Description: Practicum: Government Relations and Advocacy - 2 credits. This practicum will expose students to the role of lawyers who practice and advocate on behalf of clients before legislative bodies and government agencies. It will have a two hour class session each week devoted to lectures and discussion of relevant subjects such as direct representation of organized interests, the broad range of such interests, ethics rules, campaign finance laws, etc. Students will also gain hands-on experience and have actual legislative participation working with the Uniform Law Commission for enactment of select Uniform Acts by the Tennessee General Assembly.

Statement of Goals/Learning Outcomes:

(1) This course will expose a small, select group of 2L and 3L students to a professional practice that involves advocacy on behalf of clients supporting or opposing legislative and/or administrative action at the local, state, and federal level.

(2) The two hour class session will consist of lectures and class presentations by an adjunct professor as well as invited visiting lecturers on many aspects of professional government relations including direct lobbying, fundraising, grassroots strategies, coalition building and media and public relations; it will examine the representation of corporations, trade and professional associations, labor unions, not-for-profits, public interests and citizens groups, and government bodies/departments/agencies; and it will review law firms and lobbying firms engaged in this work.

(3) The course will explore the methods and modalities utilized by lobbyists and their clients to attempt to gain access and influence public policy. The course will work to teach students how to use such advocacy to advance their clients’ interests as they relate to legislative or administrative action and interaction with elected representatives and government officials.

(4) In addition to the professional practice and civic contributions of government relations work, the course will introduce students to the practical and ethical limitations of lobbying on behalf of causes and clients and have them consider the role that campaign contributions play in the process. There will be significant emphasis placed on ethical issues in lobbying, state and federal registration and regulation of lobbyists, and state and federal campaign finance laws.

(5) While the primary focus will be on the workings of the Tennessee General Assembly and to a lesser extent the Nashville Metropolitan Council, students will also learn about federal legislative and administrative lobbying from guest lecturers.

(6) Students will be introduced to the Uniform Law Commission (ULC), the procedures of the ULC by which its proposed laws are prepared, and the ULC’s role in developing emerging state laws.

(7) Students will be given hands-on practical experience in securing legislative sponsors, drafting and advocating bills, following legislative committee actions, and attempting to pass certain Uniform Act(s).