

Washburn Law Clinic

Participation in Washburn's Law Clinic provides an educational experience unlike any other in the law school curriculum. In the Clinic, the problems are not hypothetical, as they are in simulation courses, nor are they based upon static facts as in many doctrinal casebooks. Clinic interns are called upon to use their legal training to help solve problems faced by real people. The work conducted by Clinic students can have a profound impact on the lives of their clients. Because of this, and due to the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of clinic cases, many interns find their experience in the Clinic to be the most profound of their law school careers.

The Raymond Spring Award

Through experience, Clinic interns develop an understanding of the importance of providing legal services to clients in need. To underscore the significance of this critical professional responsibility and to honor the memory of one of the driving forces behind the creation of Washburn's Law Clinic, the Kansas Trial Lawyers Association sponsors an award that is given annually. Dean Raymond Spring '59, for whom the award is named, was committed to providing free legal services to clients who could not otherwise obtain representation. He envisioned that a clinical program run by the Law School was a means to achieve this objective while offering an outstanding and unique educational experience to law students. This year's recipient of the Raymond Spring award, given to the student who exhibits the highest commitment to providing legal services to clients in need, is Sharonda Friday '04.

Friday worked in the Clinic with Prof. Lynette Petty '87 during the summer 2003 semester. While enrolled in Clinic, Friday served as counsel for clients in divorce, represented a grandmother in a private child in need of care action, and served as guardian ad litem for teenagers in the child in need



Sharonda Friday

of care system. Friday was patient and compassionate with all her clients. Her work with youth was particularly noteworthy. She worked one-on-one with her clients, listening to their concerns, monitoring and sometimes prodding the legal system to make sure their needs were addressed.

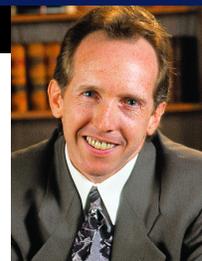
Friday's stated goal is to use her experience "in the trenches" to work as a lobbyist or advocate in policy development to improve the legal system. She is passionate about these issues, and anyone who has worked with her knows she has the determination and judgment, tempered by an appropriate sense of humor, to accomplish these goals.

The Irvine E. Ungerman Award

Each semester, the clinic faculty names a recipient for the Irvine E. Ungerman Award for Excellence in Clinical Practice. The Ungerman Award is given to the legal intern "who has distinguished himself or herself by providing highly competent representation to clients in a manner exemplifying the ideals of our profession: 'pursuit of the learned art in the spirit of a public service.'" The recipient for the fall 2003 semester is Laura Lewis '04.



Professor John Francis





Laura Lewis '04

Lewis was drawn to the Clinic because she heard positive comments from other students who had previously taken the clinic and

because she wanted to gain practical experience to prepare her for life after law school. Upon graduation from Washburn, Lewis and her son Tristin, will move to Dodge City, where Lewis has accepted an associate position at the Law Office of Leslie A. Hess '85.

During her clinical semester, Lewis gained experience in the area in family law. Working under the supervision of Prof. Sheila Reynolds, she had the opportunity to represent clients in divorce and paternity actions. She also explored the ramifications of divorce on alien residency status and thoroughly researched the division of veterans' benefits in a divorce action. Lewis discovered firsthand that learning to work with other professionals is an important part of the practice of law. "The Clinic taught me how to deal with difficult opposing counsel."

In addition to obtaining experience practicing substantive and technical aspects of law, Lewis noted that she learned a great deal about what goes into representing a real client. "It is important to use different resources to address my clients' needs, aside from the legal issues that I'm helping them with," Lewis said. "It's helpful to know what agencies are available and what it is they specialize in so that you can make good referrals for your clients when other issues arise."

Forging New Paths

A new program launched in the Clinic fall semester will make such referrals easier to obtain. The Washburn University School of Social Work and the Law Clinic are engaged in an interdisciplinary venture in which a Masters level social work student is placed in the Law Clinic to offer social work services

to Clinic clients. This exciting and cutting-edge undertaking benefits clients, Clinic interns and social work students. "Having in-house social work resources is a tremendous asset for the Clinic," noted Law Clinic Director, Prof. John Francis. "Clinic students learn to work with professionals from disciplines other than the law; they develop collaborative skills and approach problem solving from a broader perspective. In addition, these resources improve the quality of representation we offer our clients."

Erica Snyder, the social work intern currently placed in the Clinic, has offered assistance in several different types of cases, including child in need of care matters, family law cases, civil cases and even a criminal case. All of Snyder's work is conducted under the close supervision of professors from Washburn's School of Social Work and in coordination with Law Clinic professors. Snyder's work has included providing referrals for clients to specialized community resources, making recommendations to the court, consulting with Clinic interns on complex client counseling issues, and even providing direct clinical therapy services to clients. "

Snyder's knowledge of prescription medications proved helpful for a case handled by Clinic intern Jack Ryan '04 when he was dealing with a juvenile who had been prescribed several different medications. Snyder helped Ryan interview the client, who presented mental health issues, and helped Ryan understand his client's symptoms and diagnosis. She also helped Ryan determine what was in the best interests of this client. "Knowing the medication's effects on my client was very beneficial in approaching the client as a whole," observed Ryan.

After completing her Masters degree in social work, Snyder wants to experience the lawyer/social worker collaboration from the other end. "I'm planning on attending law school next year. Working with law students gave me a glimpse of where I will be in a few years."

For more information on the Law Clinic, contact the director Professor John Francis at 785-231-1010 ext. 1685 or john.francis@washburn.edu