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EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF THE REMINGTON CENTER'S PRISON-BASED CLINICAL PROJECTS

What Kind of Work do the Students Do?

Students in the Remington Center's LAIP Project, Oxford Federal Project, Innocence Project, Family Law Project, and Restorative Justice Project provide legal assistance to men and women incarcerated in prisons throughout Wisconsin. People in prison are affected, perhaps more than any other group in society, by the legal system. They frequently need legal services concerning their convictions or sentences, pending fines or charges, family law concerns, and related civil problems. In addition, prisons are better able to fulfill their missions if they have offenders who ought to be there, and who believe they have been treated fairly. An offender who leaves the institution at peace with the legal order will be more likely to adjust to life in society and avoid future crimes. For these reasons, we view the work of Remington Center clinical faculty and students as a service not only to the individual clients, but also to the correctional system and society.

What Kinds of Educational Benefits do Students Receive?

The Remington Center provides students with an excellent "hands on" education that benefits law students regardless of whether they end up practicing criminal law. At the Remington Center, we do not define "clinical education" as "skills acquisition." Rather, the Center's primary goal is to allow law students to experience and practice the highest degree of ethical, competent professionalism. Nevertheless, our students receive a variety of educational experiences, including "skills acquisition," as our former students can attest to.

1) Working with Clients

Each student meets and works with persons serving time in state or federal prisons. As a result, each student personally observes and experiences the profound human consequences of an individual's involvement in the criminal justice system. The student is able to observe, from the offender's point of view, how incarceration affects the offender's ties with his or her family and community, as well as his or her opportunity for change and growth within the correctional system. This first-hand experience with a subculture that is most often forgotten or ignored in mainstream society is a powerful and memorable experience for many students.

"Meeting with clients behind the walls of an institution allowed me to better understand the environment in which they lived--not only did I see the physical structures (i.e. the cellblocks, the visiting room, the cafeteria), but I also met with the correctional staff."
Douglas P. Dehler, Attorney at Law, Michael, Best & Friedrich, Milwaukee

"Short of 'doing time,' I can not imagine how one could get a better perspective on the human consequences of confinement. The experience has been something I draw upon fairly frequently, and sometimes subconsciously, in my current employment as a prosecutor."
Brad D. Schimel, Assistant District Attorney, Waukesha County

"The program provided direct contact with clients, clients who often had great difficulty in communicating and providing detailed or accurate information to the student attorney, and clients who suffered a host of real-life problems and had a very limited ability to deal with those problems or to use the resources of the system effectively. That exposure was invaluable."
Sally L. Wellman, Assistant Attorney General, Wisconsin Department of Justice

"Nothing in my educational experience has proven as valuable to my judicial responsibilities. . . . My ability to be mindful of the humans who participate in, or suffer because of, the legal system was focused by my participation."
Patrick L. Madden, Iron County Circuit Judge

2) Learning Lawyering Skills and Values

The Remington Center allows students to develop lawyering skills which are not taught in traditional law school classes, or gained by working as a law clerk in a private law firm. Each student handles cases for a variety of inmates; and the student's experience may involve interviewing, legal research and writing, negotiating, legal counseling, and oral advocacy.

I was assigned to the Green Bay Correctional Institute, and I made frequent trips to the Institution to meet directly with inmates. In addition, I filed and argued a post-conviction motion in Circuit Court for one of my clients, and appeared on behalf of another client in defense of a paternity action. In addition, I handled the normal quotient of time-credit motions, family legal problems, and post-conviction and parole issues [the

program] gave me my first case of actual courtroom combat. It confirmed what I had only hoped to be the case--that I was truly stimulated by preparing and arguing on behalf of people in court. . . . [my clinical experience] instilled a high commitment to advocating on behalf of clients, to ethical standards, and to preparation. All of these ideals have followed me into practice and on the Bench.”

Joseph M. Troy, Outagamie County Circuit Judge

“LAIP was the most interesting experience I had in Law School. . . . I learned something about how to interview clients, how to investigate a case, how to work in a tenacious but ethical manner, and how to work as a team. I certainly believe that LAIP’s provision of mentors, practical experience, and inspiration gave me an ethical foundation for my legal career.”

Ina Pogainis, Assistant State Public Defender, Stevens Point

3) Developing a Sense of Professionalism

Finally, and most importantly, the Remington Center instills a sense of professionalism in students. Because students are given primary control over management of their cases, they learn how to handle work for real clients with professionalism, diligence, and thoroughness. The students carry this professionalism into practice, regardless of their field of law.

“, , , the fact that students are put in the driver’s seat on these cases mean that they can learn firsthand how their actions or lack of actions affect their clients It was extremely effective in teaching us the responsibility an attorney has to his clients.”

James L. McFarland, Attorney at Law, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company

“I drew extensively on [my clinical] training in my first years of post-graduate client contacts, motion drafting, case evaluation and ethics dilemmas. It often occurred to me that I would have been largely at sea and my clients disadvantaged but for the practical and rigorous [program.]”

Mia Sefarbi, Attorney at Law, Law Offices of Steven M. Epstein, Milwaukee

“My practice over the years has been almost exclusively civil. Nevertheless, I do not hesitate to say that I view my involvement in the . . . program as one of the most beneficial experiences of my law school years.”

Wayne L. Maffei, Attorney at Law, Cross, Jenks, Mercer & Maffei, Baraboo

Remington Center Core Educational Values

2007

Students best construct their own legal education by doing the real work of lawyers, taking advantage of opportunities for **experiential learning** as they arise.

Students best learn the art of lawyering by **taking responsibility** for trying to solve clients' problems in an ethical, creative, and diligent manner.

Students will best contribute to the quality of the legal system by developing the habit of engaging in **life-long critical reflection** about themselves, the practice of law, and the justice system.

From these core educational values, we hope students will learn the following substantive aspects of lawyering and the law:

- a. Lawyering requires integrity, authenticity, civility, humility and ethical behavior.
- b. Lawyers engage in a helping profession that revolves around human relations.
- c. Lawyers must work hard, and be thorough, in pursuing their clients' interests.
- d. Lawyers must be effective communicators.
- e. Lawyers must develop sound judgment in a variety of contexts.
- f. Lawyers must be respectful and nonjudgmental toward their clients and other actors in the system.
- g. Lawyers have an obligation to address the needs of under-served populations.
- h. There are limits to the ability of lawyers and the law to solve clients' and society's problems.