



Experiential Education - **2021 Year Review**

THE WORLD NEEDS MORE ADVOCATES

Greetings from the University of Wyoming College of Law!

These past few years have certainly presented us opportunities to demonstrate our grit and resilience in the face of dynamic challenges. Our Experiential Learning programs at UW Law rose and met these challenges in 2021 with the determination and passion we have come to expect! Our eight clinic and practicum programs saw 122 students put in over 20,000 hours of work this year, serving clients in 18 of Wyoming's 23 counties. Not to be outdone, our externship program had 82 students work over 11,000 hours in placements in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Alaska, Nevada and Washington, D.C.

All this hard work resulted in the College of Law once again being recognized as a [Best School for Practical Training](#) by preLaw Magazine in 2021! The year also saw the law school recognized again as a top school for Child and Family Law by preLaw Magazine due in large part by the efforts of everyone in the Family and Child Legal Advocacy clinic!

We are continuously amazed by the enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment our students display as they sharpen their skills and prepare for life after law school. Check out their incredible work in our year in review for each experiential learning opportunity offered by UW Law!



Civil Legal Services

Family & Child Legal Advocacy

The Civil Legal Services Clinic has had an extremely busy year representing clients on an array of matters including, landlord/tenant issues, names changes, property boundary disputes and debt collections. They were especially busy with their largest client-based need of assistance in domestic relations. Domestic relations are one of the largest unmet needs in the country and that continues to be true in Wyoming. About one-third of residents in Wyoming qualify as indigent and qualify for the Civil Legal Services Clinic. With the COVID-19 pandemic, issues for indigent communities were at an all-time high and the clinic students worked extremely hard and continued to stay positive as they serve their clients.

Under the direction of [Faculty Director Danielle R. Cover](#), the students had several key accomplishments this past year. [River Heide, Student Director](#), successfully negotiated a contentious divorce in mediation for a client that was in the clinic for over two years. Raevyn Heinzen began intense preparations in the summer for a grandparent's visitation trial and just recently advocated in court for an extremely positive outcome for her client. Alicia Evans worked hard and quickly on a fast-paced contentious contempt of court action that she was able to successfully settle with opposing counsel. A first for the clinic this year, was a cemetery law case that was recently accepted, and we look forward to working on it. Alexa Rolin and Raevyn Heinzen successfully completed a divorce in conjunction with a guardianship for one client within two months.

From representing victims of domestic violence in child custody actions, to providing limited scope representation to self-represented litigants, UW law students in the Family and Child Legal Advocacy Clinic provided vital legal services to low-income families across the state during challenging times.

Addressing access to justice and parenting issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic has been especially challenging. Between co-parenting issues, tax payments, and a shifting economy, students in the clinic have been addressing issues novel to the practice of family law and child advocacy.

Led by [Faculty Director Dona Playton](#), and [Student Director, Ruth Uptain Ogden](#), students in the Clinic represented or provided brief or limited scope services to clients across the state and appeared for clients in legal proceedings ranging from status and compliance hearings, protection order hearings, temporary visitation hearings, mediations and a day-long trial. Remarkd one of the clinic clients, "I just wanted to reach out and let you know I am so grateful for everything you all have done over the past years. It's been so much. I will never forget the group of students who stood behind me and helped me get my kids back in my life. Forever grateful!"

Students in the Clinic screened and interviewed nearly 100 applicants, provided legal assistance to over 40 people, drafted pleadings, correspondence, subpoenas, settlement agreements, parenting plans, divorce decrees, discovery (interrogatories, requests for production of documents, requests for admissions), and corresponding responses.

Alexa Rolin said of her experience in the clinic, "the Civil Legal Services Clinic is one of the most enjoyable clinics. I have had the opportunity to learn about cases from opening, settling, and closing the case. My experience in the clinic has taught me a ton and I actually feel prepared for practice."

Alexa also emphasized how much she appreciated the clinic class taught by Professor Cover. This class teaches students the importance of client-centered lawyering, practical experience as an attorney, how to adapt to client needs, and is a great evidence crash course.

Clinic student, Sarah Griffin, remarked "spending nearly a year in the Family and Child Legal Advocacy Clinic taught me so many more practical skills for practicing law than any traditional law school class ever did. I learned how to write a variety of legal documents, how to calendar deadlines, client control, how to prepare opening and closing statements, and so much more! I even had the incredible opportunity of presenting my first case in front of a judge. A REAL case. The clinic doesn't give you scenarios or hypotheticals, it gives you real cases with real clients whose lives you are impacting."



[Prosecution Assistance Clinic](#)

Despite the impacts of COVID-19, students continued to gain valuable experience within the Prosecution Assistance Clinic. Throughout 2021, students worked both in-person and remotely to serve prosecuting offices within Wyoming. Students worked alongside attorneys and our [Faculty Director, Darrell D. Jackson](#) and [Student Director, Morgan Cloud](#), to create appellate briefs, research memorandums, motion responses, and a variety of other projects. Regarding her experience in the clinic, Aemelia Jensen stated, "The Prosecution Assistance Program provides hands-on experience with actual legal work, which helps refine legal research, writing, and time management skills."

Additionally, the clinic provided students the opportunity to gain courtroom experience. This past year, students participated in jury trials, motion hearings and appellate arguments. Regarding her appellate argument in District Court, Madison Blazovich explained, "It was one of the single most difficult, challenging, and undoubtedly rewarding

[Defender Aid Clinic](#)

The Defender Aid Clinic had an impactful and fulfilling year in 2021. Over the course of the year, students from the clinic practiced in front of municipal, circuit, and district courts all around the state of Wyoming, as well as submitted briefs and argued in front of the Wyoming Supreme Court. In collaboration with the Rocky Mountain Innocence Center, students have also continued the honorable work of representing individuals in Wyoming with factual innocence claims for crimes they were wrongfully convicted of committing. Additionally, the Defender Aid Clinic takes on reform projects that move toward correcting injustices within the criminal justice system. Notably, we launched a podcast, [Justice Talks: in Wyoming](#), to create a platform where we can discuss the intersections of race and the criminal justice system/process, and where systematic and institutional powers create disparate impacts along racial lines.

Under the direction of [Faculty Director Lauren McLane](#), and [Student Director Matt Klein](#), students in the clinic represented clients at all stages of the criminal process, including a bench trial, two felony

tasks I've ever worked on. It was a great experience I can take with me into my future career."

This year, the clinic expanded its team to include a 1L/2L legal assistant position, and began working to preserve the clinic's historical records, and improved communication so that graduated students can keep updated on the clinic. For 2022, we hope to keep moving this progress forward and continue diligently serving prosecuting offices throughout the State.

jury trials, and conducted oral argument on behalf of clients in front of the Wyoming Supreme Court on five separate occasions.

At the conclusion of a felony jury trial, the clinic secured two NOT guilty verdicts in a very serious case where our client was facing up to 30 years of prison. We set goals to be experts in the evidentiary issues that would arise, and it proved effective as we won up to 80% of objections, which was vital in the victory for our client. We wholeheartedly believed in our client's innocence, which made this case very difficult and intensified the pressure of trial. After 7 months of the most difficult time in our client's life, and the lives of his family, they finally received justice. The entire experience was surreal for the clinic and everyone that worked on the case. The verdict, our client's reaction, and the huge embrace from his entire family in the courtroom, including three family members he was restricted from contacting throughout the case, was unbelievably moving. It is moments like this one, that exemplify the strength of the Defender Aid Clinic, and as a clinical program it is virtually unmatched by others around the country. Every day students are afforded the opportunity to gain experience and receive unparalleled training as future public and private defenders.



The International Human Rights Clinic, led by [Professor Jerry Fowler](#) and [Golten Human Rights Fellow Martha Jenkins](#), has been busy and productive in spite of a challenging year for the international community. In the Spring, four students joined the clinic as it continued its cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. They prepared an extensive analysis of implementation of human rights standards in Asia for submission to the Asian Development Bank, which is revising the policies that safeguards against the human rights risks of projects it finances.

In the fall, five students participated in the clinic, beginning the process of developing a refugee protection project. In connection with that effort, the clinic partnered with the Military Law Students Association to assist Afghan allies and interpreters attempting to escape Afghanistan. Martha Jenkins worked with a Seattle immigration attorney to assist an Afghan-American whose family was left behind during the

evacuation. She also traveled to a military base in Virginia to provide legal assistance to Afghan allies awaiting resettlement.

Student Matthew Minikus commented on his experience working in the clinic: "The clinic has permanently changed my career path in law. . . . I never realized how rewarding a course could be until taking the human rights clinic. Fighting for those who need help the most is what I want to spend the rest of my life on."



The Energy, Environment and Natural Resource Practicum started back up with a bang in August after a brief hiatus. Students worked on several projects designed to help Wyoming landowners protect water rights, local governments access funding for wildlife conservation and park managers address visitor impacts.

Dean Klint Alexander hosted a widely popular [EENR Excellence Luncheon series](#). The series brought various experts from industry and government to campus to discuss a variety of pressing issues including regulation of pore space, the role of the Wyoming Public Service Commission in the state's energy future and the legality of a moratorium on federal oil and gas leases. Three former governors graciously shared their time and expertise with the law school community to the kick the series off.



Students had the opportunity to work closely with various state and federal officials, as well as attorneys representing all sides in issues critical to Wyoming's economy and future. Highlights included meetings with:

- The director of the Groundwater Division at the WY State Engineer's Office to prepare a *Guide for Wyoming Property Owners: Understanding your Rights to Groundwater*;
- The National Park Service lead for visitor management at Yellowstone National Park to prepare a literature review collecting resources and tools for preserving Wyoming's natural resources to support a thriving and sustainable tourism economy; and,
- The WY Department of Transportation and Game & Fish to prepare a toolkit for securing federal funding to protect wildlife migration corridors.

Students valued the chance to learn by doing. They walked away from the experience with a better understanding of the law as well as the players involved in managing Wyoming's invaluable natural resources.

- “I would recommend this clinic to any of my colleagues interested in the natural resource world. In one semester, the practicum made great connections with many of the state's most prominent natural resource minds.”
- “I learned a great deal about many of the natural resource issues facing Wyoming, and I feel more prepared to enter the state's workforce and add value where value is needed.”
- “The Energy and Natural Resources Law Practicum was one of the most productive—practical and academic—experiences that I have enjoyed in law school.”



Estate Planning

Business Law

The Estate Planning Practicum provides an excellent opportunity for students interested in transactional law. The practicum does estate planning work, usually limited to simple wills, advanced health care directives, and durable powers of attorney. In addition, the practicum also works on other issues such as transfer of death deeds, affidavits of survivorship and summary probate cases.

In the Fall 2021, [Faculty Director Mario Rampulla](#) and [Student Director Krystle Somers](#) presented at the Wyoming State Bar’s Annual Meeting. The presentation entitled “Death but not Taxes: A Basic Overview on Estate Planning,” provided attorneys with basic introductions to estate planning techniques that can be used depending on the client’s desired outcomes, which included traditional will-based estate planning, probate avoidance techniques, and trust-based estate planning. The presentation also served to advertise to the Bar members the services that the practicum provides to qualified clients. This was an incredible opportunity for the Student Director to get hands-on learning and public speaking experience, while also promoting the work of the practicum!

2021 also offered an exciting new opportunity for students, as it marked the first time in the practicum’s history that it undertook its first full

The Entrepreneurship and Business Law Practicum had an eventful fall semester both assisting clients and learning about cutting edge technologies that directly impact Wyoming. At the direction of [Faculty Director George Mocsary](#), and [Student Director Theodore Sutton](#), the practicum has allowed students to gain valuable experiences that will help them become better attorneys both in the present and in the future.

The first half of the semester focused on blockchain technology and cryptocurrency. Professor Del Wright was the visiting lecturer for this section of the course, and he is the author of *A Short & Happy Guide to Bitcoin, Blockchain, and Crypto*. Professor Wright provided students with a thorough breakdown of blockchain technologies, cryptocurrencies, and how newly passed Wyoming laws affect both. Given that Wyoming is at the forefront of blockchain and cryptocurrency law, the practicum’s students gained an edge on these exciting developments.

The second half of the semester focused on forming a wide range of businesses and advising clients on best practices. These business formations included profit corporations, nonprofit corporations, and LLCs. Students assisted clients by forming these entities through the Wyoming Secretary of State’s website, acquiring EIN numbers from the IRS, and drafting the necessary documentation for each entity. Students

probate. Student Cassie Williams is working on the estate case. It involves an intestate's primary asset of real property, which is subject to numerous creditor's claim. The practicum has been and is in the process of liquidating these assets and addressing the creditors' claims in accordance with the Wyoming Probate Code. This has been exciting new work for the students in the practicum and a building block to do this complex work in the future. Cassie commended on her experience with the clinics stating, "I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities I have had while working in the clinic with Prof. Rampulla. I can think of very few other places where I would have gotten the same amount of valuable mentorship and hands-on experience as a student. My experiences in the UWCOL Legal Clinics — also including the Civil Legal Services Clinic — have made all the difference for my confidence as I get ready to graduate, and I appreciate all the work that the Clinic Faculty Directors do to make sure that the students get a chance to take the lead on complex case work."

also conducted research to provide additional aid with setting up their client's businesses. In total, the clinic opened four cases this fall. Students represented clients from Albany County, and out of state clients from Iowa, North Carolina, and Mississippi moving their enterprises to, or starting business in, Wyoming.

Brad Fagergren participated in the practicum this fall and had many positive things to say about his experience. "I enjoyed the interactive nature of classes and the ability to engage in discussions about practical law, both in, and outside of the classroom. I appreciated the emphasis placed on forward-thinking business trends. The course also allows for the practice of law by assisting entrepreneurs in starting a business. Professor Mocsary is a patient teacher with a discerning eye for detail that I'm proud to have had as a mentor."



The Externship Program is a great way to gain practical legal experience while in law school and earn course credit at the same time. The University of Wyoming College of Law has an expansive and established externship program with many opportunities available. [Faculty Director, Ashli Tomisich](#) recently took over the program and is enthusiastic to continue to develop placement choices.

Currently the program boasts [over 100 external field placements](#), both regionally and nationally. Through the dedicated support and mentorship of our field placement supervisors, students learn in dynamic and varied legal positions. Ranging from criminal and civil litigation, judge's chambers, patent, employment, health law and much more.

Past students note, "Practical supplementation to what we have been learning in our classes is a vital part of a law student's education. I have learned many things from my externship and would recommend other students participate." Another student said, "It was a great experience. My legal research and writing skills improved, I learned a lot about an area of law that was interesting to me, and I have a topic for a law review comment. You will learn a lot from the externship supervisors and make great connections. I would recommend it to anyone, it is a great way to learn."

UW Law has a demonstrated history of prioritizing and advancing the arena of experiential learning. The externship program is a pragmatic and engaging way to explore practice areas, advance substantive legal skills and expand a legal network. The flexibility of the program is convenient to students and employers, while still providing a robust learning opportunity.