While she valued all of her courses at Maine Law, the direction of Leah Baldacci’s career and the skills she needed to get there really came together during her externships.

“I participated in two externship placements during law school, one at the Maine Board of Overseers of the Bar and one at Pine Tree Legal Assistance,” said the Newcastle, Maine native. “My externships were, by far, the best learning experiences I had during law school.”

After graduating from Maine Law, *summa cum laude*, in 2016, Baldacci was hired as an associate attorney at Lambert Coffin in Portland. Her practice focuses on personal injury, workers’ compensation, and family law.

“The practical experiences and the learning opportunities allow you to develop a sense of what it is like to be a practicing attorney and help guide you in discovering the type of attorney you want to become after graduation.” Baldacci said.

That appreciation for the Externship Program is shared by many other Maine Law Alums.

Andrew Berggren ’16, who had externships with the York County District Attorney’s Office and the Maine Attorney General’s Office, is now an Assistant District Attorney in York County.

By Trevor Maxwell

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**Externship Placements**

Examples of past and current externship placements include:

- **Corporate:** TD Bank N.A.; Cianbro Corporation; Foreside Financial Group, LLC; WEX
- **Criminal:** Offices of the United States Attorney and the Maine Attorney General; Federal Defender’s Office; various District Attorney offices
- **Environmental:** Conservation Law Foundation; Maine Attorney General’s Office – Natural Resources Division; Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- **Health:** InterMed P.A.; Mercy Hospital; Maine Medical Association; Consumers for Affordable Health Care; Penobscot Community Health Care; MaineHealth
- **Judicial:** State District Court; U.S. Bankruptcy Court; U.S. District Court (Maine); U.S. Court of Appeals (First Circuit)
- **Privacy:** International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP); Elsevier; RXAnte; Maine Attorney General’s Office – Public Access Ombudsman
- **Public Interest:** Disability Rights Maine; Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP); Legal Services for the Elderly; Pine Tree Legal Assistance
- **Create Your Own Externship:** In addition to regularly offered externship placements, students can also create their own externships at any number of courts, agencies, or institutions.
- **Semester in Practice:** The Semester in Practice Externship Program allows selected students the unique opportunity to spend an entire semester working alongside a seasoned attorney. This is a full-time externship, which provides 12-14 credits for the semester.
graduates. Under the oversight of Rachel Reeves, Director of Field Placement Programs (and a 2001 Maine Law alumna), the program has grown in recent years, in response to the needs of students and the job market. Employers in the legal industry have geared recruitment efforts toward candidates who possess practical lawyering skills and can make an immediate impact.

Externships allow students to work for a semester for academic credit alongside seasoned lawyers and judges in government agencies, nonprofit organizations, corporate in-house legal departments, and state and federal courts. Depending on the placement, students handle advocacy, policy, regulatory enforcement, and transactional legal matters, and may have the opportunity to practice as a student attorney during their third year of law school. Students in the Externship Program receive valuable feedback and mentoring from placement supervisors and the Externship Director.

Externship placements are available in virtually every practice area and geographic location, and they provide Maine Law students the opportunity to develop essential professional skills while making valuable contacts. Students have worked in cities and towns throughout Maine, at the epicenter of government in Washington, D.C., and as far away as Alaska.

“The time that I spent as an extern at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in D.C. was an invaluable experience,” said Marpheen Chann, a 2017 Maine Law graduate.

“My supervisors and colleagues were more than willing to connect me to the networks and contacts they had accumulated throughout their many years in government service. I was also able to explore a new, exciting, and diverse city and meet other young, ambitious professionals.”

Leah Baldacci ’16
Attorney, Lambert Coffin

What do you do for work, and how long have you been in your current job? I became an Associate Attorney at Lambert Coffin in September 2016.

When you were a student at Maine Law, where did you work as an extern, and what was that experience like for you? I participated in two externship placements during law school, one at the Maine Board of Overseers of the Bar and one at Pine Tree Legal Assistance. My externships were, by far, the best learning experiences I had during law school. I also developed lasting professional relationships and friendships with my supervisors.

Are there certain lessons or skills you still use that you learned as an extern? I had the opportunity to interview, counsel, and represent clients at court. Negotiating with the opposing party quickly became one of my favorite aspects of my externship. I use the negotiation skills I learned during my externship in my practice today. I also continue to develop the courtroom skills I learned during my externship by representing victims of sexual assault and domestic violence pro bono.

Why should Maine Law students consider an externship as part of their education? The practical experiences and the learning opportunities allow you to develop a sense of what it is like to be a practicing attorney and help guide you in discovering the type of attorney you want to become after graduation.

Andrew Berggren ’16
Assistant D.A., York County D.A.’s Office

What do you do for work, and how long have you been in your current job? I am an Assistant District Attorney at the York County D.A.’s Office. I have been an A.D.A. for just over a year.

When you were a student at Maine Law, where did you work as an extern, and what was that experience like for you? I was an extern with the York County D.A.’s Office as well as the Maine Attorney General’s Office, specifically White Collar Crimes. Both opportunities were incredible. Both agencies handled criminal prosecutions, but the pace and volume of cases were very different.

Are there certain lessons or skills you still use that you learned as an extern? A skill set that I began to develop as an extern and continue to use now is working extensively with statutes. A lesson that I keep with me is that my professional reputation matters; if you lose the respect of your peers, it is very difficult to regain it.

Why should Maine Law students consider an externship as part of their education? An externship is a great way to take classroom concepts, especially after 1L year, and see how they apply in a professional setting. During my 2L and 3L semesters my broadened understanding of how legal principles relate to one another paid dividends in all of my classes.
For many Maine Law alumni, the Law School’s Externship Program has served as a launching pad for their careers. And even when externships do not lead directly to jobs, graduates say the experiences helped them become well-rounded lawyers and job candidates. We caught up with several recent graduates and asked them about the Externship Program and its impact.

Rose Cox ’15
Corporate Compliance Manager, TD Bank N.A.

What do you do for work, and how long have you been in your current job?
I am a Corporate Compliance Manager at TD Bank. I started two years ago in consumer compliance and last year transitioned to institutional compliance.

When you were a student at Maine Law, where did you work as an extern, and what was that experience like for you?
I was an extern at TD Bank and InterMed. Both experiences helped me identify my professional interests, strengths, and growth opportunities. By the second year of law school, gaining professional experiences and networking was much more valuable for me than taking traditional classes.

Are there certain lessons or skills you still use that you learned as an extern?
The greatest lesson I learned is that there is an unlimited pool of qualified talent, so you need to identify and capitalize on what differentiates you. People want to work alongside someone who breathes life into an office. If you are authentic and positive the right doors will open.

Why should Maine Law students consider an externship as part of their education?
Externships are a perfect way to explore different career paths and companies. Both are equally important to your long-term happiness, and life is too short to settle for a job that consistently makes you unhappy.

Brian Philbrook ’17
Privacy Counsel, OneTrust

What do you do for work, and how long have you been in your current job?
I am Privacy Counsel at OneTrust. I started working for the company as an extern during law school. After graduation, I moved to Atlanta with my wife and started working for the company full time.

When you were a student at Maine Law, where did you work as an extern, and what was that experience like for you?
My first externship was with the International Association of Privacy Professionals where I was able to dive into privacy law. I later worked for the Maine Public Access Ombudsman, where I learned about freedom of information. Both of those experiences allowed me to tailor my law school experience to my chosen field of practice.

Are there certain lessons or skills you still use that you learned as an extern?
I learned the value and importance of networking. This does not come naturally to everyone, but it gets easier with practice.

Why should Maine Law students consider an externship as part of their education?
Students should consider an externship because it will provide realistic and practical experience that classroom learning does not.

Cassie Rodgers ’16
Attorney, Swanson Law

What do you do for work, and how long have you been in your current job?
I have been employed by Swanson Law, P.A. in Presque Isle since graduating from law school in May 2016. Swanson Law is a general practice firm where I focus on criminal defense, family law, protective custody, and small claims matters.

When you were a student at Maine Law, where did you work as an extern, and what was that experience like for you?
The summer after my 1L year I completed my externship with the Hon. Bernard O’Mara ’73 at the Presque Isle District Court. That experience was invaluable – I became familiar with the processes associated with the field I now practice and had the opportunity to meet the small, collegial bar in which I now practice.

Are there certain lessons or skills you still use that you learned as an extern?
Many of the lessons and skills I learned as an extern are useful in my everyday practice. From research and writing, to practice style, to interpersonal skills – I utilize what I learned as an extern in each of these areas daily.