Clinic Moves to New, State-of-the-Art Facility

Occupying the entire eighth floor of the Rubloff Building on Northwestern University’s Chicago campus, the Bluhm Legal Clinic’s new 23,000-square-foot space not only consolidates its centers and programs but also physically reflects the Clinic’s importance to the Law School and the legal community.

“The Clinic takes on serious and important cases, and this new space is a more professional setting for what in my opinion is the most valuable part of the Law School,” says second-year student David Kraut (JD ’08).

All of the Clinic’s centers and programs moved into the renovated space by the end of 2006. The Children and Family Justice Center, Small Business Opportunity Center, Center for International Human Rights, Center on Wrongful Convictions, Investor Protection Center, Fred Bartlit Center for Trial Strategy, Program on Negotiation and Mediation, and the Supreme Court and Appellate Advocacy Program had been scattered across three floors of the McCormick Building and one floor of the Rubloff Building. The MacArthur Justice Center was at the University of Chicago before joining the Clinic last year.

Adequate space for the clinic’s 150 students was a major shortcoming of the centers’ previous locations. “The first consideration [in designing] was to improve the amount of space dedicated for students,” says George Langford, the Law School’s director of facilities and space planning.

“The new space was designed specifically as a teaching law office,” notes Clinic director Tom Geraghty. “I think the students sense and appreciate that the space is a recognition that their learning and service are a meaningful part of the Law School and of their legal education.”

The interior design conveys the professionalism—but not the hierarchy—of a law office. Students have the most expansive area and the best views. The open student work area on the east end accommodates as many as 75 students at one time with modular furniture that can be configured to seat up to 16 people; computer and phone banks; and spectacular views of Lake Michigan and Navy Pier. A number of meeting and conference rooms, a glass-walled training room equipped with smart technology, and a student teleconferencing room are nearby.

“It has all the resources necessary for effective client representation and for a great learning environment as well,” says third-year student David Perry (JD ’07). “It can handle simulated courtroom preps, multiple client meetings, and classes at the same time.”

Since students are “in transition between an academic environment and a legal environment,” Langford actually toured law firms to get ideas for space planning. But he instructed architect Chad Harrell of Griskelis Young Harrell to hold the line on corporate coolness. “We wanted to convey warmth,” Langford observes. That was achieved primarily through the extensive use of two shades of yellow paint, warm fluorescent lighting, and wood-veneer furniture.

The first area a visitor enters from the eighth-floor elevator is a wood-paneled reception area as polished as a law firm’s. Around the floor’s north and south perimeters are more than 30 faculty offices. Open staff stations with glass-topped privacy panels occupy the center.

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Continued on page 3
Service to students, to our clients, and to the community remain our priorities. This year more students than ever have participated in our simulation-based courses (96), in our in-house clinics (153), and in our practica (75). Of the JD students graduating this year, 90 percent enrolled in at least one live client, simulation, or externship class; half enrolled in one of the live client clinical practice sections. We have also sent teams of Clinic students to Malawi and to the Ukraine to participate in projects designed to bring attention to the need to provide access to justice to people around the world. A major result of this significant international engagement of our students and faculty is the publication of the book *Access to Justice in Africa and Beyond*, a joint project of Prison Reform International and the Bluhm Legal Clinic. The work that led to the publication of this book is described on page 5 by Kate Shaw (JD ’06) and Erica Walter (JD ’06), two students who played a tremendous role in this process.

I invite you to stop by to see our new Clinic. You will be impressed by its attractiveness, size, and wonderful views of Lake Michigan. You will also be impressed by the energy, creativity, and dedication of our students, faculty, and staff.
On the west side a cozy lounge and snack room encourages impromptu student-faculty interaction, and a small library offers another lounging area.

Along with satisfying the students, the new space has won over faculty and staff, who are enjoying the benefits of being near their colleagues.

“Our new space has made it possible to situate people in close proximity to those that they work with on a daily basis,” says Clinic executive director Shericka Pringle-Jackson. “It encourages better communication and collaboration.”

“What I like as the person who has overall responsibility for the clinical program is that I have a much better feel for what is going on,” says Geraghty. “I can walk the halls and have conversations with students and faculty. The faculty also enjoy interacting with each other.”

Interaction is enhanced not just by proximity but also by the sharing of facilities. A half-dozen conference rooms provide space for group meetings that couldn’t fit in the intentionally small faculty offices. Active case files are maintained in a centralized file room instead of individual offices.

Geraghty’s nearly four-decade history with the Clinic was invaluable in planning the design of the new quarters, Langford says. Geraghty has been with the Clinic since shortly after it opened in 1969 in the basement of the old Thorne Hall auditorium with four offices, a small student work area, and a tiny reception area. He says that “substandard clinical space” was the norm at all law schools in the early days of legal clinics.

“Back then clinics sprung up in law schools’ least desirable spaces — many in basements,” he says.

About a decade after opening, the Clinic moved to the first floor of Weboildt Hall — a bigger space but still not within the Law School. The next move was to the McCormick Building, where the Clinic eventually took over the majority of offices but still outgrew the space.

“The McCormick Building had no major renovation since the 1940s,” Langford says. “The center proximities weren’t correct. The Clinic was growing, and we were at the point of looking at dividing offices. We couldn’t sustain the growth of the Clinic without major rearranging.”

Then the American Bar Association decided to leave the Rubloff Building, where it had been an anchor tenant since the building opened in 1985. Northwestern University, which owns the building, originally looked for other nonprofit tenants and then chose to use the space itself. The Law School gained the whole eighth and twelfth floors.

Its new space allows the Clinic to meet present needs as well as expected future needs. The design took into account the growth rate of the various centers, leaving a suitable number of offices empty in each area so that people won’t have to relocate to accommodate future hirings.

The $3.5 million project has given the Legal Clinic “the state-of-the-art offices at the Law School,” Langford says. Employees in other areas are excited when they see it, he says. “It sets the standard for renovation.”

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**Grand Opening of the Bluhm Legal Clinic’s New Facility • April 12, 2007**

*Top from the left: More than 150 alumni and friends attended the grand opening celebration; Clinic student conducts a tour of the new space; Bobby L. Owens (JD ’07) talks about his experience in the clinic.*

*Bottom from the left: Neil Bluhm (JD ’62); Professor John Elson and Hon. Ruben Castillo (JD ’79)*
The CFJC’s second Gault anniversary event on April 10 featured Jakob (Jaap) Doek, former chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and professor at Vrije University in Amsterdam. In his six years heading the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Doek traveled to 150 countries to survey how governments, NGOs, agencies, and advocacy groups are trying to improve the condition of children. Doek’s talk here focused on how notions of children’s rights in international law have enhanced the obligations of nations and encouraged ways of thinking about protecting children, encouraging children to participate and be heard, and helping them develop.

Two other activities this spring will also provide opportunities to mark the Gault anniversary, Dohrn said. In early May the CFJC, in partnership with the National Juvenile Defender Center, will release On The State of Legal Representation of Children in Illinois. The report will include recommendations for legislation to strengthen legal representation for Illinois children in conflict with the law. In late spring, the Illinois Coalition for Fair Sentencing for Juveniles, of which the CFJC is a part, will issue a report on the 104 juveniles in the state who received life sentences without the possibility of parole. This sentence is prohibited by international law but pervasive in the United States, which has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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In addition to the editing, in Malawi they worked with PRI’s Adam Stapleton on a title and image for the cover and on a sequence for the essays. Back in the U.S., Shaw continued to work on the project pro bono after graduation to wrap up final details.

Essays in the book call on governments to provide legal aid at all stages in the criminal justice process, to recognize the role of informal means of conflict resolution, to diversify legal aid service providers, and to encourage legal empowerment of all citizens. In a review, E. K. Quansah, coordinator of the Legal Clinic at the University of Botswana, noted that since constitutional guarantees of legal representation have proven to be “mere paper tigers” for Africa’s poor, “the publication of Access to Justice in Africa and Beyond is to be welcomed.... The collection will prove a valuable source of relevant information which governments and policy makers may use.”

“Some of the pieces in the collection assess different models for providing legal assistance to the indigent accused, but since there simply aren’t enough lawyers, many devise ways to equip those caught up in the criminal justice system with the tools to help themselves,” Shaw said. “In Malawi, for example, paralegals conduct seminars in which prisoners actually participate in role-playing with a paralegal playing the judge. This ‘Paralegal Advisory Service’ has been extraordinarily successful in reducing overcrowding in Malawi’s prisons, and the model is being replicated elsewhere on the continent.”

Shaw said she hopes the first thing the book will accomplish is increasing awareness.

“I think that the problem of access to justice for criminal defendants in Africa is largely invisible,” she said, “and I hope this book will get people thinking about the magnitude of the problem. Criminal justice reform is just very low on most governments’ priority lists.”
Clinic Students Obtain Release of Prisoners in Malawi

By Marie Sorivelle (JD ’07) and Ana Navarro (LLM ’07)

Six students enrolled in the human rights clinic traveled to Malawi from March 10–25, 2007, with Center for International Human Rights clinical director Sandra Babcock. Malawi’s Director of Public Prosecutions and Chief Legal Aid Advocate invited our group to assist them in alleviating a backlog of homicide cases that has resulted in horrific overcrowding in Lilongwe’s Maula prison.

Prisoners at Maula are crammed into crowded cellblocks where over 150 inmates share a single toilet. They receive one meal a day of corn porridge (nsima) and beans. Disease is rampant, and the prisoners are malnourished and gaunt. Most have never spoken to a lawyer.

Once we arrived in Malawi, the students divided into two teams. One team worked with prosecutors, reviewing homicide case files and writing legal memoranda. All of the cases were potential death penalty cases, since every defendant convicted of murder in Malawi receives a mandatory death sentence. Students wrote opinions recommending that the prosecution accept pleas to manslaughter or other charges in approximately two dozen cases.

Meanwhile, a second team of students interviewed prisoners at Maula to obtain mitigating evidence that could be used by the legal aid lawyers at sentencing. Interviews were either conducted in the open prison yard under the scorching sun with the prisoners crouching on the hard earth, or in the prison guard’s office with a guard in the office conducting paperwork or other duties.

Our work yielded extraordinary results. To date, nine prisoners have pleaded guilty to manslaughter. Six were released upon sentencing for time served. Three additional prisoners were sentenced to terms that will allow them to go home within the next few years. Two others had their murder charges reduced to accessory after the fact and are expected to be released soon.

After years of learning about the black letter law it was incredibly fulfilling and satisfying to see how theory can be applied in the real world and bring about such far-reaching and life changing effects.

Alumni Profile • Where Are They Now?

Angela Daker, JD ’98

Angela Daker spent many hours at the Children and Family Justice Center while a law student and stayed on as a clinical associate professor for four years after graduation. She is now an associate in the litigation department at White & Case in Miami, where she concentrates in white-collar criminal defense in commercial cases.

Q: How did you make the transition from children’s justice issues to working in white-collar criminal defense?

A: The transition was fairly seamless. While juvenile justice work always has been and always will be my passion, the heart of all criminal defense work for me is the belief that every criminal defendant, whether he or she is a child caught within the juvenile justice system or an adult charged with a white-collar crime, deserves excellent representation and a voice in the courtroom. That belief was ingrained in me as a student in the Clinic. So, while white-collar work is very different in terms of issues, applicable law, and procedure, I brought the same mindset to it as to the juvenile justice work I performed at the Clinic.

Q: What kinds of cases have you been handling?

A: Over the past few years I have represented individuals and companies in white-collar matters involving a wide variety of issues, including allegations of securities fraud, bank fraud, mail and wire fraud, bankruptcy fraud, money laundering, and Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act violations.

Q: Even though you’re working in a different area, how did your experience at Northwestern prepare you for what you’re doing?

A: My experiences at Northwestern were invaluable to my development as a lawyer. Everything I do well I learned in the Clinic. I learned all of the basic skills a litigator needs in the Clinic, including interviewing witnesses, preparing and conducting trials, and persuading fact-finders. I had more experience at all of these things before I graduated from law school than many of my colleagues have had after years of practice in law firms.

In addition, there are three major intangibles that the Clinic gave me. First, I learned how to be an excellent advocate and to make sure that advocacy for my client permeates every aspect of the representation. Second, I learned how important it is to maintain credibility with clients, opposing counsel, and judges. And third, I learned how to be tenacious when you believe in your position. I learned this lesson when we filed a motion to reconsider a juvenile court judge’s decision to try our 13-year-old client in adult court. We knew we were right but did not think we had a chance of winning. Tom Geraghty, Clinic director, made the call to file the motion. We won, and it meant the difference between juvenile and adult court for our client. In other words, it gave him a chance to live a real life outside of prison. Eventually, the juvenile court prosecutors dismissed the case against our client.

Q: Do you do any children and family justice work pro bono now?

A: Since leaving the Clinic, I have done quite a bit of pro bono work involving children and families. I have represented children in juvenile court, criminal court, dependency proceedings, and state and federal appellate courts, including filing a petition for writ of certiorari on behalf of juvenile clients in the U.S. Supreme Court. I have been involved in organizations that provide legal and social services to children and their families, including a public interest group that trains law firm lawyers to represent children in dependency proceedings and a legal advice hotline staffed by law firm lawyers. I have also handled immigration matters on behalf of children and families.
SBOC Helps Special Needs Documentary Film Project

Small Business Opportunity Center students George Schaefer (JD ’06) and Greg Nelson (JD ’07) have been providing legal assistance to the non-profit organization Special Needs Documentary Film Project (SNDFP). Julie Peterson, a Northwestern University alumna, founded SNDFP and wrote, directed, and produced a documentary highlighting families of children with special needs. Under the supervision of clinical assistant professor Esther Barron, Schaefer and Nelson helped SNDFP negotiate contracts for broadcasting the documentary on WTTW in Chicago and for use by United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago as a training tool for therapists in Illinois. The SBOC is continuing its representation of SNDFP in its negotiation of a contract for broadcasting the film nationally.

CFJC Students and Faculty Win Motion to Dismiss Charges against a Juvenile Defendant

The Children and Family Justice Center’s Simmie Baer and James McLaughlin (JD ’04) of Kirkland & Ellis LLP led a team of students in successfully arguing a motion to dismiss charges of murder, attempted murder, and weapons charges against a juvenile defendant.

On February 11, 2005, J.C. fled a party as he was being threatened by gang members. Eventually, J.C. climbed into the back seat of his friend’s white SUV for safety — unaware that a few hours previously, his ‘friend’ had used that vehicle to rob the son of a Chicago police officer. That officer, the officer’s brother, and his partner, all out of uniform and off-duty, piled into an unmarked car to seek out the perpetrator. When they found the boys’ car, they pulled a quick U-turn and began ramming the boys. The officers never identified themselves, and the boys, certain they were being attacked by gang members, sped away.

During the ensuing pursuit, shots were exchanged between the vehicles. When the boys saw marked police cars, they stopped, hoping that the police would save them from their pursuers. However, the Chicago police opened fire, peppering the boys’ vehicle with bullets, and killing the driver, J.C., unharmed by the shooting, was dragged out of the vehicle and beaten by numerous officers. J.C. was charged with felony murder, for the police shooting of his friend, and three charges of attempted murder for allegedly shooting at the pursuing police officers.

J.C. had already been awaiting trial for 9 months when Baer and McLaughlin took on the case. The J.C. team discovered that the police had released the boys’ vehicle without ever giving J.C. the chance to examine it. Without the car, there was no way for J.C. to prove that the police rammed him, thus, he could not establish a case for self-defense, nor could he establish the number of shots that were fired at the boys car by the police. Over the course of the next year, the J.C. team gathered information and poured over documents to support their motion to dismiss the case for discovery violations. The team filed a detailed motion to dismiss the case for violations of discovery rules and J.C.’s right to due process. More than 2 years after the incident, the Cook County Juvenile Court dismissed all charges against J.C., who is now home with his family.

Members of the J.C. team include Monica Llorente, clinical assistant professor of law, and law students Prudence Beidler-Carr (JD ’07), David Berger (JD ’08), Lisa Carey-Davis (JD ’06), Mugambi Jouet (JD ’06), Michael Llorente (JD ’07), Megan O’Malley (JD ’07), Jenay Nurse (JD ’06), Minnie Raghavan (JD ’08), and Deborah Starcher (JD ’06).

CWC Frees Two Innocent Clients

In the span of just a few months, Center on Wrongful Convictions’ client Robert Wilson won a federal writ of habeas corpus, left prison after a decade behind bars, and reconciled with the woman whose mistaken identification of him in 1997 resulted in his erroneous conviction for the attempted murder of a nurse who was slashed by a boxcutter-wielding assailant while waiting for a bus on her way home from work.

CWC faculty members Karen Daniel and Jane Raley, along with students Luis Pinedo (JD ’06) and Negar Tekeei (JD ’06), filed a habeas corpus petition based on the exclusion from Wilson’s trial of compelling evidence that another man was the assailant. After the victim learned the details about the other suspect from a newspaper reporter, she contacted Wilson’s Northwestern attorneys to say that she had sent an innocent man to jail. The prosecutor’s office thereafter dismissed the charges against Wilson and he went home on December 4, 2006.

Wilson and Siler met in person at Northwestern Law on February 16, 2007. Before a packed Lincoln Hall audience, they spoke of the events surrounding the conviction and exoneration. The emotionally-charged event ended in thunderous applause after Wilson and Siler described their sense of closure and hugged each other.

Around the time of Wilson’s release, another Center on Wrongful Convictions client was also exonerated. Marlon Pendleton had been convicted of a 1993 sexual assault after the victim identified him following a flawed identification process. A police crime lab examined the evidence in 1994 and concluded that there was insufficient evidence for a federal writ of habeas corpus, left prison after a decade behind bars, and reconciled with the woman whose mistaken identification of him in 1997 resulted in his erroneous conviction for the attempted murder of a nurse who was slashed by a boxcutter-wielding assailant while waiting for a bus on her way home from work.

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BLUHM LEGAL CLINIC

Center for International Human Rights
CIHR conducts academic and practical work in support of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.
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Center on Wrongful Convictions
CIWC is dedicated to identifying and rectifying wrongful convictions and other serious miscarriages of justice. The center has three components: representation, research, and public education.
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Children and Family Justice Center
CFJC is a holistic children’s law center, a clinical teaching program, and a research and policy center.
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Investor Protection Center
IPC provides assistance to investors with limited income or small dollar claims who are unable to obtain legal representation.
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MacArthur Justice Center
MJC focuses on criminal justice reform, litigating cases involving issues such as prisoner rights, the death penalty, police misconduct, gun control, and indigents’ rights to legal representation.
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Small Business Opportunity Center
SBOC is a student-based clinical program providing affordable legal assistance to entrepreneurs, start-ups, and not-for-profit organizations.
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To make a gift to the clinic or one of its centers, please visit www.law.northwestern.edu/giving.