

**I**magine spending a semester immersed in global business transactions and litigation in Dubai, one of the world's most dynamic cities.

BYU Law's Global Business Law Program offers students a unique opportunity to explore a variety of practice areas through Global Law Seminars in key commercial hubs such as Geneva, London, Tokyo, Bengaluru, and—as of 2023—Dubai. The most populous emirate in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Dubai is a bustling center for regional and multinational trade, and its crucial role in Middle Eastern affairs makes it an ideal location for BYU Law students interested in international corporate law to gain hands-on experience.

### **Balancing Academics and Experiential Learning**

Professor Aaron Nielson, an expert in the field of administrative and antitrust law, spearheaded the new Dubai seminar. He ensures that participants are well-prepared for the opportunity. "Antitrust (what the rest of the world calls competition law) is a complex global subject," he says. "Program participants are required to take my class about how competition law works around the world." Nielson helps students grasp both the common policy issues that arise globally and the diverse approaches countries employ to address them.

One of the standout features of the Global Law Seminars is their blend of classroom learning and practical experience. The program's cornerstone is the externship, in which students spend 35-45 hours a week working with firms involved in international transactions and litigation. Unlike international

programs at many other US law schools offering study abroad opportunities, BYU Law's Global Law Seminars focus on placing students in demanding externships with partnering organizations, such as hedge funds, investment banks, and multinational law firms. These externships introduce students to various aspects of global business law and help them make informed career decisions. The program complements this practical experience with courses in administrative law and public international law. "Our goal is to help students learn both in the classroom and in real-world situations," Nielson says.

### **Real-World Experience**

BYU Law's global network and its International Center for Law and Religion Studies were influential in the decision Rachel Howden, 3L, made to attend BYU Law. Howden studied international peacebuilding and cultural anthropology as an undergraduate, and in law school she has focused on corporate and business law courses with an interest in practicing law internationally. Howden jumped at the opportunity to put her classroom learning into action with the seminar in Dubai.

Howden externed with the in-house legal team at Aster DM Healthcare, a multinational healthcare company, where she worked on legal issues including real estate acquisitions,



*BYU Law students Rachel Howden, Jordin Annett, and Jessica Christensen visit Sharjah, UAE.*

international contract disputes, and employment law. "I worked with a team of seven lawyers, each of whom were licensed in their home countries, and each had a different legal background and expertise," she says. "My experience at Aster showcased the multifaceted nature of legal practice within a large multinational corporation."

A serendipitous encounter Howden had with a Utah-based supplement brand at a Dubai health expo underscored the global nature of commerce and the unexpected ways in which the familiar and unfamiliar can collide. "Aster was selling a supplement brand that is made and distributed in Park City, Utah," Howden explains. "Here I was, a Utah local, almost 8,000 miles

away, and the company I was externing with was selling vitamins from a place that is an hour away from my childhood home! It was a reminder that we are all connected."

Howden came to appreciate the critical role of cultural understanding in business and law. "My experience in Dubai taught me that it is crucial to listen and to not hesitate to ask for clarification," she says. "Especially when team members have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, contracts must be written clearly and understandings fully confirmed. Clear communication is key to collaborating on international teams. The beauty of globalization is that we can all learn from each other and expand our perspectives."

and diversity of Dubai. I made good relationships and I would welcome the opportunity to live in the region in the future.”

### **Building a Future in Dubai**

Because the Global Law Seminar in Dubai is new, Nielson is working hard to refine and optimize the learning experience. Finding the right balance between students earning credits and gaining real-world experience is a critical consideration for the program, and BYU Law’s commitment to fine-tuning the program is a testament to the school’s dedication to student success.

Nielson is optimistic about the future of the program and the potential for students to build careers in Dubai: “For years, I’ve helped manage the Law School’s program in Washington, DC, and as a result of that program, some students have decided to practice in DC. We’ve had students in Dubai for only one semester, but we hope a similar dynamic will develop through our Dubai seminar.”

The Global Law Seminar in Dubai is not merely an educational program; it is a transformative experience that equips students with the skills, knowledge, and real-world exposure they need to thrive in the complex landscape of international business law.

“This program exemplifies a new frontier in legal education, where theory meets practice in a global context. Dubai is one of the most important cities on Earth, yet many US law schools do not have a presence there,” Nielson observes. “People from all over the world live in Dubai, which makes it a perfect place to fulfill the university motto ‘The world is our campus.’”

Balancing the demands of an externship with the required coursework was challenging for Howden, but it provided valuable lessons in juggling work with other responsibilities. She shares, “After a full workday, I would then come home to several hours of class. The timing meant that I had to be very organized with doing my homework the day before because I would not have time during the day to prepare for class.”

The seminar exceeded her expectations. “Working in Dubai was empowering: I am more confident in not only my legal skills but also my ability to work alongside people with very different backgrounds,” she says. “I loved being in the UAE, and I appreciated the safety



*The group commemorates International Women’s Day at Aster DM Healthcare’s corporate office.*



*A kayaker views the morning skyline of downtown Dubai from Business Bay.*



*Rachel Howden poses with the sculpture Power of Words at Qasr Al Watan, the presidential palace in Abu Dhabi.*