2011

Report from the Dean 2011

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“Because the Night”

At IIT Chicago-Kent, the night belongs to an elite corps of working professionals with uncommon talent, stamina and commitment to the intellectual challenges of studying law.
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A Message from Dean Harold J. Krent


But for those with the talent and the drive, Chicago-Kent’s evening program delivers superb teaching, an uncommonly broad curriculum, and the camaraderie of an elite student body, carefully selected for high academic aptitude and significant professional achievement.

In response to the professional demands placed on our evening students, Chicago-Kent recently introduced a flexible scheduling option for the first year of study. Evening students may now take a summer course both before and after their first academic year, thereby reducing their first-year course load from four nights a week to three. So far, feedback from students and faculty has been overwhelmingly positive.

In the following pages, you’ll meet several students, alumni and faculty members associated with our small but influential evening program. Representing the Class of 2011 are Howard Smith, a mechanical engineer, and Tamara Starks, a journalist. Both exemplify the professional excellence and intellectual discipline typical of our evening students.

Representing the graduates of our evening program, many of whom now practice around the world, are international commodities lawyer Ann Cresce, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Lester McKeever, the FDA’s Captain Justina Molzon, patent litigator David Roche, and civil rights lawyer Standish Willis.

Finally, our program owes its prestige most significantly to the full engagement of the Chicago-Kent faculty, many of whom have taught in both the day and the evening programs for their entire academic careers. Writing of their experience teaching evening students are two of our most admired professors, Supreme Court scholar Carolyn Shapiro and criminal law scholar David Rudstein.

[Signature]
Attorney and structural engineer David Roche is one of a number of individuals who chose to attend Chicago-Kent for its excellence in intellectual property law, a practice area that has expanded dramatically in recent years and dovetails beautifully with David’s background and skills. We are delighted with David’s success as a partner and patent litigator at a major international law firm. —HJK

After earning his undergraduate degree in structural engineering and materials at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1978, David Roche ’84 worked for Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates Inc., an engineering consulting firm in Northbrook. “I was exposed to the legal profession,” he recalls, “working with lawyers on things that had gone wrong.”

He knew he would need an advanced degree and thought about an MBA or master’s in engineering, “but having worked with lawyers who had no clue about anything scientific,” he says, “I just sensed an opportunity.”

His uncle and namesake, David H. Lucas ’65, recommended Chicago-Kent. The younger David especially liked that the evening program did not hold classes on Friday nights. “When you have a family,” he observes, “you’re so cramped for time. That was a little thing that helped a lot.”

David’s third child was born during his first semester at Chicago-Kent. Living in Rogers Park, he would make “the big loop” from Northbrook to downtown Chicago for the first year. In his second year, it became “the big triangle” when he landed a job with Illinois Tool Works (ITW) near O’Hare Airport. ITW had contacted Chicago-Kent, looking for a student with a scientific background. The firm paid tuition as part of his compensation.

“Law school definitely filled a gap in my education. Prior to law school, I had pursued an engineering degree in which most areas of study were highly quantitative and generally grounded in science and mathematics,” says David. “While I hope I never stop learning, I do feel that law school gave me a balanced and broad foundation from which I have greatly benefited.”

David’s favorite professors were Ronald Staudt; Bruce Levin, who taught contracts; and Michael Spak, who conducted the bar exam prep course as if it were a stand-up comedy routine.

But David singles out the legal writing program. “Ralph Brill was driven to make good writers out of Chicago-Kent students. That has served me very, very well.”

David became a licensed patent agent midway through law school and found that work and law school complemented each other—his classes providing context, work providing the opportunities for application. He credits his wife and his boss at ITW, Tom Buckman, for being so understanding during the four years of law school.

After graduating, he worked at ITW four more years, then moved to Baker & McKenzie LLP, where he has remained since 1988. As a partner at the firm, he still does patent prosecution, but most of his practice now involves litigation. “I attended a trial while I was at ITW,” he recalls, “and was smitten by the process. I found it fascinating.”

He was “drawn into” the field of intellectual property, which he says is almost inevitable if you have a law degree and a technical background.

What David appreciates most is the breadth of his education. “You learn evidence, estates, corporate law, civil procedure. You learn so much and it’s so broad. That’s what makes law school great.”
Gifted with focus and flexibility, Tamara Starks can do it all—as an outstanding law student, as a judicial extern and teaching assistant, as a dynamic student leader, and as a professional journalist with a demanding day job. An invaluable asset to our law school, Tamara has a wonderful future ahead of her. —HJK

Deadlines are a way of life for Tamara Starks ’11, who has worked as a journalist for the past two decades.

After earning an undergraduate degree at the University of Illinois, she got a job as a reporter at The Associated Press and worked her way up to editor while also serving as her office’s union rep for a number of years. After witnessing the arbitration process and watching the attorneys in action, she thought, “I really want to do that.”

Being a journalist, Tamara called around before applying to law school to find out what grads thought of Chicago-Kent. “Whether they were out two years or 12 to 15,” she recalls, “they all said it was completely worth it.” She also was impressed by the strength of Chicago-Kent’s labor and employment law program, which offered more courses than other Chicago schools.

Tamara says she chose the evening program because “Chicago-Kent makes it possible for working professionals to get the full education, not just the classroom stuff. That made a difference to me.”

During law school, she completed an externship with a federal judge in U.S. District Court. Because of her job, she couldn’t take the classroom component during the day. Chicago-Kent made an accommodation that allowed her to take the class at night.

Tamara continued to work at the AP on an early morning shift, from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., then studied until it was time for evening classes. Summer classes enabled her to finish her degree in three and a half years. She took the bar exam in February.

“Studying law was difficult, challenging and ultimately very rewarding,” Tamara says. “Law school taught me to dig deeper, to look at all of the angles.”

Her legal writing instructor, Professor Mary Rose Strubbe, was so impressed that Tamara became her TA for two semesters. She also enjoyed having Judge David Erickson for criminal procedure.

“The best thing about Chicago-Kent is you get to take classes from people who’ve worked in the field,” she says. “You learn the law from individuals who’ve done it from every angle.”

As a new graduate, Tamara isn’t limiting her options, but she has a special interest in employment law.

“Employment is such a huge part of everyone’s life, and it can go horribly wrong. I want to practice law that really matters to people.”

Last May, Tamara won the first Sandra P. Zemm Labor Law Prize, given annually to an outstanding third-year student in Chicago-Kent’s labor and employment law program. Tamara also served as president of the Evening Law Student Society, and she was a vice president of the Labor and Employment Law Society and a member of the Black Law Students Association.

“I didn’t want to just have classes,” she says. “I wanted a well-rounded experience. That’s one of the benefits of Chicago-Kent’s evening program.”
Captain Justina Molzon enrolled in our evening program after carving out an impressive career in the field of public health. At Chicago-Kent, she leveraged her professional assets to excel in the study of law, eventually extending her reach to the national and international levels of public health policy and initiatives. —HJK

The three things Justina Molzon ’85 uses most from her law school experience are writing, negotiating and avoiding worst-case scenarios.

“Law school changes the way you think,” she notes. “I can’t walk across the street without thinking of comparative fault.” But it didn’t make her a pessimist. “You have to know the worst case to avoid it,” she observes. “That’s the optimistic approach. How can you remedy something? It keeps you on a positive path.”

Justina's career path began at the University of Rhode Island, where she earned a pharmacy degree. “My mother told me I could be a nurse, a teacher or a pharmacist,” she recalls. “She had talked to the town pharmacist. I was always good at science, so I thought it would be a good profession.” Justina got her master’s in pharmaceutics and pharmacognosy, the science of deriving medicine from natural sources.

Satisfying an urge for public service, Justina spent five years on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona with the U.S. Public Health Service. A court case pitting the Navajos against the Hopis over mineral rights led to imperfect legislation, she said, that made her job more difficult. That experience increased not only her interest in the law, but her desire to see it done right.

In 1980, Justina relocated to Chicago to take a job as the regional pharmacist consultant with the Health Care Financing Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services. When she arrived in February, the only law school whose deadline hadn’t passed was Chicago-Kent. Justina had also heard about the law school’s legal writing program.

“We all wanted to quit after the first paper,” she recalls. In fact, one member of her study group called the school to quit but was put on hold. While waiting, he changed his mind.

“We figured it was part of the process of becoming an attorney,” she recalls. “We were being changed somehow, and we were rebelling.”

After her first year in law school, Justina took a position as a hospital pharmacist, working the midnight shift at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in intensive care, figuring if she worked after school then slept during the days, she would be fresher for classes in the evening.

Today she is the associate director of international programs for the Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, which she joined in 1990. Her ability to “flip time zones,” she says, has served her well, as have the skills she acquired in Negotiations and in Legal Writing, her favorite classes at Chicago-Kent.

At the FDA, Justina coordinates efforts to make therapeutic drugs more accessible worldwide through “harmonization” of the various regulations related to the registration of pharmaceuticals.

“Every regulatory agency has way too much to do and not enough resources,” she notes. “It’s important for agencies to start working together to promote better health globally.”
Business executive and civic leader Lester McKeever is one of many evening graduates who studied law as a means of enhancing their acumen in business, finance and a variety of cognate fields. Having joined us as a young CPA, Lester excelled in law school as he launched an extraordinarily accomplished career with the accounting firm of Washington, Pittman & McKeever and with the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. Forty years later, Lester continues to inspire our evening students with his warmth and generosity. —HJK

Lester McKeever ’71 had been working for an accounting firm, Washington & Pittman, for more than 10 years when he entered Chicago-Kent in the late 1960s.

“During law school,” he says, “our accounting practice began to experience growth.”

To this day he remains with his original firm, now Washington, Pittman & McKeever LLC, founded in 1939 by Mary T. Washington, the first African-American female CPA in the United States. In 1976, Lester was elected managing partner. Though he stayed with accounting, law school served him well.

“Law is life,” he says. “It teaches you how to think, how to read and understand, how to interpret, how to debate or solidify a point you’re trying to make.”

And it made him a better accountant. “Though I wasn’t practicing law per se,” he says, “my legal knowledge often proved beneficial to a client. A lot of issues that accounting presents are about legal matters that have to be dealt with. It’s a paper world. The more degrees you have, the better you can serve your client.”

Married with two kids and working full time when he set his sights on law school, Lester considered evening school his only option. “It was an endurance test,” he recalls. “It was a test of your stamina.”

He chose Chicago-Kent over other schools with night options and feels that was a lucky break. “Ralph Brill and the writing program provided a very strong foundation for all of us, and I met some friends I still have today. So going at night was a wonderful experience.”

Having a law degree helped foster new opportunities, most notably, his appointment to the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, where he served from 1995 to 2001, including three years as chairman. His multiple duties as chairman required meetings twice a year in Washington, D.C., where he sat with the board of governors and then chairman Alan Greenspan.

“That was an awe-inspiring experience considering that I did not know I was going to college until the day before I graduated from high school, when I received a scholarship from Allen J. and Frances Beasley.”

Lester has served as board chairman of the Chicago Urban League and the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago. He is a life trustee of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and has served on the Transition-Finance Committees of Chicago Mayors Harold Washington and Richard M. Daley, and on the board of trustees of Illinois Institute of Technology. Currently, he is serving his 17th year as treasurer of the University of Illinois board of trustees, and co-chairs the Endowment Committee of the ETA Creative Arts Foundation.

“I encourage everyone to do this kind of volunteer work,” he says. “Even getting on smaller nonprofit boards really helps you understand how to manage money and all the things businesses experience.

“Volunteerism affords opportunities to enhance your skills, and you often get out of it more than you give. We are obligated to give back to the community.”
Evenings: When Teachable Moments Abound
Reflections by Professor Carolyn Shapiro

An expert on the Supreme Court, where she clerked after law school, Professor Carolyn Shapiro is the consummate law professor who embraces legal scholarship and cares deeply about students and their intellectual and professional development. In the classroom, Carolyn balances her strong intellectual bent with the practical insights she acquired as a young attorney for a plaintiff civil rights firm and for the National Center on Poverty Law. As do most of our professors, Carolyn teaches both day and evening courses, including Legislation, Employment Relationships, and Public Interest Law and Policy. —HJK

Chicago-Kent’s evening students never cease to amaze me. Their discipline, motivation and sheer hard work are remarkable.

Law school is challenging enough without a full-time job on top of it. Yet many evening students thrive not only in law school, but also at their jobs—from the former student who earned a promotion while in law school, to the student who is chief financial officer of a business with multi-state locations, to the many students I have had who handle the stresses of working as full-time paralegals. And of course, like many day students, evening students often have family responsibilities as well.

Evening students often bring unique perspectives to the classroom. When I teach Employment Relationships at night, for example, students often have relevant experiences to relate from their own workplaces. And some of those students bring the perspective of the employer to the classroom, describing the management challenges and difficult decisions that employers sometimes face.

Having the employer’s point of view in the classroom is invaluable. It helps to make concrete our policy discussions, and it sometimes demonstrates when and how law in action is not identical to the law on the books.

A few years ago, for example, I had a student whose full-time job involved managing a staff within a larger organization. He spoke about the extent to which the employment-at-will doctrine, which is the default of any employment relationship, in his experience no longer describes the nature of that relationship. (Employment-at-will provides that an employee can be let go, or can quit, for any reason or no reason at all.)
There are so many exceptions to the employment-at-will rule, so many possible ways an employer might face liability for firing someone, that employers—or at least large, risk-averse employers—often function as if the law required them to have good cause before terminating someone. This student’s experience and anecdotes fleshed out what can sometimes be an abstract discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of employment-at-will and about the appropriateness of the exceptions to it.

No matter the subject matter, however, my experience teaching evening students is that they are generally mature and thoughtful. And I have benefitted from their unique perspectives and experiences in all of the classes I teach, including Legislation, Professional Responsibility, Work and Family, and Public Interest Law and Policy.

Teaching at night, of course, has its challenges. Students are understandably tired—and often so is the professor! But the rewards of teaching at night are significant. Having a hand in the legal education of such high-achieving people is a privilege.
Having served in the U.S. Navy in Afghanistan and Japan, Howard Smith is one of many students with impressive military backgrounds who have excelled in our evening program. An engineer and a stellar law student, Howard began law school with first-rate professional credentials already in place and graduates this spring with even more career options down the road. —HJK

Howard Smith ’11 thought about law school while he was getting his master’s in mechanical engineering at State University of New York at Buffalo, where earlier he’d earned his bachelor’s degree in aeronautical engineering. But he’d never been out of New York, so he joined the Navy to see some of the world. It turned out to be pretty good preparation for law school. He served as a project manager in the Civil Engineer Corps, and as a public works officer overseeing a 2 million-square-foot hospital.

“I was also responsible for 50 other buildings,” he mentions casually. “They kind of throw you right in.” He spent four years in Okinawa and a year in Afghanistan. Along the way, he earned a Navy Commendation Medal for superior leadership and an Army Commendation Medal for superior project management.

A friend from high school had already graduated from Chicago-Kent and recommended it—particularly the Honors Scholars program, which pays tuition and a $10,000 stipend for full-time day students and full tuition for those who go part time. Howard conducted the Honors Scholars interview with Dean Krent over the phone from Afghanistan.

Now Howard is glad he went full time his first year. “In first year, I felt like law school was my job,” he recalls. “That’s all I did.” His first child was born at the end of April 2008, “just before spring semester finals.”

Then a contracts management job opened up in the Chicago offices of Anson Industries, a nationwide construction firm that does specialty contracting. Howard talked it over with Dean Krent and decided to transfer to the evening program.

“I was actually surprised to see how well engineering meshed with the study of law,” Howard says. “Fundamentally, solving a complicated engineering problem is very similar to addressing a complicated legal issue. In both cases, you must break the problem into manageable chunks, and apply the applicable equations or rules.”

His military experience helped him manage the time commitment. “In the military,” he notes, “they frequently give you more tasks than you have time for. I learned to prioritize and work efficiently.”

Howard believes that the combination of his engineering background and his law degree provides a wide array of professional career opportunities, whether in the private or public sector. As a member of the law review staff in 2008 and 2009, he wrote a paper on the interpretation of patent claim language.

He loads up on classes twice a week, so he has a couple of nights free. Going full time that first year meant he didn’t have to take summer courses, so he was able to use that time to recharge. Recently he won CALI Awards for earning the highest grade in his class in Patent Law, Commercial Law: Payment Systems, Legal Writing 3, Estates and Trusts, and Personal Income Tax. He’ll be taking the bar exam this July.
Storied civil rights lawyer Standish Willis is one of many Chicago-Kent evening alumni for whom law is a second career. Returning to school with a day job and a young family, Stan embraced the study of law, excelled in legal practice, and has given back to the local and international communities in ways that will resonate for years to come. — HJK

Stan Willis ‘83 didn’t consider law school until his father, a former sharecropper who brought the family to Chicago after World War II, lost his job at the local steel works.

Stan thought it was a case of unfair discharge. One of his professors at the University of Chicago suggested a labor lawyer who might be able to help.

“I was inspired by what that lawyer did for my dad,” says Stan. He began to see law as a way to gain additional tools to fight for working-class causes, but it wasn’t until he was 39 with two children that he entered Chicago-Kent’s evening program.

“Chicago-Kent was the only school advertising that their evening and day programs shared the same professors,” he recalls. “I thought that was a sign of commitment to their evening division.”

Chicago-Kent was also the only school to offer civil rights and employment discrimination courses with professors such as Sheldon Nahmod and Martin Malin. During his second year, Stan made one of Chicago-Kent’s new trial advocacy teams.

“They had such excellent lawyers, led by Warren Wolfson, coaching the teams,” he recalls, “that when you finished law school, you really knew how to try a case.”

Chicago-Kent scheduled extracurricular lectures and panel discussions in the late afternoons so evening students could participate. At one of those panels, Stan met an attorney from the People’s Law Office, which later became the first firm to bring suit against the Chicago Police Department in the Jon Burge torture cases. The lawyer invited Stan to visit, and the firm offered him a job after graduation.

In one of his first cases, Stan sued the Cook County Public Defender’s Office for employment discrimination based on race and gender, representing five public defenders of color, including two women. The county settled, and soon after the salaries of female public defenders were boosted to match their male counterparts.

After eight years, seven of them as partner, he left the firm for solo practice. During his career, Stan has tried more than 75 federal jury trials and has argued frequently before the Illinois Appellate Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Moreover, he has litigated hundreds of civil rights lawsuits against municipalities.


Recently, Chicago police responded to a distress call from a mother whose mentally ill son had barricaded himself in a bedroom. Police killed the man during the ensuing altercation.

“We filed suit. We were raising a policy issue. Chicago had failed to train their officers to deal with mentally ill people.” Already, he says, “I’ve seen a change in their policy.

“I got that from Chicago-Kent.”
Ann Cresce '94
Ann Cresce’s success story is no surprise to those who witnessed her ability to balance the demands of law school, a young family, and a challenging day job at the Chicago Board of Trade. Ann applied that same versatility and talent to a succession of challenging professional responsibilities as she built a strong portfolio in commodities law and regulation. —HJK

Ann Cresce ’94 has spent the last two years living and working in Hong Kong helping to launch the Hong Kong Mercantile Exchange, an electronic futures exchange capitalizing on rapid growth in commodity trading in China.

As general counsel and head of compliance for the new enterprise, she’s a long way from where she started—as a special ed major at the University of Illinois. Soon after starting college, she switched majors, she explains, having discovered that “I did not possess the unique teaching techniques, business was exciting and fast-paced, and the U of I had an outstanding business school.”

After graduating with a BS in finance, Ann got a job at the Chicago Board of Trade in Investigations and Audits and worked her way up to director of investigations and market surveillance. “I learned about trading and how markets operate,” she recalls, “and about regulatory compliance.”

Work drew her toward law — she was writing up investigative reports, prosecuting cases before the disciplinary panel, and working on settlement agreements. After 13 years, she says, “I wanted to expand my knowledge base, and I couldn’t advance much further without a law degree.”

Heading two departments, supervising 60 employees, and raising two young children, Ann viewed evening school as the ideal option. “I was told by many people that Chicago-Kent had the best evening program in the city,” she says. Having worked with attorneys who were adjunct professors at Chicago-Kent, she also knew they had a lot to offer in corporate and financial services law.

As Ann entered Chicago-Kent, her daughter started kindergarten. Life was busy but rewarding.

“At that stage in my life and career, I appreciated the intellectual challenge of studying law,” says Ann. “I learned to approach situations with more intellectual and situational curiosity. I learned to take into account a wider variety of views. I began to consider work matters from a broader perspective, arriving at more effective and considered decisions and results.”

Two years into law school, Ann began working at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. After graduation, she became vice president for compliance at Carr Futures, where she did U.S. and international regulatory work.

Later, she was corporate secretary and director of shareholder relations for the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and was part of the IPO team when it morphed from a mutual organization into a public company. She then became general counsel of the Chicago Climate Exchange, a start-up that developed a cap-and-trade greenhouse gas emission reduction program and a futures exchange.

Recently, Ann was named to the 2011 DirectWomen Board Institute, a program that positions exceptional senior women attorneys for corporate governance and board work.

Ann enjoys the balancing act between law and business. “I can see both sides of the story and make it work, moving the business forward within the confines of the law.”

Hong Kong, she says, has been “a life-changing experience. I’m enjoying it immensely, and I wouldn’t be here without Chicago-Kent.”
Evenings: Where Quality Trumps Quantity
Reflections by Professor David Rudstein

Professor David Rudstein may be the author of a highly influential treatise on criminal constitutional law, but generations of Chicago-Kent students remember him first and foremost as an extraordinary teacher. David’s bond with the evening program began in 1973, the year he joined our faculty and began teaching both day and evening courses in criminal law and criminal procedure. With each ensuing year, David has refined his first-rate teaching skills and his mastery of his subject, engaging his students in an intellectual dialogue that few of them will forget. —HJK

Before walking into the classroom to teach my first evening division class, I was quite nervous. Although I had taught Legal Writing for a year at the University of Illinois, all of my students there were full-time students, all had graduated from college the previous spring, and all were younger than I. I knew things would be different in the evening division at Chicago-Kent—nearly all of the students would be older than I, most would have full-time jobs and careers, and many would have spouses and children. From an educational perspective, I wondered where these students, with all the additional responsibilities, would get the time to study and prepare for class. When I was in law school, I found it difficult enough being a full-time student with a part-time job.
Much of what I anticipated before that first class proved to be true—the students were a bit older, most did have full-time jobs, and many did have families. And yes, they did have less time to study and prepare for class. For the most part, this is still true today, though now I rarely have an evening division student who even approaches me in age.

What has surprised me over the years (and since that first class in 1973, I have taught more than 80 percent of the evening division students at Chicago-Kent) is that the additional responsibilities borne by evening division students actually are positives, rather than negatives.

These “older” students are mature adults who, for the most part, are paying for their legal education out of their own pockets. They know they have to be serious students and balance their work and family responsibilities with law school. As a consequence, they use their time efficiently—three hours of study time means three hours of studying, not one hour of studying and two hours of watching a sporting event or the latest hit television show.

Additionally, many work in fields related to law. Over the years, I have had physicians, police officers, probation officers, accountants and union organizers—as well as a rock concert impresario—as students in my Criminal Law class, and they have added significantly to the classroom discussion by drawing on their real-life experiences.

I remember one class in which I said to a student, “Suppose that Mr. X (the student sitting to his right) pulled a knife and threatened to kill you, and that Ms. Y (the student sitting on his other side) drew a gun and shot Mr. X to prevent him from harming you.” Most of the class began laughing as I stood there dumbfounded. It turned out that, unbeknownst to me, Ms. Y was an Illinois state trooper who indeed carried a gun to class.

Perhaps most important, though, my evening division students have been able to compete academically with my other students. Many of my top students over the years have been evening division students, and many of my students have gone on to have outstanding legal careers.
Chicago-Kent College of Law was established in 1888 as an evening school for working men and women. The law school’s founders, Judges Thomas Moran and Joseph Bailey, initially held classes in their chambers. Today, Chicago-Kent’s Evening JD Program is geared toward working professionals seeking a highly selective, competitive course of part-time study. The program enrolls approximately 50 students in each entering class for enhanced selectivity and a low student/faculty ratio. Chicago-Kent’s evening program is ranked the best in the Midwest by U.S. News & World Report.

For more information, visit www.kentlaw.edu/adm/evening.