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NYLS Patent Law Clinic Helps Disabled Veteran Patent Clean Energy Invention

Shahrokh Falati

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Disabled Veteran Patent Clean
Energy Invention**

Professor Shahrokh Falati '08 • Published October 21, 2024

The Patent Law Clinic at New York Law School (NYLS), directed by Professor **Shahrokh (Seve) Falati '08**, recently assisted client **Tracy Omdahl** in obtaining a U.S. patent. Omdahl, a disabled veteran, consulted for the Westinghouse Power Generation Business Group as an engineer in the energy industry. While serving as a Private in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War, he was appointed by President Nixon to the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York.



From left to right: Daria Denisenko '26; Daniel Bonaventura '26; Peter Vicchio '25; Hailey Kate Chatlin '25; and Professor Falati.

During his time in service in Fort Knox, Kentucky, Omdahl was severely injured in an M-62 A1 main battle tank and sustained permanent disabilities. He describes this period as a pivotal moment in his life, as he faced emotional anguish due to his injury following his honorable discharge. With the help of family and friends, Omdahl rebuilt his life, resuming reading literature about the engineering field and experimenting with his ideas.

"If I did not have my work experience in engineering and my ideas for experimenting to fall back on, I'm not sure I would have found it so easy to transition into my new life," Omdahl reflects.

After moving from Detroit, Michigan, to Florida, Omdahl began experimenting with ways to capture the sun's energy, though his true passion was in wind turbine technologies. Drawing from his practical engineering experience and knowledge of issued patents on various wind-operated turbines, Omdahl began to build handheld models of vertical wind turbines and larger ground-staked units. To field-test these models, he adapted his turbines for use in signs for warnings, information, flags, advertising, and real estate placed on vehicles, structures, and lawns.

Omdahl encountered several technical problems at first, including the challenges of ensuring reliability in Florida's tropical storm environment and attaching the wings to durable wing spars. After many revisions to his original design, Omdahl discovered an innovative and improved way of instantly capturing the wind energy of all common velocities in Florida from all angles. He field-tested models of his invention in various storm wind conditions to confirm his calculations and his prototype's veracity and efficacy under different controlled and uncontrolled natural environments.

Omdahl sent models of his invention to the Patent Law Clinic, explaining that he wanted to invent a more efficient way of capturing wind energy—one that could withstand and instantly adjust to high- and low-velocity wind coming from any direction. The goal of his vertical axis wind turbine is to provide alternative means of harnessing and accessing clean energy, especially in remote, off-grid areas.

Omdahl's initial patent application was rejected on multiple grounds, leaving him with little hope of success. However, Patent Law Clinic student associates reviewed technical documents, conducted legal research, and worked closely with Omdahl to draft thorough responses to each rejection, refuting the positions of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office examiner. Following a three-year prosecution full of hurdles, the Patent Law Clinic was able to get Omdahl's patent successfully granted.

Clinic students Kathryn Sacca '22, Tabetha Tufariello '22, Maximilian Ranzato '23, Kiera Latham '23, Courtney Schenck '24, Jacob Ehrlich '24, Peter Vicchio '25, Hailey Kate Chatlin '25, Daria Denisenko '26, and Daniel Bonaventura '26 worked with Professor Falati to secure this U.S. patent and present it to Omdahl.

NYLS's Patent Law Clinic is proud to have successfully assisted Omdahl in obtaining a patent for his highly impactful wind energy technology, contributing to advancements in the clean energy industry.



From left to right: Christine Park '26, Professor Falati, Rachel Zakharov '26, Juliana Recchia '26, Eric Siletsky '26, Daniel Bonaventura '26, Jack Rucigay '25, Brooke Fulmer '26, Ismael Mamdu '25, and Daria Denisenko '26.

Patent Law Clinic Client, Tracy Omdahl

"Navigating the patent process was far more complex and time-intensive than I initially imagined, but the exceptional guidance I received from Professor Falati and the talented students in the Clinic made all the difference. They not only took the time to fully understand my invention—a vertical-axis wind turbine with the potential to significantly impact the wind-focused clean energy industry—but they also worked tirelessly to ensure my patent was granted. I am proud to share that my patent was officially granted recently, and I am now in the exciting process of commercializing my invention."

Patent Law Clinic Student, Courtney Schenck '24

"This was a very challenging client matter for us. However, after our first interview with Mr. Omdahl, it became clear that he was both knowledgeable and very patient with us. We used this opportunity and worked closely with him and Professor Falati for both semesters to capture the key features of his invention. Professor Falati was a crucial guiding force for us throughout this process and I'm impressed by the work of the subsequent Patent Law Clinic team who prosecuted and overcame the lengthy rejections to ultimately obtain a patent for Mr. Omdahl. Congratulations, Mr. Omdahl!"

Patent Law Clinic at New York Law School

The Patent Law Clinic, directed by Professor **Shahrokh (Seve) Falati '08**, is a yearlong clinic, providing 2L and 3L students an opportunity to work with entrepreneurs and practice patent law before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

Experiential Learning at New York Law School

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