Loyola to launch program in Rome
By Maria Kantzavelos
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Law graduates from around the world who want to pursue a career in promoting the rule of law in developing countries, nations in economic transition or countries emerging from conflict can soon receive training in the nuts and bolts of this work through a new program to be rolled out in Rome by Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

The law school has announced that it will launch a one-year, "practice-oriented" Master's of Law degree program in Rule of Law for Development in September at Loyola's John F. Felice Rome Center in Italy.

The program, also called PROLAW, is the law school's "first truly international law program," said Loyola's Dean David N. Yellen.

Loyola Chicago's law school has long been offering U.S. students overseas study options to include programs and field studies in various countries. But the PROLAW LL.M program in Rome is unique for the school in that an estimated three-quarters of the students in the program are expected to come from outside the United States, Yellen said.

Offering the program in Rome makes sense, the dean said, "because of it being accessible to so many places in the world where these students may come from."

Organizers of the new program, which is being supported by a $1.1 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, said the program also stands out from other law school offerings in that its emphasis is on the "how to do it" end of providing rule of law advice. Yellen said he knows of only one other similar program at a law school in Ohio.

"Ours is quite unique in terms of training people to actually go back and do this kind of work," Yellen said.

According to the university's website, the program will prepare graduates to work as rule of law advisers for such places as: governments undertaking legal and justice reforms; international financial institutions, such as the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank; the United Nations and its specialized agencies dealing with peacekeeping and peace building; specialized international organizations such as the International Development Law Organization and the Institute for the Unification of Private Law; nongovernmental organizations like national and international bar associations dealing with rule of law and justice issues; and private consultancy firms, universities and think tanks performing rule of law advisory work under contracts and grants.

Serving as the program's director is attorney William T. Loris, an alumnus of Loyola University Chicago's John F. Felice Rome Center and the former director general of the International
Development Law Organization, a Rome-based inter-governmental organization that works to promote the rule of law and good governance in developing countries, countries in economic transition and countries emerging from violent conflict.

"It's an idealistic career for a lawyer, who has all kinds of other potentials," Loris said, referring to rule of law advisory work. "This is a very practical area they can get into and affect the lives of millions of people."

Loris said there are currently hundreds of millions of dollars going into rule of law initiatives around the world. He said a target for the new Loyola program is to recruit students who are from developing countries that are receiving rule of law advice and people who are actually working in their own countries on rule of law reforms as partners of foreign-sponsored advisers — "so that these people in the developing countries actually develop the same skill set and knowledge base that the advisers have and eventually they would take over completely the responsibility for legal reform."

"The idea there is that, if all of these efforts — which are being financed by the international community, including the United States — are going to be successful, we need to build up a cadre of lawyers and judges and other kinds of legal professionals in these countries who will be able to conceive of and implement the next wave of change and reform long after the assistance from the United States or other countries is no longer available," Loris said.

The program also aims to attract students from countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development — students from "basically the rich countries; from the donor countries," Loris said.

That segment of the program's prospective students would include those from such places as the United States, European countries or Australia, "who are young lawyers and judges who would like to take advantage of the opportunity of their legal educations to help other countries develop the rule of law, and thus provide an essential element of governance, which will help alleviate poverty in the countries in which they work," Loris said.

"There's a huge market now for lawyers from successful countries to contribute to the efforts of other countries in developing their legal systems," he said. "This is an extremely rewarding way to lead your life."