James Backman, the newly named 2007 Stephen L. Richards Professor of Law, has been instrumental in providing thousands of students with practice-related externships. After 19 years of teaching property law, he began one of the most successful models for a law externship program in the nation.

Its first year (1992), the BYU Law School externship program placed 43 students. Today, there are more than 165 students in 230 placements during the summer and 100 students during the school year. The school now has the largest percentage of participating students in credit-granting externships and the largest international externship program in the American law school community.

Professor Backman joined the BYU faculty in 1974. He served as the original editor in chief of the BYU Law Review (1974). University director of BYU’s Office of Academic Internships, he was the founding director of BYU’s Jacobsen Center for Service and Learning. He also founded the Law School Placement Office (1974), the BYU Legal Studies program (1975), the LLM program for visiting foreign lawyers (1986), the externship program (1992), and the BYU International Law and Management Review (2003).

Professor Backman served on the board of directors of the Cooperative Education and Internships Association.