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## UMKC incubator preps lawyers for small, solo practices

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Hanging out a shingle right after graduating from law school is a road less traveled but one the [University of Missouri-Kansas City](#) is trying to facilitate.

The UMKC School of Law has launched the Solo and Small Law Firm Incubator to provide newly minted lawyers help starting their practices. The school has made space available at one of its buildings at 47th Street and Troost Avenue and expects its first wave of applicants to be in place by Jan. 1.

Participants with a business plan will get office space at reduced rent and access to advice from a rotating coterie of retired judges.

"There are, by choice or by need, more and more people graduating from law school who want to start a small firm but don't have the ability to do it on their own," said **Ellen Suni**, dean of the UMKC School of Law. "This is an opportunity for nine new lawyers ... to start in a mentored environment."

**John Rollins** of The Rollins Law Firm PC said that starting a solo practice straight out of law school is a risky proposition — one that he probably would not have opted for when he graduated.

"I've always been pretty brave, but I don't know that I'm that brave," he said. "It takes guts to do that. There's a whole different type of stress dealing with that kind of practice."

But Rollins said that working in solo or small firm practices can give young lawyers a more rounded experience than if they had gone to a larger firm and specialized in one or two practice areas.

The UMKC incubator is an extension of course work and seminars at the law school designed to help students prepare for entrepreneurial law practices.

Suni said not all graduates will be interested in going to a small firm or solo practice. It's not a path she would have considered out of law school, but now it is a more feasible option than when she entered the profession.

"Today, with technology, people are starting out from their homes with very little overhead," she said.

UMKC's partners in the incubator are the Missouri Bar Association and the [Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association](#)'s Solo Practitioner/Small Firm Committee, which Rollins leads.



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