



FROM COACHING TRAVEL SOCCER TO COACHING FUTURE TITAN LAWYERS: AN UNEXPECTED PATH TO FOUNDING AND CO-DIRECTING THE TRADEMARK & ENTREPRENEUR CLINIC

Timothy K. Kroninger '85

Partner, Varnum LLP
Founder & Co-Director, Trademark & Entrepreneur Clinic

Tim Kroninger '85 never imagined he would launch a clinic at Detroit Mercy Law, but after 20 years of coaching youth travel soccer, teaching future Titan lawyers became his next opportunity to give back.

An accomplished intellectual property and business law attorney, Kroninger has founded and operated his own companies and counseled clients of all sizes, ranging from startups to Fortune 500 companies. After joining the Detroit office of Varnum LLP, he reconnected with Detroit Mercy Law and proposed expanding the school's intellectual property offerings.

"I had a great student experience and wanted to do more for the law school," Kroninger shared. "At the time, there was a clinic focused on patent law, but intellectual property is much broader than that. After a few conversations with the dean and a faculty member, the next thing I knew, I was launching and directing a new clinic."

The **Trademark & Entrepreneur Clinic** is an opportunity for students to blend intellectual property law and business law. The clinic serves small businesses and startups in Michigan. Students learn how to protect trademarks and form limited liability companies for clients among other business related projects..

"For me, this is teaching the youth—like soccer, it's coaching. I'm teaching law students how to practice law," Kroninger said of his approach to directing the clinic. **"My focus is on coaching them to succeed in the business of law—the kind of learning that is not in a book, so they are prepared for the actual practice of law—how to deal with real situations as they come."**

IP LAW FELLOWS

Detroit Mercy Law awards the Intellectual Property Law Fellowship to highly qualified incoming students with STEM backgrounds interested in pursuing IP law.

He told his first group of students, "I know about the practice of law and how to be successful. We'll figure this clinic out together." Kroninger covers seven keys to success in the practice of law and relies on his co-director, Timothy D. Kroninger, his son and also a Varnum LLP attorney, to teach students the black letter law and manage clients.

"I continue to practice and teach because I have fun doing it," said Kroninger, which aligns with one of his keys to success in the practice of law. "I tell students, life is short, so you have to enjoy it along the way. Find a workplace that you can enjoy and practice law there. Start somewhere and turn it into an experience to get you where you want to be."

He also instills in his students the importance of energy, preparation, attentiveness, and learning from mistakes. **"No matter how tough your day has been, clients and colleagues still expect your best,"** he tells them. "Whether it takes 5 minutes or 50, you need to be fully prepared—there's no place for winging it in the successful practice of law." He also emphasizes the value of being a good listener, noting that many people are more focused on crafting their next response than truly hearing what is being said. "We can make mistakes; we can learn from them—so long as it's not serious—but limit the mistakes or you risk losing client trust and over time they won't come back to you," he tells students.

Kroninger says it's his students who keep him going. "When a former student reaches out and says, 'Your teaching and advice in class helped me succeed on my first assignment—my partner told me I did a great job, just the way you taught us—and now I'm getting more responsibility,' that's what keeps me going," he explains. "And that message always seems to arrive when you need it—as if it's being sent by a higher being—and it reminds you why it matters and inspires you to keep going."



Jaafer Alemara, 1L
B.S.E., Electrical Engineering,
University of Michigan Dearborn

Jaafer worked as a design engineer in multiple industries. He is a registered patent agent and interested in engineering, innovation, and law, as they relate to patents.



Alexandra Biederman, 2L
B.S., Chemical Engineering,
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Alexandra became interested in IP law while completing an internship during her undergraduate studies. Thereafter, she gained exposure to legal matters while working as a regulatory affairs engineer.



Andrew Majchrzak, 3L
B.S., Mechanical Engineering,
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Andrew worked for several years as an engineer before law school. He plans to become a patent attorney and serve others by protecting their intellectual property.



Jacob Obendorfer, 1L
B.S., Electrical Engineering,
Wayne State University

Jacob has supported IP legal services for over a decade in the D.C. and Detroit markets. He plans to use his law degree to become a patent attorney.



Christopher Storms, 3L
B.S., Physics; M.S., Electrical &
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Chris is a registered patent agent and patent engineer. He was inspired to pursue work with patents and IP law after working on his own patents, of which he has two.



Sarah Wilson Meyrer, 3L
B.S., Mechanical Engineering,
University of Michigan Ann Arbor

Sarah is a registered patent agent and works in the Detroit office of a large law firm. She plans to use her law degree to help local businesses and serve clients seeking protection of their IP rights.