Loyola Chicago launches new rule of law LLM in Rome
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Loyola University Chicago’s School of Law launched a new LLM program overseas that gives students the skills to build the rule of law in developing countries around the world.

The one-year academic program, located at its John Felice Rome Center in Italy, currently consists of 25 students who mostly hail from economically unstable countries. Some are recent law school graduates interested in public service and human rights, while others have an extensive resume in rule of law initiatives from their respective countries.

“Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there has been a concerted effort by the U.S. and its OECD partners to help countries develop the rule of law,” said Bill Loris, program director and former director general of the International Development Law Organization.

The objective of that is two-fold, he says: to provide a basis for protection for individual rights and promote democracy, as well as provide a favorable framework for economic growth through investment and trade.

The program is being funded through a $1.1 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other donations from Microsoft Corp., Loyola law alumnus Bernard Beazley, U.S. Department of State, Government of Uganda and some employers of students enrolled in the program.

The current student body is made up of individuals from U.S., Australia, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Liberia, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, The Kingdom of Tonga, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, South Africa, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe.

A snapshot of the current class includes an employee in the attorney general’s office in Mexico City, Mexico, looking to help recover the social order in a country battling a security crisis, to a lawyer from Tanzania’s Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance who wants to solve societal problems related to poverty and injustice.

“If you are a good lawyer in Chicago or Tokyo or Amsterdam, if an organization calls on you to go to Afghanistan or Bolivia, what do you actually do when you get there?,” Loris asks.

Most of the responsibilities, he says, are not related to legal work but rather inspiring people, mentoring and helping organize strategic processes for areas ranging from human trafficking, trade to human rights.