becthel Corporation. "I have enjoyed the challenge of teaching," says Smith. "Durham is a place away from the hassles of the bigger cities

and one can engage in a considerable amount of meaningful research and thinking here," he said. His wife, Mrs. Joyce Smith, is currently working on an advanced degree at the University of North Carolina.



SMITH

There are only 36 black Patent Lawyers in the United States. Charles Edison Smith, associate professor in the School of Law at North Carolina Central University in Durham is one of them.

Smith, son of a California builder-construction worker and a nurse, says that during the past few years, a tremendous interest has developed in bringing blacks and other ethnic minorities into more meaningful participation in the field of Patent Law.

"For persons with engineering backgrounds, Patent Law is one of the most interesting areas of law to study," says Smith, who earned his undergraduate degree at California State Polytechnic University and his law degree at Georgetown. "There is a wide open market for Patent attorneys," Smith points out.

Smith believes that the small number of blacks in Patent Law stems from the fact that they are severely underrepresented in the fields of engineering, science and technical education. One estimate indicates that in 1970, only 1.2% of the engineers in the U.S. were black, he says.

In his third year at

NCCU, Smith teaches Business Associations, Antitrust and a course in Patents, Trademarks and Copyrights. Students from neighboring Duke University Law School and the University of North Carolina have enrolled in the Patents course which is not currently offered at their institutions.

"I had never considered the idea of practicing Copyright Law," said Anthony Harris, one of Smith's students, "but this course opened up an entire new world to me and it is a real consideration now."

Smith's students take his Patents course because they want to represent small to medium-sized business clients, writers, artists, entertainers and others who want to copyright their works or protect new designs.

"The area of intellectual property, which is included in the field of Patents, Trademarks and Copyrights law, is challenging for me," says Smith. "Many of the early inventors were blacks and they were not able to benefit economically from their inventions. One reason, perhaps, is due to the fact that there was no one around to aid and guide them in the protec-

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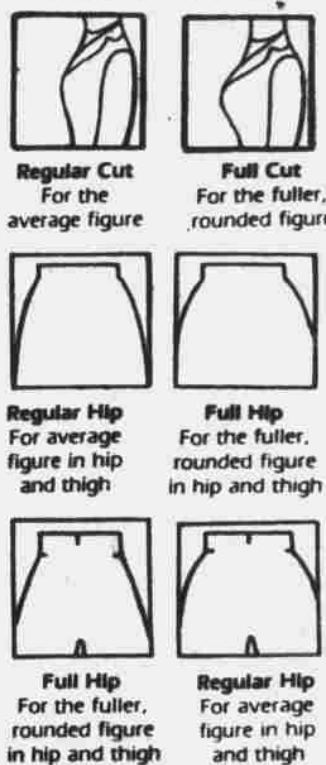
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