Clinical Education
Meeting the Needs of a Changing Legal Market

Since Professor Annette Appell was recruited to the law faculty as the inaugural associate dean of clinical affairs in 2008, she has been spearheading a dynamic plan to integrate and further distinguish clinical offerings at the school.

The quality of clinical education at Washington University School of Law was no secret. The school had burnished its stellar reputation in clinical teaching, service, and scholarship since 1973 when its Civil Justice Clinic was founded to serve disadvantaged individuals and families in the St. Louis area. Under the tenure of Karen Tokarz, now the Charles Nagel Professor of Public Interest & Public Service and director of the Dispute Resolution Program, the Clinical Program achieved consistent recognition among the nation’s top six programs.

Under Appell’s leadership, the program has been further coordinated, professionalized, and expanded. Already in less than two years, she has led efforts to recruit outstanding faculty in key areas of environmental law and youth advocacy; modify and expand curricula to meet market demand for practice-ready graduates; leverage new partnerships to expand programs; and renovate facilities to foster collaboration and professionalism.

Appell, an experienced leader in building clinical education programs and an accomplished teacher and author, explains the importance of the program’s expansion: “Clinics provide some of the most profound and self-revelatory experiences students will encounter in law school.”

A wealth of national leaders

The recent hiring of noted scholars Robert Kuehn and Mae Quinn has enhanced the program’s full-time faculty, which includes some of the most widely respected educators in clinical legal education today.

“There are only a few other schools with such a concentrated wealth of national leaders,” says Appell of the more than 20
full-time faculty members who rotate in and out of the Clinical Program from semester to semester. A distinguished group of adjuncts also lends expertise to the program.

“Besides increasing the number of students we can teach and clients we can represent, Professors Kuehn and Quinn bring their excellent reputations and track records as community builders to Washington University,” Appell continues. “They will expand our horizons and have already added new components to the clinics in which they teach.”

A nationally recognized leader in environmental law, Kuehn serves as co-director of the Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic, alongside founding director Maxine Lipeles. Under their supervision, law students team with engineering, environmental studies, medical, and social work students on a variety of cases. Kuehn’s expertise is enhancing an already robust clinic whose victories include a lower ambient-air standard for lead and measures to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases. President of the Clinical Legal Education Association, Kuehn’s research interests lie in environmental law and professional responsibility.

Quinn brings to the law school vast experience in criminal defense, a passion for juvenile justice representation, specialized expertise in problem-solving courts, and award-winning clinical teaching. She and Appell co-direct the Civil Justice Clinic and have transformed it into a youth and family advocacy practice serving the most vulnerable children and families in Missouri.

Junior faculty members Sarah Jane Forman, named the law school’s inaugural Clinical Faculty Fellow last fall, and Kathryn Pierce, lecturer in law and supervising attorney for the Civil Justice Clinic, are making additional contributions to the Clinical Program. Forman, who works with the Criminal Justice Clinic, researches the role of punitive police presence in urban public schools. Pierce is bringing to the Civil Justice Clinic her expertise in children’s law and youth advocacy in juvenile-justice and child-welfare settings.

Brookings Institution partnership

AN EXCITING NEW ACADEMIC partnership between the Brookings Institution and Washington University is enabling the law school to step up its programs in the nation’s capital, including expansion of its venerable Congressional & Administrative Law Program from a one-semester to a year-round offering.

The Brookings Institution is internationally recognized as one of the leading think tanks in Washington, D.C. The partnership complements the Clinical Program’s policy orientation, says Appell, and has led to placements in the Brookings Institution, as well as other D.C.-based policy organizations.

Additional collaborative efforts underway include increasing the number of student externships, forming a new speakers series, creating a scholar-in-residence exchange program, and promoting research collaboration. Kent Syverud, dean of the law school, the Ethan A.H. Shepley University Professor, and associate vice chancellor of Washington, D.C., programs, has taken a leading role in developing this partnership, as well as supporting overall enhancements to the Clinical Program. Tomea Mayer Mersmann, JD ‘91, associate dean for strategic initiatives, is also working to expand opportunities with the Brookings Institution and has been heading the team developing a University-wide academic program in Washington, D.C.

New facilities

STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF, AND CLINIC CLIENTS are finding the newly renovated clinical facilities invaluable to the program’s collaborative and interdisciplinary focus. Previously scattered in-house clinic spaces have been drawn into a central location on the first floor of Anheuser-Busch Hall. The space is designed to model and perform as a law firm, replete with reception areas, public and private work areas, faculty offices, conference and
Recruit a social worker to expand interdisciplinary teaching, client service, and research in all in-house clinics and to forge and fortify connections to the George Warren Brown School of Social Work and its public health initiatives;

Growing the Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations Clinic, whose groundbreaking work ranges from the protection of indigenous knowledge to the incorporation of charter schools;

Step up international programs and further leverage the University’s partnership with the Brookings Institution; and

Interview rooms, and a mix of student workspaces surrounded by a glass enclosure.

The enhancements speak to the value and rigor law schools are assigning to clinical education.

“The importance of clinical programs has increased nationwide as the legal academy recognizes how these capstone courses inform and complete a legal education,” Appell says. “particularly as the economy continues to struggle, employers and clients will expect law schools to produce students who have more of the competencies they will need to perform as lawyers.”

Which is why Appell and her colleagues have no intention of resting on their laurels. Among the ambitious goals they’ve set forth are:

• Complete hiring to further strengthen the youth and family advocacy project of the Civil Justice Clinic;

Clinics Show Law in Action

“Quality capstone courses in clinics are essential to legal education,” says Annette Appell, associate dean of clinical affairs and professor of law. “They require students to synthesize the skills they have learned in the classroom—the legal analysis, research, and writing—and apply them to real people and real problems. Students see the law raw and in action. They witness justice firsthand.”

Abigail Browning, JD ’10, recalls how she grew professionally during the semester. “When I first looked at the facts of my case, I was not sure how to proceed,” she says. “But after I met with my client, I realized there was a lot more to the case and to him than the charges he was facing.”

Her Civil Justice Clinic professors soon taught her to identify how the law might help her client. By semester’s end, she won the confidence of her client, clearly communicated his story to

(above) Criminal Justice Clinic students defend clients whose trials are held at the Buzz Westfall Criminal Justice Center in Clayton, Missouri.

(left) The newly renovated in-house clinic space in Anheuser-Busch Hall models a professional law office, facilitating student and faculty collaborations across clinics.
the prosecution, crafted strong legal arguments in his defense, and got the case dismissed.

“I gained a whole new set of skills, and my eyes were opened,” she says. “I had heard about police misconduct and overreaching law enforcement involving young people, but this case made me realize that it really does exist. My client’s rights had been infringed upon, and I had the incredible opportunity to make a difference in his life.”

Students have counted their clinical experiences among the highlights of their law school career. They have argued before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, assisted co-prosecutors at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, and successfully petitioned the outgoing Missouri governor for executive clemency for a survivor of domestic violence. The woman was released from prison after serving eight years of a 30-year sentence for killing her abusive husband.

- Develop a corporate governance field placement program in New York.

While the demands of exceptional clinical teaching place it among the most labor-intensive activities in the legal academy, Appell says the benefits of such deep engagement are undisputed.

“Lawyers are leaders in society and have great impact on the development of the law,” she says. “Clinical teaching provides important public service and can help reform the law and legal systems by bringing to bear the resources of the University and its students on strained agencies and court systems.”

(above) Maxine Lipeles, Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic (IEC) co-director, second from left, and Peter Goode, IEC engineer, right, discuss environmental issues with students at a site where a neighborhood abuts a steel mill.

(top) Adjunct Professor Peter Ruger, JD’69, who co-teaches the Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations Clinic, serves on the boards of numerous nonprofit organizations.

(above) Professor Bruce La Pierre, second from left, works with Appellate Clinic students on a brief before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Clinical Opportunities

American Indian Law Externship
Appellate Clinic
Civil Justice Clinic
Civil Rights & Community Justice Clinic
Congressional & Administrative Law Program
Criminal Justice Clinic
Government Lawyering Externship

Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations Clinic
Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic
International Clinical Opportunities
Judicial Clerkship
Lawyering Practice Externship