

Whoa. Are Law Schools Testing the Apprenticeship Model?

With the rising cost of college and the decline of skilled workers, the idea of apprenticeship [has been catching on](#) as a worthy higher education alternative. After all, who wouldn't want the opportunity to earn money while learning, gain hands-on experience, and get a foot in the job field of their choice?

The idea of apprenticeship seems novel and limited to the trades in the minds of many modern Americans. Historically speaking, however, apprenticeship was also the realm of more [academic-oriented fields](#). News out of Minnesota suggests that the trend toward apprenticeship may be working its way back into legal education.

According to the [Star Tribune](#), the University of Minnesota Law School is piloting a program that will enable students to spend a majority of their third year working in a law office receiving real-world experience instead of sitting in a classroom:

“While virtually all law schools have hands-on training programs, this is one of the first in the nation to offer a working alternative to the traditional third year, said Prof. Mark Kappelhoff, who created the program.

...

As part of the program, the students pay tuition and take one course a semester while working essentially full time, for free, for one of the participating city or county prosecutors or public defenders. When school is finished, the fledgling lawyers will get to stay on the job for a second year, with full pay, once they pass the bar.”

As Alli Holznecht, one of the students accepted into the glorified legal apprenticeship program, explains:

“Classroom learning is wonderful and the professors are great at the U, but it doesn’t prepare you fully for being in the courtroom, which is what I want to do.”

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi, who will be her boss during her residency, agrees. ‘I think experiential learning is so important,’ he said.”

As the [New York Times](#) recognized last year, there are far too many law students to fill the available legal positions. For those who are still passionate about studying law, will apprenticeship type programs like those the University of Minnesota is piloting give students the experience and connections they need to get a leg up in their careers?

Image Credit: Young Mr. Lincoln via ciakhollywood.com