

LLM Studies as a New Perspective in Czech Legal Education

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Background

The aim of my project was to take courses and seminars at **University of Illinois** and **Northwestern University** in Chicago and do an internship at **The John Marshall Law School** in Chicago, United States with the purpose to increase my knowledge and gain practical experience at a higher education institution providing LLM study program.

My motivation resulted from my work position, the Head of Centre for Lifelong Learning at the **School of Law, Masaryk University**, where I am in charge of lifelong learning and commercial activities, including the LLM study program. Even though I have been responsible for the LLM program administration I had no direct experience and knowledge of the LLM program in its original environment. Therefore, when I have learnt about the possibility of financial support from the American Fund in an email sent out from the Office of International Studies of Masaryk University, I was very much motivated to succeed.

After reading through the rules and requirements for applicants, I was very positively surprised as the funding - in addition to common financial support for faculty members (lecturers, professors) - was offered also for individuals working in administration. I did not hesitate and started to think about specific form of a project in cooperation with a US institution.

My preparation included identifying partner institutions, discussing the project with my superiors, entering into communication with the representatives from partner institution and at the same time browsing the Internet in order to find information about suitable education in Chicago. I submitted my proposal, passed the interview and after positive notification that I have been selected by the American Fund, I have arranged the interview necessary for my **visa**. In parallel with visa arrangements, I have started to look for flight connections and accommodation; the latter was done with cooperation with my partner institution.

American Partners

My main partner in the United States was **The John Marshall Law School** (hereinafter JMLS), our sister school, long-term and active partner in our international relations. JMLS is providing a legal education (JD, LLM, MS programs) and that was crucial for my direct experience with LLM program administration and U.S. legal education in general.

My other partners were Chicago universities - **Northwestern University**, School of Continuing Studies - provider of the Leading and Managing People course; **University of Illinois**, Chicago – provider of Marketing Management for Nonprofit Organization course; **DePaul University** – provider of Public Relations Boot Camp seminar and **American Management Association** – provider of Standing Strong in Difficult Workplace Situation seminar.

Brief Evaluation Statement

The whole project and my stay at the John Marshall Law School I consider an amazing, enriching and energizing experience and the three months I have spent in the United States I consider an extra three months of my life. My program objectives were accomplished. My comments are stated in the table below:

	The proposed objectives of my project were:	Assessment and Comments
1	To acquire experience at a higher education institution providing LLM program.	After three months of visiting partner institution I have good understanding and knowledge of the LLM program administration.
2	To learn about the context of professional legal education in the U.S.	I have gained good knowledge about professional legal education, continuing legal education and higher education system in general as well as knowledge about adult continuing education at Chicago universities.
3	To gain new practical working experience at a partner institution.	Working experience was not possible due to short-term stay at partner institution.
4	To obtain an education in management, leadership and higher education administration.	I have gained knowledge and practical skills from the area of management, leadership, administration, marketing management and public relations.
5	To develop a new form of cooperation between our sister schools	My stay at the John Marshall Law school contributed to the development of international relations in general and will make any future common projects easier.

Detailed Description

I have initially planned three on-line courses and one on-site course. Finally, after discussion with my colleagues at JMLS, I have changed the structure. This resulted in experiencing wider areas of interest and more educational institutions in the role of a recipient. Generally, all four courses were highly beneficial to me. All the lecturers were excellent professionals and teachers. I have no formal education in management, leading people and in marketing, even though I need these skills for my everyday work. Therefore I have enjoyed the opportunity to learn in these areas very much and gain new perspective for solution to my work assignments.

The detailed description of the proposed objectives and their assessment is stated in the table below:

	The proposed objectives of the project were:	Assessment and Comments
1	To gain insight and understanding of the area of higher education in a different environment.	The three months stay at the JMLS, direct contact with administration procedure, lecturers and professor as well as direct experience when enrolling on courses and seminars were sufficient for gaining good experience and understanding.
2	To be well prepared for the internship at a partner institution.	N/A
3	To increase the soft skills necessary for my current working position at home	During the courses and seminars I have increase my knowledge as well as practical skills in

	institution and at a partner institution.	management, leadership, emotional intelligence, teamwork, marketing and public relations. I consider the courses I have passed as a part of lifelong learning and development and in the future will pursue my education in this area.
4	To strengthen existing skills.	
5	To improve time management skills.	
6	To improve organizational skills.	
7	To improve decision making skills.	
8	To develop thinking in a practical context.	

Next table provides information on education and outcomes:

Institution	Course / Seminar	Content / Outcomes
Northwestern University, Chicago	Leading and Managing People (Instructor: Ms. Aleen Bayard; October 15 – November 11, 2008)	My own work team analysis, team development models, models of leadership, leader interview, typology and analysis, fictional teams analyses, my own leadership action plan production and assessment of my own performance
University of Illinois, Chicago	Marketing Management for Nonprofit Organization (Instructor: Mr. Martin Berg; October 19 – December 10, 2008)	Marketing overview, image and positioning, strategies and tactics, media, web marketing, web site of nonprofit organization analysis (Clovek v tísní / People in Need), analysis of Coke and Pepsi web marketing, group project: developing marketing strategy for Food Scrap Reduction Project.
DePaul University, Chicago	Public Relations Boot Camp (Instructor: Steve Bosak; December 12, 2008)	Public relations overview, communication with editors, development and fostering relationships with press, press release writing and distribution.
American Management Association	Standing Strong in Difficult Workplace Situations (December 5, 2008)	Introduction to patterns and rules of human behavior, accepting and giving feedback, dynamics of difficult people and situations, causes of workplace conflict, development of effective communication skills, identifying unproductive behavioral and communication patterns.

At the John Marshall Law School I have focused my research on two areas – one was **general operation of law school** in the framework of U.S. higher educational system, the second was the **LLM program operation and administration**. I have tried to learn as much as possible about the program, from marketing activities, recruitment, term organization, communication with students, form of lectures, assessment of students etc. This was done through personal meetings with individuals responsible for particular areas and also by my own research of available materials.

Key partners at JMLS were Professor **Michael Seng**, co-executive director of The John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Fair Housing Legal Clinic and Ms. **Virginia M. Russell**, Associate Director at **Center for International Law**. Their support, guidance and direction during my stay in Chicago were crucial for successful accomplishment of my project.

The detailed description of the proposed objectives and their assessment is in the table below:

	The proposed objectives of the project were:	Assessment and Comments
1	To gain direct experience with U.S. higher education system (context, policy and strategies).	Yes, the three months stay at the JMLS, direct contact with administration procedure, lecturers and professor as well as direct experience when enrolling on courses and seminars were sufficient for gaining good experience and understanding.
2	To get acquainted with the methods and procedures in U.S. professional education.	
3	To gain the comprehensive knowledge of the LLM Program that is provided by U.S. higher education institutions.	
4	To gain the LLM Program management and operation experience.	As the direct working experience was not possible, this is not applicable.
5	To gain inspiration for innovative approach for work at my home institution.	Yes, the stay in different language and cultural environment is motivating and enables fresh look at the area I am responsible for.
6	To increase the quality of programs offered at my home institution.	I believe that this will be the case, as inspiration and knowledge gained at school providing the LLM program for so many years and thus having much more experience, will no doubt positively affect my own work.
7	To increase effectiveness and efficiency of procedures in the subject area.	

During my stay at the John Marshall Law School I have become acquainted with all areas of LLM program operation. At the **Center for International Law** I acquired the knowledge on the operation of the centers, their position in the organizational structure of the school, communication schemes and job descriptions of the center members. I have participated in the meetings and was in touch with faculty and staff linked with the activities of the Center.

Subsequently, I have continued with my research at different departments (**Academic Services incl. Admission, Academic Affairs, International Students, Registrar Office, Continuing Legal Education, Event Management, Academic Achievement Program, Public Relations** etc.) and learnt about various aspects of functioning of the law school, their specific roles and contributions.

Especially interesting and inspirational were areas that are different to our higher educational system, such as **Continuing Legal Education, Legal Education Licensing** linked with professional institutions and especially different **methods of teaching and assessments** of students following different law system. Meeting with faculty members that are involved in teaching in LLM programs gave me insight to the approach applied there. In my opinion, especially continual work and outcomes, compulsory attendance at lectures, immediate feedback from lecturers might also be inspirational.

As The JMLS is providing JD, LLM and MS programs (and also JD/LLM join degrees) the areas for future cooperation and enhancing the offer of internationally recognized degrees provided at Masaryk University might be identified by these programs.

Organization and Time Schedule

I have learnt about the program in **February** 2008. The first thing after identifying what the project would be about and what the partner institution would be, I have addressed Professor Michael

Seng from the John Marshall Law School with the proposal of this form of cooperation. The feedback was positive. In **March** I discussed my interest and the project with my boss and gained her support. Subsequently I asked her and another colleague for their recommendations. At the same time I was preparing my proposal, translating all the required documents, and searching Chicago universities web sites to find suitable courses.

In **April** I received a positive notification from the American Fund that my application was found satisfactory and I was invited to the interview and examination from English language for late April. I received the final results in early **May**. After receiving Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status (form DS-2019) from the JMLS I applied for the visa.

After receiving the visa in **July**, I started to arrange accommodation and flights, which I finished by August. In late September I have arrived to the United States and started my project, cooperating closely on everyday basis with the JMLS where I used fully equipped office. From the middle of **October** to early December I have taken my courses with Northwestern University and University of Illinois, Chicago; and supplemented them with two seminars in early **December** with DePaul University and American Management Association. In late December I concluded my stay and came back to the Czech Republic.

Program Cost

Item	Cost Estimate in US\$	Actual Cost in US\$
Executive training seminars	2,380	2,386
Internship	0	0
Administrative fees (visa, registration fees, etc.)	166	408
International travel	1,500	1,700
Local transportation	500	752
Phone	150	277
Medical insurance	210	682
Accommodation	4,500	5,277
Per diem allowance (food, toiletries, cleaning, telecommunication, pocket money) – 50 USD/day	4,600	4,614
Contingency	600	488
Total	14,606	16,584

Program Benefits

The benefits of my stay in the United States are crucial for my professional and private life. This experience has enhanced my professional knowledge, understanding of higher education system abroad and enhanced my understanding of the procedures in legal education in different environment.

I have had the opportunity to **experience directly the U.S. education system** in several forms – from organizational and administrative point of view, directly onsite, online, several weeks of course work, and one day seminar. I have better understanding of continuing and corporate education in Chicago.

One of the benefits is also better knowledge of **English language**, its appropriate use in various situations and environments. Meeting with a lot of people, lecturers, legal professionals, students and sharing our experience in multicultural environment, created a basis for **networking** and **social skills improvement**. Naturally, all these situations implied my role as a **representative of Masaryk University and the Czech Republic**.

Risks

If I had been preparing the project again, I would have done some things differently:

1. I have not taken into account the exchange-rate loss. Therefore I would recommend for future participants to add extra money in their budget to cover this potential deficit or to wait with the transfer of money and execute this after opening a dollar account in the United States.
2. I would have found accommodation by myself after arriving to the United States. Seeing the premises and the area in person is a must; spending a couple of days looking for an apartment might have saved me some money.
3. I would have discussed the choice of the educational institutions, seminars and courses from the very start of the project. I have planned this as a stranger and a person completely unfamiliar with higher education in Chicago. Self-search on the Internet is good, but an advice from somebody more familiar with this area is irreplaceable. On the basis of this I have consequently changed some seminars. I would also have come earlier in order to come when the new term was starting.