NEW INTERDISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENTAL CLINIC OPENS

Providing a regional resource for pro bono legal and technical help on a host of environmental problems--ranging from lead poisoning to contaminated urban areas to agricultural and industrial pollution--is the mandate of the School of Law's new, first-of-its-kind Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic. The clinic trains and supports law, engineering, and environmental studies students as they take their expertise into the community to tackle some of the area's intransigent environmental problems.

"Presently there is no entity--governmental agency, public-interest organization, or private individual or company--to which St. Louis area citizens can routinely turn for pro bono legal representation on environmental problems," said Professor Maxine Lipeles, director of the new clinic. "The Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic fills this void, while providing a unique combination of legal, engineering, and scientific expertise."

The law school officially launched the new clinic at a November 17, 1999, ceremony, following a lecture on "Denial of Access to Environmental Justice" by Robert Kuehn, visiting professor of law and former director of the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic.

Dean Joel Seligman said Washington University's interdisciplinary clinic breaks new ground in allowing students from a variety of disciplines to work together for the benefit of the community. "Few, if any, other law school clinics nationally have such a combination of law and non-law students engaged in active representation of clients on environmental issues," he said. "The hands-on, interdisciplinary approach offers a tremendous educational experience to our students, while providing an important service to the St. Louis community."

The clinic teams eight law students and a combination of eight students from the engineering school and the Environmental Studies Program in Arts & Sciences. In addition to Lipeles, law students work with the School's clinical staff attorney, C.J. Larkin. Judith Coyle, affiliate professor of engineering, works directly with the engineering and science students as the clinic's staff scientist.

Lipeles, who holds joint appointments in the law school and the School of Engineering and Applied Science, said the new approach makes sense. "Environmental problems are inherently multidisciplinary in nature," she said. "The clinic enables students from a variety of backgrounds to learn to work effectively across disciplines, while applying their educational tools to real problems for real clients. For any given problem, the law students bring an understanding of the law and how it is or is not working. The
engineering and science students offer technical expertise, such as what the standards are, how bad the situation is, and what needs to be done to bring the situation up to standards."

Although the clinic is not initiating court-based litigation, students can assist attorneys who have filed environmental cases on behalf of environmental or community organizations. Clinic students also can represent nonprofit organizations and individuals unable to afford a private attorney in administrative and local government proceedings, including challenges to regulations and permit decisions.

An 11-member Community Advisory Board is helping the clinic define its community objectives and spread the word about its services.

ENVIRONMENTAL FELLOWSHIP HONORS J. PETER SCHMITZ, JD ’60

In conjunction with the opening of the new Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic, the School of Law announced the J. Peter Schmitz Summer Fellowship Program.

Beginning this summer, the fellowship program will provide new stipends to support at least two students working for employers that promote environmental causes and that could not otherwise afford to pay a regular salary to their summer interns. Such employers could include local and national environmental organizations, the U.S. Attorney's Office Environmental Crimes Division, or the School of Law's new Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic.

"The fellowship program further enables our students to make a positive difference in this and other communities," said Associate Dean Daniel Keating. "J. Peter Schmitz's legacy of environmental advocacy will continue through the work of his summer fellows."

A partner in the Clayton firm of Schmitz, Kopman, Schreiber & Kaveny, Schmitz practiced law in St. Louis for over 39 years. During his legal career, his pro bono work included litigation for the environment, parks, and the disabled. Schmitz's tireless advocacy for environmental causes helped in the establishment of Forest 44 and the Carondelet Greenway, and the expansion of Castlewood Park.

Friends and The Middle Fund established the fellowship program in the memory of Schmitz, who passed away on May 24, 1999, after a yearlong battle with cancer.

NEW SCHOLARS PROGRAM SUPPORTS STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

The School of Law has created a significant new scholarship program, the Webster Society, in honor of one of its most celebrated alumni, former FBI and CIA director William H.
Webster, JD ’49.

"The School of Law strives to educate future leaders who will contribute to society as a whole," said Dean Joel Seligman. "William Webster personifies this ideal. Throughout his remarkable career, he has maintained a lifelong commitment to public service. Our aspiration is that the Webster Society will encourage students to emulate the model of professional and personal excellence exemplified by Judge Webster."

Designed to recognize students with exemplary academic credentials and a demonstrated commitment to public service, each Webster Society Scholar receives a full-tuition scholarship, a $5,000 annual stipend, and preferred status for positions as summer faculty research assistants, as well as an invitation to special Webster Society events.

"Before coming to law school, I spent time in Senegal, West Africa, working at the Dakar office of Catholic Relief Services, an international development agency," said Shelby K. Johnston, a first-year student and Webster Society Scholar. "Writing grant proposals and assisting with project management were challenging, but also very rewarding. I really enjoyed traveling to nearby villages to meet with women who had started their own successful enterprises. The Webster Society will make it possible for me to continue public-interest work in the international arena after graduation."

The eight inaugural members of the Webster Society joined William Webster and his family for a fall dinner hosted by Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton.

TRIAL ADVOCACY TEAM CAPTURES SECOND PLACE AT NATIONAL TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS

The Washington University School of Law's trial advocacy team placed second in the nation in the prestigious, invitation-only 1999 Tournament of Champions Trial Competition, sponsored by the National Institute of Trial Advocacy (NITA). The 1999-2000 trial advocacy team included Jovita Walker, Scott Casanover, Shelly Gray, Thomas Rea, Laura McNeal, and Debra Zahalsky.

Each year, invitations to compete in the NITA Tournament of Champions are extended to the "16 best trial-training law schools in the nation." Although the School of Law has been invited each year since the competition's inception in 1989, this is only the second year the School has competed. The unparalleled success of the School's teams in the annual National Trial Competition, sponsored by the American College of Trial Lawyers and the Texas Young Lawyers Association, and the exceptional quality of the School's Trial Practice faculty and adjuncts led to this year's invitation. Washington University has won the National Trial Competition regional 16 of the past 19 years, advanced to the quarters and beyond in the nationals 10
times, and captured first place in the country twice.

Special thanks to the Hon. David Mason, JD ’83, and all those who volunteered their time as coaches, witnesses, and sparring partners for the team.