Legal Studies (Patent Practice), MLS

Patent law has become one of the integral ways to protect and commercialize inventions, ideas and processes. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office does not require a law degree to sit for the patent bar exam. This degree provides students with an understanding of patent law and intellectual property.

Program Description

Degree Awarded: MLS Legal Studies (Patent Practice)

The concentration in patent practice within the MLS degree program prepares students for the practice of patent law as registered patent agents with the United States Patent and Trademark Office. The concentration program focuses on providing students with substantial doctrinal knowledge about patent law as well as practical skills training, including a capstone clinical course, relevant in the patent law field.

Undergraduates with an engineering or hard science degree can draft and submit patent applications on behalf of themselves and others by passing the patent bar exam and becoming a registered Patent Agent with the USPTO. Additionally, many law firms, corporations, entrepreneurial ventures, and others hire nonlawyers to draft patents.

At ASU's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, the patent practice focus provides students with a detailed understanding of patent law and a general understanding of intellectual property and the U.S. legal system. Skills gained enable students to successfully assist clients in securing their patentable invention rights.

Patent Agent

Trends show that many law firms, large corporations and other companies that rely on patent prosecution expertise are increasing their hiring and use of patent agents. Patent agents are nonlawyers but are approved by the USPTO to represent individuals and companies in the patent prosecution process.

Not surprisingly, patent agents are well-paid. According to the American Intellectual Property Law Association, the average salary is $131,333 and $147,978 for all patent agents having five or fewer years of experience and who are employed at law firms who participated in the 2015 AIPLA Economic Survey.

Clinical Experience

Students in the Lisa Foundation Patent Law Clinic (https://law.asu.edu/experiences/clinics/lisa-foundation) receive hands-on experience in real-world patent prosecution and learn skills needed to recognize and obtain
valuable and enforceable patents for clients that later may be successfully licensed or litigated. Regardless of whether students plan to practice transactional patent law or work in patent litigation, the clinic gives students insight into both areas of practice so they may understand the impact that actions taken during the patent procurement process have during a subsequent patent litigation.

Through their clinical experience, students work with independent inventors and start-up companies to draft and prosecute patent applications in the USPTO under the supervision of licensed patent attorneys. Additionally, students learn to conduct validity and infringement analyses while gaining valuable skills such as patent due diligence, valuation and licensing strategies.

The clinic focuses on providing students with hands-on experience in the most commonly encountered practical areas such as inventor interviewing, patentability searching and opinion drafting, patent application and office action response drafting, and examiner interviewing.

At a Glance

- **College/School:** Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law
- **Location:** Downtown Phoenix campus

Degree Requirements

**Required Core (3 credit hours)**
LAW 581 US Law and Legal Analysis (3)

**Concentration (18 credit hours)**

**Electives (6 credit hours)**

**Culminating Experience (3 credit hours)**
clinical experience (Lisa Foundation Patent Law Clinic) (3)

Total required credit hours (30)

Admission Requirements
Applicants must fulfill the requirements of both the Graduate College and the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law.

Admission to the concentration requires a bachelor's degree in one of the following:

- aeronautical engineering
- agricultural engineering
- biochemistry
- biology
- biomedical engineering
- botany
- ceramic engineering
- chemical engineering
- civil engineering
- computer engineering
- computer science*
- electrical engineering
- electrochemical engineering
- electronics technology
- engineering physics
- food technology
- general chemistry
- general engineering
- geological engineering
- industrial engineering
- marine technology
- mechanical engineering
- metallurgical engineering
- microbiology
- mining engineering
- molecular biology
- nuclear engineering
- organic chemistry
- petroleum engineering
- pharmacology
- physics
- textile technology

*Acceptable computer science degrees must be accredited by the Computer Science Accreditation Commission of the Computing Sciences Accreditation Board or by the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET on or before the date the degree was awarded.
A minimum of a 3.00 cumulative GPA (scale is 4.00 = "A") in the last 60 hours of a student's first bachelor's degree program is required. A minimum of 3.00 cumulative GPA (scale is 4.00 = "A") in the applicable master's degree is required.

All applicants must submit:

1. completed MLS application form and application fee
2. official transcripts
3. resume, not exceeding three typed pages
4. statement of interest (typed, double-spaced) not exceeding 1,250 words
5. two letters of recommendation
6. a writing sample
7. proof of English proficiency

**Additional Admission Information**
An applicant whose native language is not English (regardless of current residency) must provide proof of English proficiency as indicated by acceptable scores. Applicants should have a TOEFL score above 600 (paper), 250 (computer) or 100 (Internet). Exceptional candidates with relevant experience and background who have scores of at least 590 (paper), 243 (computer) or 96 (Internet) also will be considered. Applicants must meet the requirements of the Graduate College as well as those of the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law.

Applicants with degrees from foreign institutions must submit transcripts to World Education Services (www.wes.org).

There is no required admission examination.

Potential applicants should see the program website for application deadlines.

**Contact Information**

Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law | BCLS 420
mlsasu@asu.edu | 480-965-1474
Admission Deadlines