



EXPANDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: IPEC

By Jane Wilson

A few years ago, a Bethesda-based startup suspected it had some intellectual assets that needed protection if it was to succeed in launching its new business.

After just a few meetings with the entrepreneurs, Professor Patricia Campbell and her students at the Maryland Carey Law Intellectual Property Law Clinic agreed, and over the next several months, they filed a series of successful patent and trademark applications for the company.

But as the new venture grew, its executives started asking the clinic for advice about distribution agreements, equity arrangements and other business matters vital to its development, but well beyond the scope of patent and trademark law.

“It was so frustrating,” recalls Campbell. “This had been an incredibly successful experience for our students, but we couldn’t help the company take its logical next steps. The legal questions it was bringing to us were related to our practice area, but beyond it.”

All that will change in January 2018, when the clinic adds a second attorney, expands its legal services, opens a Baltimore office in addition to its longstanding site at Mtech’s TAP Incubator in the A. James Clark School of Engineering in College Park, and becomes the Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship Clinic — or IPEC — a new name to denote the new services it hopes to offer high-tech startups, small businesses, and other clients.



Professor Patricia Campbell, Director of the Intellectual Property Law Program and the Maryland Intellectual Property Legal Resource Center.

Campbell is thrilled at the prospect of what she calls the clinic's "grand opening" and the opportunity it will give students to serve Baltimore's fast-growing community of entrepreneurs, including those at University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) schools as well as local incubators, such as City Garage. In fact, IPEC is one of several projects that will be part of the Center for Maryland Advanced Ventures, an initiative created and managed by the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership, MPowering the State, a partnership between UMB and the University of Maryland College Park.

In addition to providing advice on intellectual property matters, IPEC plans to help clients with business formation, drafting charter documents, obtaining business permits, and handling business operations, including drafting and reviewing service contracts, manufacturing agreements, and strategic partnerships. For companies interested in seeking outside investment, IPEC may offer assistance with

financing and review of term sheets. The clinic also may provide counseling on tax implications of business decisions and help companies obtain non-profit or benefit status.

Campbell expects that IPEC's Baltimore clients will be similar to those in College Park—startups that are so new or so small they simply can't afford a law firm. Although most of the new companies hire professional counsel once they win financial backing, the lean startups can still pose legal or technical challenges that provide a rich experience for students.

"People often ask why we should support a clinic that helps people make money," Campbell says. "But if a person loses a job and wants to use their years of experience to start a company, we should help them. Everyone benefits if they succeed — including our students." ♦