TO: J.D. Candidates

FROM: Gary Clinton

RE: Planning Your Upper-Level Curriculum

This memo is meant to introduce you to the upper-level curriculum. It will set out the requirements for the J.D., and suggest ways to go about course selection.

Requirements

Following successful completion of the 1L program, J.D. candidates must:

- 1) Spend four full-time semesters (of a minimum 12 semester hours each) in residence at the Law School.
- 2) <u>Complete</u> a total of at least 55 semester hours of credit-bearing work, subject to the rules and limits described in the Registration Materials and the <u>Student Guide to Policies and Procedures</u>.
- 3) Satisfy the "Senior Writing Requirement," which involves production of a significant piece of expository writing and research. This requirement is satisfied through writing a paper under the supervision of a Law School faculty member or lecturer in a seminar or independent study, or through production of a comment on a Penn Law publication (<u>Law Review</u>, <u>Journal of Constitutional Law</u>, <u>Journal of International Economic Law</u>, or <u>Journal of Labor and Employment Law</u>). A full description of the Writing Requirement is found in the Registration Materials.
 - 4) Satisfy the Public Service Requirement.
 - 5) Successfully complete a course in Professional Responsibility.

Courses Outside the Law School

As part of your upper-level load, you may take up to 12 semester hours (4 full courses) of work in other departments of the University. The courses must be: 1) graduate level (numbered 500 and above); 2) relevant to a legal education; 3) not duplicative of courses we offer at the Law School.

What Courses Should You Take?

Over the span of your second and third year of law school, you can anticipate that the School will offer a program consisting of approximately 145 different offerings. These will

consist of courses, seminars, clinics, externships, and co-curricular programs (which include journals and moot court activities). Over the four upper-level semesters, the average student will take perhaps 20 of these offerings.

The fact that Penn requires no specific set of courses offers you both a significant opportunity to design your own curriculum and the challenge of actually doing so. There are some broad suggestions we can make, and then we will outline a variety of approaches to course selection.

Generally Speaking

Law School courses have varying semester hours, with most carrying 2, 3 or 4 semester hours. These "credits" are normally based on the amount of time the course meets per week. Semester hours are <u>not</u> based on workload, although there is a strong correlation between workload and time in class.

The great majority (perhaps as high as 90%) of 2Ls will take a number of the "big" semester hour courses: Evidence, Corporations, Commercial Credit I, and Federal Income Tax I. My general advice is to avoid taking more than two of these courses in a single semester, and possibly deferring some of them to your third year. The reason is that these courses are highly detail-oriented, and keeping all the codes and rules straight during the exam crunch can be hard. That said, a number of students will take three in a semester and be perfectly comfortable. It's yours to decide.

Specific Approaches

We have boiled down advice we've heard from various faculty members and students over the years into the following. These are given simply as illustrations of ways you can view your curriculum. These are not the only approaches you might take, nor are they given in a significant order.

I. The "Major In Something" Approach

Some individuals choose to "major" in an area, gearing their choices toward their interests, their backgrounds, their career choice, or their prediction of what the future employment market will value.

II. The "Challenge Yourself" Approach

This approach advises students to search the curriculum for exactly those courses which will cause them the greatest stretch intellectually and philosophically. It says that at least one of your courses each semester should help you examine your own ways of thinking, seeing and knowing - - not necessarily in order to change yourself, but to recognize the basic and often

unspoken ways you handle information, ideas, and policies.

III. The "Terrific Teacher" Approach

This advises students to take courses with faculty members whose intellectual or philosophic approaches, subject matters, accessibility, clarity, or so on is appealing to the student, as a means of establishing a relationship with those faculty members or a particular approach to the law.

IV. The "Now's The Time to Get Practical Skills" Approach

This advises students to focus on practice-oriented and skills development courses so that they are prepared to "hit the ground running" when they get to practice. Courses in trial and appellate advocacy, moot court competitions, externships, and the Law School's clinical offerings (with a live client or a simulation base) all help to develop a high level of proficiency.

V. The "Generalist" Approach

Most students seek to take a broad range of courses, studying across a wide variety of subjects ranging from the "big course" group listed above to highly advanced seminars, and from code-oriented courses to courses focused on legal theory, philosophy, policy and points inbetween. This approach may also have students taking courses on distinctly U.S. law as well as courses in international and comparative law.

Picking What's Right For You

Those who are not sure which of the above approaches to curriculum planning to adopt will find it very helpful to canvass upper-year classmates and faculty members for their advice and assistance. Faculty members are also happy to talk with students about the subject matter and format of their upper-year courses.