

Clinical Education: Real-World Experience with Real Impact

There are many compelling real-life stories with real-world impact around the Law School these days. Three recent examples: Courtroom dramas in which our students play a central role, international deal-making, and the fight against human trafficking in the United States and all over the world.

This is what Michigan Law's clinical education looks like today.

Consider the cover story in this issue of *Law Quadrangle*. The Law School's Innocence Clinic is making headlines with exonerations in its first three major cases. Beginning on page 10, you can learn more about the dramatic story of Dwayne Provience. After nearly 10 years in prison, his murder conviction was overturned based on the legal efforts of Professors Bridget McCormack and David Moran, '91, and their students. "What we had amassed over the year that we worked on this case was overwhelming evidence that police had prosecuted the wrong man," said Professor Moran the day the prosecutor dropped the charges. The new U-M Law School Innocence Clinic is the first of any law school to work exclusively on erroneous convictions with non-DNA-based cases.

Another first of its kind is the International Transactions Clinic, which focuses on teaching students the art and science of cross-border business deals. The clinic works in emerging global markets representing a wide range of clients such as socially responsible investors and microfinance providers—those who want to, as Professor Deborah Burand says, "do well and do good." This year the clinic introduced a seven-week "deal boot camp" to prepare law students to handle the wide array of business transactions necessary not only for their work in the clinic but soon, their work as lawyers in an international marketplace.

Just as ground-breaking is the work of Professor Bridgette Carr, '02, and her students in the Law School's Human Trafficking Clinic as they represent foreign nationals trafficked in the United States and advocate passionately to educate the public about the ugly reality of modern day slavery. One of Professor Carr's first clients was Katya, a university student from Ukraine, who was forced into the sex trade by traffickers who kept her against her will for more



than a year. Now the clinic works to bring legal penalties in cases of those forced into labor or prostitution, and to track cases in the United States since trafficking legislation was enacted in 2000.

These three new clinics, all the first of their kind nationally, join Michigan Law's distinguished family of clinical offerings from child advocacy to urban community transactions. Our clinics have grown substantially over the past few years, both in the variety of offerings and numbers of enrolled students. In fact, the number of Michigan Law students taking advantage of clinical offerings has increased about 50 percent in the past five years.

Clinical education provides a unique path to training students how to think critically and strategically about legal issues, supplementing the more familiar case-focused education using lectures and the traditional Socratic method. Clinics provide experiential learning opportunities so students can develop other lawyering skills, including, first and foremost, a proclivity for client understanding and service. Today we push way beyond the tried-and-true domain of landlord-tenant disputes to provide a much broader range of pedagogically sound experiences. The growth of our clinics and the important pedagogical role of clinical educational are reflected in our plans for the Law School's new academic building: The building will feature suites for the clinical programs, enabling faculty and students to meet with clients in a professional, business-styled setting.

When combined with our legal practice curriculum, students have a second-to-none portfolio of skill-building opportunities available as they not only study the law from top scholars but hone the lawyering skills that make Michigan graduates so valuable to employers. The Princeton Review and Vault.com have ranked Michigan graduates in the top three in employability, and the 2010 Super Lawyer U.S. Law School rankings places Michigan Law second in its tally of the number of alumni to attain that moniker.

Skill-building is a topic of much discussion across the country as the ABA considers modification of its accreditation standards to include assessment of skill development. The ABA wants law

schools to demonstrate that they effectively prepare students for practice, including working effectively with clients as well as skills in area such as negotiating, legal writing, and interpersonal communication. In part stimulated by this possibility and in part based on their own assessment of desirable pedagogic reforms, law schools (including ours) and practitioners are considering different models for assessment at this time—whether as a matter of best practices for each school, or as a matter of potential common standards across legal education.

In today's challenging legal employment market, it is more important than ever for new graduates to hit the ground running in the practice of law. At Michigan, the balance of academic rigor and skill-building opportunities help them do just that. And while they're at it, Michigan students just may change people's lives forever.

Sincerely,

Evan Caminker

Evan Caminker
Dean and Branch Rickey Collegiate Professor of Law



Above: 2L Philip Smith meets with a client in the Human Trafficking Clinic.

Below: Student clinicians Nicole Lonsway, '09 (left) and 3L Luis Avila meet with International Transactions Clinic client Kate McKee of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP).

