

Dear Summer Start Student,

Most things in the world are undergoing some changes right now, in response to the coronavirus issues. And that is true for the summer start as well. We are confident that it will continue to be a good educational experience that gives you a solid basis as you start your law school career.

The key thing that will be different about summer start this year is that the courses will be done online rather than in person. It's hard to predict what the circumstances will be like in May when the summer start begins, but we believe that making plans now for it to be online gives us the best ability to prepare and make the program a strong one, and it gives potential students like you the certainty of knowing what's in store, which is a nice thing to have in a time when there is so much that is uncertain.

There are 4 courses in the basic package of courses offered for summer starters. They add up to a total of 8 credits. But there is also a lot of flexibility, so you can take some portion of the courses if you don't want to take them all.

**Introduction to Law Study.** This is our mandatory orientation program. All students begin with a short course providing a basic introduction to the study of law as well as orientation to other aspects of UMKC law school such as information technology and career services. This is a course that is required for all new students, but it is not graded and there are no credits (and therefore no tuition or fees) for it. The course is scheduled to run from May 19 to 22. It usually runs from about 9:00 each morning to 4:00 each afternoon, over each of those four days. But the specific schedule this year is still being set, and it may be possible to shorten the time since it will be done online this year. (For example, the schedule normally includes some things like lunch events, building and campus tours, and getting photos taken, that we won't need to worry about this year. We will welcome the summer starters to participate in those things during the next orientation that is in person rather than online.) The Introduction to Law Study course is taught by Prof. Dan Weddle, who is the law school's director of academic support. This means he is the school's expert on training students in the key foundational skills needed for success throughout their time in law school.

**Torts.** Dean Allen Rostron will be teaching the Torts course. Torts is the area of law that deals with accidents and injuries. For example, if someone negligently crashed into you with their car, you'd have a tort claim against that person. Torts has long been one of the basic courses that new law students take. For example, it is a course that our "fall starters" have always taken in their first semester of law school. And it's a great course to have in the summer start, because it's such a classic "common law" subject, meaning that the rules of tort law have been developed over centuries through the common-law process of judges deciding cases. Torts is a 3-credit course. I have taught the course in summer start many times in the past and it definitely works well as a summer course. In fact, the summer course is actually better in some ways than what I am able to offer in the fall semester, because there are fewer students in it and so we can do more tests throughout the semester, with more feedback, so you can assess how you're doing and be sure you're getting the hang of what you're aiming to do in this course but also all the courses you'll be taking in the fall. The online version of the course will have several basic components. For each class session, you'll begin by reading the homework assignment. (I have a package of materials for you to read, that I created. So one of the nice little things about the course is that there is no textbook to purchase. Law textbooks are expensive, so that's a nice little savings for everyone.) There will then be a video to watch. I like making videos, and have been doing them for my constitutional law class since it switched to being online, and the students seem to really be enjoying them. Then we will have a synchronous or "live" online element for each class session (using Zoom) where we will focus on the problem method of learning law. This means you'll be taking the concepts and principles you learned from the reading and video and applying them to new scenarios and issues. And then there will also be a written online component to the course, using discussion boards on the law school's learning management system (Canvas). Students in my online constitutional law course have been doing a wonderful job of debating issues using these discussion boards, and it's actually enhanced the level of student engagement so much beyond the normal level that it's something I'll continue to use in my courses even when courses return to being done in a live format.

**Lawyering Skills I.** This is a course focused on the crucial skills of legal research and writing. It is 3 credits. It is taught by Prof. Dan Weddle, who is also teaching your orientation course. It is the first part of a two-part series; in other words, there is also a Lawyering Skills 2 course that you will be able to take in the fall. Lawyering Skills I and Lawyering Skills II will teach you how to research in the specialized field of law – finding cases, statutes, regulations, and other materials from which you can glean the law that courts in a given jurisdiction will rely upon to resolve legal issues. Like any profession – engineering, medicine, teaching, etc. – the legal profession has its own logic structure tailored to the kinds of problems lawyers solve and the resources they use to solve them. In this course, you will learn to engage that logic and the special demands it puts on written

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analysis. It will be challenging at first to move from the types of writing you have done in the past to the writing demanded of lawyers when speaking to judges, other lawyers, and clients. Engaging the logic of legal analysis in research, writing, and oral argument in these two courses, however, will speed that transition and will give you the skills to resolve complex legal issues not only in the real world of legal practice but also in the academic world of law school. Taught this summer in a synchronous Zoom format, Lawyering Skills I will begin an in-depth exposure to those skills, and Lawyering Skills II in the fall will develop the skills you acquire this summer, including the skills required for arguing before a court. Professor Weddle has taught writing in numerous contexts for over forty years, including literary analysis, business writing, scholarly writing, and legal writing. He will bring all of those experiences to bear to help you navigate the difficult transition into powerful, effective written analysis.

**Professional Responsibility.** This course (commonly referred to as PR) is about the ethical rules that govern the conduct of lawyers. It is a subject that every student at every law school is required to study at some point. The course is 2 credits. It will be taught by Prof. Rana Lehr-Lehnardt. The Professional Responsibility course is built around the study of a national model code, called the Model Rules of Professional Conduct. In other words, this is a model set of provisions, created by the American Bar Association, that states are encouraged to adopt. This makes it a nice contrast to Torts, since Torts is a classic common-law subject and Professional Responsibility is a code subject. So with these two courses, you are getting exposure to the two primary types of legal subjects.

This class will be taught twice a week using Zoom. Preparation for each class session will include a reading assignment from the textbook *Ethical Problems in the Practice of Law, Concise 4th Edition*. Embedded in the reading are a few ethical problems to which students will write a response (a couple of paragraphs in length for each). In addition, a second writing component will be online in the form of discussion boards. Students will write a comment at least once a week (or something similar) to encourage deeper thought of the ethical rules, how you would interpret them, and if there are better ways to lawyer than individuals in the problems demonstrated. Finally, videos will be prepared for students to watch prior to class sessions and we will meet twice a week during a Zoom (live) class session. This PR classes includes significant discussion, so when we meet live via Zoom, we will focus on discussing ethical issues, the ones assigned in the book that students “answered,” as well as others. Some students will love the online learning because it provides for increased flexibility, but I am also aware that some students greatly prefer the in-person experience. I will try to incorporate the best of both teaching methods.

There is a national standardized test, called the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (or MPRE), that all future lawyers are required to pass. It is sort of like a very small version of the bar exam, but just for the subject of Professional Responsibility. You can take the MPRE at any point during law school, but many students opt to take it shortly after they complete the Professional Responsibility course. It is offered in August, so assuming that is not disrupted by the coronavirus issues, you would have the option of knocking out the MPRE this summer, which is a nice thing to do. Again, the four courses described here are the basic package for summer starters. But if you wanted to take some portion of these courses and not all of them, there is flexibility on that. And if there is some other subject offered this summer that you are particularly eager to take and are particularly well suited to take right away in your first semester, we can discuss that.

The maximum number of credits that anyone can take in the summer is 9. The minimum number that you need to take in order to be eligible for financial aid (loans) is 5.

The introduction/orientation course is May 19 to 22, and then the other courses will run from May 26 to July 10. The Lawyering Skills course does not have a final exam (you do writing assignments in that course). The final exam in Professional Responsibility will be some time during the week of July 13 to 17, and the final exam in Torts will be in the first part of the next week (July 20 to 22).

Best,

**Dean Rostron and Professors Lehr-Lehnardt and Weddle**  
Summer Start Professors

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