Innovation can be anywhere,” according to Ross Baird, 2013–2014 ITC Annual Report attorney supervisors on legal issues and involved. Additionally, I learned a great job, it provided context for everything the envelope in social innovation and with the ITC was extremely valuable I was learning in my regular courses to my second year at Michigan Law.

“The ITC has been a pivotal part of my Michigan Law experience. The opportunity to work with leading thinkers and practitioners to push the envelope in social innovation and the law is unmatched and has been vital in finding summer and future employment.”

Nikki Crowin
Class of December 2014


The 2013-2014 academic year started out with a celebratory bang. Clients, professors, current and former students, and other friends and supporters of the ITC joined together in Ann Arbor in September to celebrate the ITC’s accomplishments over its first five years of existence. The ITC’s 5th year anniversary coincided with the 25th year “silver” anniversary of the State Bar of Michigan International Law Section (SBM-ILS). Together, the ITC and the SBM-ILS co-hosted a symposium where panels of ITC clients, ITC faculty and practicing attorneys discussed topics such as “The Art of Lawyering Deals that Generate Social and Financial Returns (at Home and Abroad),” and “How to Structure Equity Exits from Double Bottomline Enterprises.” Rachel Robbins, former General Counsel of the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group (and founding client of the ITC), concluded the symposium by providing keynote remarks about the evolving role of lawyers in international deal making.

The five-year anniversary of the ITC gave us an opportunity to celebrate the many accomplishments of ITC clients, faculty, alumni, and, most of all, its law students. We say we launched a new law clinic in 2008, but, as this celebration made clear, we also launched a new community—a community working together to make the world a better place. (See more about the ITC’s 5-Year Celebration at www.law.umich.edu/ITCcelebration)

But the ITC did not rest on its laurels during the 2013-2014 academic year. By year-end, over 33 transaction matters were handled by ITC students (16 student attorneys, 2 advanced student attorneys, and 2 LLM student advisors). Together these students provided around 3700 hours of pro bono service to ITC clients (not including the many hours also dedicated by ITC’s supervising attorneys). And that is ever more reason to continue celebrating.

The ITC’s adjacent faculty are heavy lifters, but not just in their law offices or the ITC classroom. In the late spring, ITC adjunct faculty, Dave Koch and Carl Volkerstein (together with ITC Director Deborah Burand, friends and family), travelled to Lesotho, Africa to help build a cinder block home for two young men whose parents had died of HIV/AIDS. This trip was organzied and supported by ITC client Habitat for Humanity International. Dave and Carl have been supervising students in the ITC since 2011-2012 and 2008-2009 respectively. Thanks to their efforts, ITC students have learned, among other things, how to create legal structures for impact investment vehicles, and how to help clients expand globally through branded networks. There are no plans, however, to integrate Dave and Carl’s newly found construction skills into the ITC curriculum.

Helping Clients to Invest in New Markets

“Innovation can be anywhere,” according to Ross Baird, founder of Village Capital. Village Capital’s core innovation is simple but audacious. It aims to democratize entrepreneurship by transforming the way that investment capital builds companies. Village Capital enlists peer entrepreneurs to conduct the due diligence that underpins its investment decisions in mission-driven entrepreneurs around the world. Using this model of “peer-allocated capital,” Village Capital has launched 28 programs worldwide, and made investments in over 40 seed-stage enterprises since its launch in 2010.

In the fall of 2013, Village Capital asked the ITC to help it understand better the legal landscapes of countries where Village Capital plans to invest. So ITC students created a checklist of legal issues to discuss with local counsel before Village Capital enters a new market. Then the students collaborated with an alumnus of the Law School’s LLM program, Patrick Meshoulam (LLM, Class 2011), to give this checklist a trial run. Using this local counsel checklist as an outline, Patrick, with colleagues from his law firm, Mijares Angoitia Cortes y Fuentes, advised Village Capital on how Mexican laws and regulations would likely impact Village Capital’s investments in Mexican seed-stage enterprises.

Working side by side with Mexican counsel provided ITC students with a chance to develop skills at engaging effectively with local counsel, while at the same time providing valuable legal insights to Village Capital.

Heavy Lifting by ITC Supervising Attorneys

Supervising Attorney Profile

Bruce Theilen
U-Mich Class of 77; Partner, Dickinson Wright PLC
Client: Living Business Models

“When a prospective client called me about a plan to launch a demonstration project for self-supporting health care in Uganda, I immediately thought of the ITC and put him in touch with Deb Burand. It was not a surprise when Deb called me to enlist my support as the supervising attorney for this new client. And I am glad she did. It has been immensely rewarding to work with Deb and the enthusiastic students as they use their talents to make life better for people half a world away.”

ITC CLIENTS

Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) (DC)
Biomimicry LA (CA)
Blue Sky.Invested Development (TN/MA)
DIIME (MI)
Farm Shop Trust (Kenya)
Global Partnerships (WA)
Grassroots Business Fund (DC)
Habitat for Humanity International (GA)
HoneyCare Africa (Kenya)
International Finance Corporation (IFC) (DC)
Living Business Models (MI)
Relationship Coffee Institute (OR)
Root Capital (MA)
Santa Clara University (CA)
Small Enterprise Assistance Funds (SEAF) (DC)
Southern Energy Partners (TN)
Tata Technologies (MI)
TIDES Foundation (CA)
TONIC (CA)
Unibis Impact (CA)
Venture Dairy (IL)
Village Capital (GA)
World Wide Hearing Foundation International (Canada)

“Working with the ITC students has allowed Root Capital to pursue valuable projects such as an announcement of our standard loan agreement and a survey of best practices regarding managing compliance with investor covenants. The fact that the students are led by Deborah Burand, who has tremendous experience and sector knowledge, is a great additional benefit to their work.”

Lubena Maria Elia, Senior Director of Governance & Compliance, Root Capital
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For further information, check the International Transactions Clinic’s website at

www.law.umich.edu/ITC

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