Loyola University Chicago School of Law hopes its new weekend J.D. program will draw part-time students seeking a way to study law.

The program, slated for a 2016 fall semester launch, will convene for 14 weekends each year and use distance learning one-third of the time.

The law school hopes to attract 25 to 30 students during the first academic year and 40 to 50 each year subsequently. The $33,344 tuition will mirror the school’s traditional part-time rate.

Dean David Yellen spoke with The National Law Journal about the program.

**NLJ: Who is the target audience?**

Yellen: It’s everything, [including] the current people who go to law school part-time who might find this flexible schedule and the blended delivery method appealing. We also think it’s going to be appealing to people who are interested in going to law school but haven’t been able to make the schedule work with their busy lives.

**Is the program modeled after any other programs?**

We’ve learned from a lot of different sources, including our own distance-learning offerings, weekend law school programs at other schools and the executive MBA model that a lot of leading business schools use. We took pieces of knowledge and have made it into something new within legal education.

The students will have a full range of curricular choices, including experiential learning, and a full range of student services, including career services. People will participate in externships, which involves working in a legal job for
credit, simulation-based learning and, potentially, clinics as well.

How many similar programs are there like this?

There are no programs quite like this. Two law schools have weekend programs. Those meet every weekend, pretty much all day, both weekend days. They are Hamline University School of Law in Minnesota and Western Michigan University Cooley Law School. One other, William Mitchell College of Law in Minnesota, got special approval from the American Bar Association to try, on an experimental basis, a program that’s essentially all online except for a week or weekend a semester.

We fully comply with the ABA’s rules; we don’t need a special waiver. There’s a very large in-person component. That’s why it’s a truly blended learning program. It doesn’t need accreditation. It just needs acquiescence.

How does the instruction compare with a traditional law school program?

Only some of our current classes incorporate any distance learning. This will be different, in that each class will be structured to blend distance learning and in-class instruction. Distance learning will be used to convey basic materials through lectures. There will also be lots of regular assessments of how students are learning, through quizzes and chat rooms. The in-class part sometimes will be like a traditional law school class and sometimes will be used more creatively for group work and problem-solving.

How does the cost compare with Loyola’s other law school options?

Per year, it’s the same cost as our traditional part-time program, which is three-quarters of the cost of our full-time program. If you do part time over four years, you pay the same amount as someone who does three years full time.

Is the program designed to take four years?

That will be the normal schedule. People will have the ability, if they want, to accelerate it to 3 1/2 years, or they could extend it to more than four.

How does the law school plan to market this program?

We’re looking largely for a nontraditional group of students, some of whom may not be actively looking because they don’t know there’s a program that will meet their needs. We’re going to rely on free media and do a lot of Internet-based advertising. We have a lot of online degree programs at the masters’ level, and we’ve been marketing them for the five years we’ve had them.