



LLM Studies as a New Perspective in Czech Legal Education

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Background

The aim of the proposed project is to participate in courses at **University of Illinois** and **Northwestern University** in Chicago and do an internship at **The John Marshall Law School** in Chicago, USA with the purpose to increase my knowledge and gain practical experience at a higher education institution providing LLM study program. My current position is Head of Centre for Lifelong Learning at **Faculty of Law, Masaryk University** (hereinafter MU). I am in charge of lifelong learning and commercial activities at the Faculty, including the LLM study program. I believe that the gained knowledge and experience would enhance the quality of my work at my home institution.

Masaryk University is the second largest university in the Czech Republic. The Faculty of Law as one of its 9 faculties was established in 1919 and is well known for its excellence both in academic and research areas. The Faculty of Law offers Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral study programs.

In 2005 the Faculty of Law, MU launched LLM in Corporate Law study program. This way Masaryk University became the first university in the Czech Republic that has brought students the possibility to take their LLM degree in their home country. With respect to the fact that Czech higher education institutions can award degrees that are explicitly given by the Higher Education Act No. 111/1998 Code (Bc., Mgr., JUDr., Ph.D. in legal education), the LLM program is provided in cooperation with Nottingham Trent University, U.K. that awards certificates to the successful graduates.

The placing of the LLM program on the educational market was supported by the need of graduate legal education for professionals with strong practical accent. Until then only the doctoral study programs (Ph.D.) suitable for students with research, scientific and academic potential were offered. The Czech educational market was in this way enriched – together with the already popular MBA programs – by a new program complying with the higher education systems abroad.

As a program administrator I have been responsible for the program operation since the very beginning. We try to make our best to provide a first-rate quality education and the feedback from students and graduates is excellent as well as from our British partner. Nevertheless this kind of study program is a new one to our educational system. And this is the reason why I have started to think about the possibilities where to learn more about it. I believe that gaining experience and insight in the traditional conception of the LLM study program at a higher education institution with long term experience with this kind of education will enhance my knowledge, bring the innovation and thus improve the overall quality of program at my home institution.

Taking into account that this type of program is originating in English speaking countries, looking for a partner institution abroad was implied. When I was considering the universities that might

come into question I wanted to find a partner that is strong, perspective and already successfully cooperating with our institution for a longer period of time.

The John Marshall Law School (hereinafter JMLS) – an institution with rich experience and an excellence in legal education, our sister school since 1993 – was then a natural choice for my internship. From my previous position at the Science and International Relations Department at Faculty of Law, MU, I have already known Professor Michael Seng who acts as a liaison with our institution personally and I have been familiar with the partnership activities. I have chosen the Center for International Business and Trade Law at JMLS because the field of specialization is closest to the LLM program at my institution.

During the internship I would like to gain experience with overall organization and day-to-day administrative activities at the Center for International Business and Trade Law and another JMLS departments that are concerned with programs organization. I am interested especially in the areas of administrative and marketing activities, program development and quality assurance procedures. I will be happy to participate in any activities and would like to be a productive member of JMLS team.

The practice and familiar understanding of the methods and procedures of the original provider of the LLM study program will be in a great deal beneficial for the operation of not only LLM program but also for another activities at Faculty of Law, MU. New inspiration will surely bring a motivation for new projects and arrangements that will help to continuous improvement of program curriculums and other activities.

When considering the project I have discussed the proposal with my supervisor – the dean of the Faculty of Law, MU, Professor Nadežda Rozehnalová and gained her full support. I have also introduced the project to the Vice-Rector of Masaryk University and LLM program director, Associate Professor Jan Svaton then who supported the project as well. He himself then suggested this project as another form of cooperation directly to Professor Michael Seng. Professor Seng kindly agreed with the proposed cooperation and supported the idea. During his stay at the Faculty of Law in March this year we have also met personally and discussed some details of the project.

American Partners

The John Marshall Law School in Chicago was established in 1899. With more than one hundred years of experience, more than 15,000 alumni throughout the United States and in countries around the world the JMLS possesses excellent reputation and ranks among the top quality U.S. programs.¹

Today, in addition to its J.D. Program, JMLS offers seven LL.M. Programs in employee benefits law, global legal studies, information technology law, intellectual property law, international business and trade law, real estate law, and tax law. The law school also offers M.S. Programs in employee benefits, information technology and privacy law, real estate law, and tax law.

Since 1993 Faculty of Law of Masaryk University belongs among the number of institutions which have established their international relationships with the JMLS. The cooperation was formally confirmed in 2002 in the form of bilateral agreement when the JMLS's representatives (Professor Robert G. Johnston, Dean; Professor Carol Belshaw, Associate Dean and Professor Michael P.

¹ U.S. News ranks John Marshall's Advocacy and Legal Writing Programs among the Nation's Top 10.

Seng) visited MU. Due to well established relations and exceptional results of cooperation the agreement was extended in 2005 for an indefinite time.

The cooperation is implemented through various activities:

1. Every year we are happy to welcome the U.S. legal experts and participate in preparation of their program in the framework of **Czech Legal Study Tour**.
2. **Days of U.S. Law** are arranged every fall at Faculty of Law, MU when a group of the JMLS faculty members, adjunct faculty members, lawyers and other professionals comes to share their expertise and knowledge with our students.
3. There has been **exchange of faculty members** contributing to lively cooperation. Professor Michael Seng comes regularly to Faculty of Law as a visiting professor and leads courses on American law². As well as a number of our faculty members have visited the JMLS.
4. Arrangement of **student exchanges** provide a unique possibility to one undergraduate student each year to gain a fully paid fellowship to study at the JMLS.

It is also important to point out that the cooperation is possible thanks to personal dedication and support of individuals from each sister schools, especially the former Dean of JMLS Professor Robert G. Johnston, Professor Michael P. Seng³ (Co-Director, Fair Housing Legal Support Center) who has been acting as the JMLS liaison with the Masaryk University and the former Dean of Faculty of Law Associate Professor Jan Svaton.

The relationship between our institutions is traditional and prosperous. Both schools are providing excellent quality legal education, have rich experience both with education, research and development projects. It is the common mission of both institutions to provide a legal education that combines an understanding of both the theory and the practice of law, where the approaches of both institutions come together.

I think that the proposed project could advance the existing forms of cooperation to a new area aimed at the overall management and administration of higher education institution. I believe that my diligence, responsibility and enthusiasm to learn new things will enable me to reach the set aims.

Objectives

The objectives of the proposed program are:

- a) **to acquire experience at a higher education institution providing LLM program**
- b) **to learn about the context of professional legal education in the U.S.**
- c) **to gain new practical working experience at a partner institution**
- d) **to obtain an education in management, leadership and higher education administration**
- e) **to develop a new form of a cooperation between our institutions**

² In 2005 Professor Michael P. Seng's stay at Masaryk University was supported by Fulbright Commission (Program Fulbright Senior Specialist).

³ Professor Seng's special contribution to international cooperation was appraised by the Rector of Masaryk University and he was awarded the Masaryk University Gold Medal on March 17, 2005.

Detailed Description

a) The aim of the first part of the project (**EDUCATION**) is to:

- gain insight and understanding of the area of higher education in a different environment
- be well prepared for the internship at a partner institution
- increase the soft skills necessary both for my current working position at home institution and at a partner institution
- strengthen existing skills
- improve time management skills
- improve organizational skills
- improve decision making skills
- develop thinking in a practical context

I have chosen **University of Illinois** and **Northwestern University** in Chicago. I have decided for these institutions after thorough examination of the offers in the field of professional education at Chicago universities. At University of Illinois I have chosen the courses of **Nonprofit Governance, Strategic Management** and **Leadership Ethics** and at the Northwestern University I have selected **Leading and Managing People** course. These are the areas which I consider crucial for further development of my work qualities both for my home institution and partner institution. One of the biggest benefits of the first courses is their online delivery so I can start preparing for my internship even before the planned arrival to USA.

b) The aim of the second part of the project (**INTERNSHIP**) is to:

- gain direct experience with U.S. higher education system (context, policy and strategies)
- get acquainted with the methods and procedures in U.S. professional education
- gain the comprehensive knowledge of the LLM Program that is provided by U.S. higher education institutions
- gain the LLM Program management and operation experience
- gain inspiration for innovative approach for work at my home institution
- increase the quality of the provided programs at my home institution
- increase effectiveness and efficiency of procedures in the subject area

I believe that the experience will lead to perfection of overall management, teaching and learning processes and quality assurance. The experience of John Marshall Law School as a LLM program provider will surely be inspiring and stimulating. There are also planned the meetings with representatives of other higher education institutions, legal experts and representatives of American Bar Association in Chicago as a part of the internship. In this way I would like to contribute to the general development of Faculty of Law in the area of education and international relationships. I would like to be prepared and more experienced for the forthcoming development in the area of global higher education.

Organization and Time Schedule

The time schedule of the project is generally shown in the table below. The proposed overall length of the project is 3 months, starting late September 2008 and ending in December 2008.

Time	Activity
09/2008	arrival in the USA
10/2008 - 12/2008	education & internship
12/2008	return to the Czech Republic

Program Benefits

I believe the continual education no matter what position people work at should be a natural part of our lives. The education has to combine theoretical background and also the practical work based aspects to be effective.

The new experience will enhance my professional knowledge and improve skills in the areas:

- organization and decision making
- time management
- development of quality assurance process
- data analysis and evaluation

With respect to my current position as a head of department at a university department I would like to improve the overall quality of my work and consequently the quality of work of my team members. And as an integral part of Faculty of Law enhance the overall quality in day-to-day activities. The benefits gained through the project implementation will be specified in the final report.

The measurable benefits of the projects are:

- a successfully completed education program
- gained understanding and knowledge of U.S. higher education legal system
- the report of my immediate supervisor on enhancing the quality of my work

I am confident that any new experience in the area of higher education and especially in legal education will no doubt be beneficial. The extent of taking advantage of the opportunity given above all depends on me. My vision is to use this opportunity as much as possible.

Risks

The implementation of new ideas and approaches might be always risky. Even though I believe that good and sensible innovations will always find their way into implementation. The only risk of this project I am aware of is the change of staffing at the department I am in charge of (e.g. long term illness). If there is any situation like this and I would not be able to find alternative substitution to ensure functional team operation in time, then I would have to postpone the implementation of the proposed project. I want to believe the probability of this is very low.