Professor/Director Cheryl Wattley leaves the OU Legal Clinic for new opportunity at UNT- Dallas College of Law

2014 began on a bittersweet note for the Legal Clinics as we said good-bye to our director, Professor Cheryl Wattley. Having led the clinical programs for 7 years, she decided to take a position as an inaugural faculty member of the new University of North Texas/Dallas College of Law. Professor Wattley also assumes the position of Director of Experiential Learning there.

During her tenure as OU's Director of Clinical Education, Professor Wattley brought great energy and passion for education and protecting the rights of those who may be underrepresented in our legal system. Under her direction, the clinic offered practice on §1983 cases, which allowed students to conduct federal jury and bench trials and to argue before the Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit. She sparked students to give more of their time by introducing a community service component to the clinic curriculum. The various community service projects included advice sessions regarding living wills at senior citizen centers, book drives for detention center inmates, and assistance to women bridging the gap to life after incarceration.

Professor Wattley touched not only clinic students, but also her students in her traditional stand-up classes, many of whom then became clinic students. She traveled with students to Uganda, Zambia and Morocco as part of the International Human Rights Clinic. She also served as the faculty advisor for the Black Law Students Association, and coached moot court and mock trial teams which have been heavily decorated at both the regional and national levels.

We know that Professor Wattley will bring the same dedication to her new positions with UNT, and that she will be a large part of that school's success, just as she has been a large part of our students' success. Professor Wattley has been instrumental in helping to establish the UNT- Dallas curriculum and protocols for the first students who will begin classes in August of 2014. As the Director of Experiential Learning she has many, many plans to have the students active with hands on learning of the law from day one on campus! As many of you know, she is not one to sit idle on the sidelines— just one example, she has been developing a mentorship program so that each new law student will have a mentor from the Dallas legal community from the first day of orientation thru the completion of their law degree at UNT.

The Legal Clinic, along with many other students outside of the Clinic will miss her friendship, direction, enthusiasm and energy. We wish her the best of everything in her new endeavors. The administration and students at UNT—Dallas are very lucky to have you. Their gain is definitely our loss!

Questions or comments? Email us at legalclinic@law.ou.edu or call 405-325-3702
Our Accomplishments for 2013-2014

“Kudos to our interns and supervising faculty attorneys”

This year clinic students handled over 165 cases in Cleveland and McClain Counties. Collectively, they provided almost 4600 hours of legal services to persons who might not otherwise have legal representation. Our clients overwhelmingly praise the work of our interns.

A few comments from previous clients:

“...OU Legal Clinic was willing to help me to be free to better my life. I’m very proud to say that OU Legal Clinic worked very hard for me.” Kevin B.

“The kind explanations on my level and made sure I understood all! I have had lots of attorney’s and they were no match. This was the Best legal representation I have received in my life, and I needed it!!!!” Cynthia H.

Co-Chief Counsel for Legal Clinic

A program was initiated several semesters ago in which the supervising attorneys would select one or two returning clinic students to serve as chief counsel. Generally they will choose one civil and one criminal student. These students act as recruiters, answer new clinic students general questions when a supervising attorney is not available, etc. During the Fall 2013 semester the chief counsel were Shane Hill and Leah Stein and during the Spring 2014 semester, Shane Hill and Kayla Argo. The Fall 2014 co-chief counsel are Kayla Argo and Eric Warner. Thanks to all the chief counsel who have served, we appreciate your hard work!

Collaboration with the School of Social Work

The O.U. Legal Clinic and the O.U. School of Social Work continue to provide clinic students and graduate students in social work the opportunity to experience the holistic approach to lawyering and social work. Aaiza Chaudhry, a graduate student in the School of Social Work, worked on her practicum in the Legal Clinic during the Fall 2013 semester and is continuing to work in the Clinic during the Spring 2014 semester assisting our interns and their clients. Aaiza has taken a special interest in our Juvenile Drug Court clients and especially enjoyed working with the young people.
Student Awards and Recognitions

Each year, the Legal Clinic makes four monetary awards recognizing the exceptional work and commitment of our interns. This year our award winners are:

The Cindy Foley Award: Shane Hill. This award honors the memory of Cindy Foley and her 18 years as a supervising faculty attorney. It is presented to the clinic student who most exhibits passion, competence, and commitment in the representation of clients.

The Kelly Beardslee Award: Bonnie Blumert. This award is in memory of 1994 graduate, Kelly Beardslee, and is presented to the outstanding criminal defense Legal Intern from the O.U. Legal Clinic who demonstrates overall excellence in representing people charged with crimes who are unable to afford an attorney. In a thank you note after receiving the award Bonnie wrote “I appreciate tremendously the teaching & guidance I received from you all in the Clinic & know that I couldn’t have picked a better place to start my career.”

The Larry Siria Award: Megan Decker. The Siria award is in memory of 1984 graduate, Larry Siria, and is presented to the outstanding civil Legal Intern from the O.U. Legal Clinic who is compassionate, caring and dedicated to representing people who are unable to afford an attorney.

The Cindy Foley Fellowship: Kaitlin Polacheck. This fellowship was created to honor Cindy Foley, a long time clinic faculty supervising attorney who lost her battle with cancer in 2010. Cindy was dedicated to representing those who could not afford an attorney. She had a special place in her heart for young people and wanting to get them back on the right track in life. The fellowship is awarded to students who are doing unpaid summer placements at government agencies or non-profits focusing upon indigent criminal defense. This year’s fellowship goes to Kaitlin Polacheck, a student who will be working at the Oklahoma County Public Defender’s office. Kaitlin, a rising 3L, spent last summer doing an externship with Children at Risk in Dallas. She well exceeded her pro bono pledge of 100 hours. Before working with CAR she was unsure whether she would be able to work on emotionally taxing issues. However, she discovered that “when you are passionate about something, the strength to pursue your passions will follow.”

Legal Clinic Oath of Professionalism

The Professionalism Oath:

“As an intern in the University of Oklahoma College of Law Legal Clinic, I promise that I will do my best to be responsible for what I say and do, to respect myself and others, to be fair and honest in all of my dealings, and to be considerate and caring in all of my interactions. I pledge that I will be diligent, compassionate, and dedicated as I represent my clients to the best of my ability. When engaged in clinic business, I will be mindful of the trust that has been placed in me, the responsibility that I have assumed, and the clients who I serve.”
Alumni Highlights

Alumni News

Amanda Higgins Everett, a 2010 graduate and Taos Smith, a 2011 graduate, both clinic alumni are in practice together in Norman.

In late 2013 they represented the defendant in a big jury trial in Custer County. The charges were felony Kidnapping and felony Domestic Assault with a Dangerous Weapon. This was Amanda’s first big jury trial and she was able to impeach the State’s main witness and fought a long battle against the State regarding evidence as well as keeping lots of prior bad acts evidence out. After nine hours of deliberating the jury came back with a Not Guilty verdict on both counts in their favor.

Again in June 2014 Amanda and Taos had a jury trial in Oklahoma County in which their client was charged with three counts: aggravated A&B; kidnapping; and interfering with a 911 call. The best offer prior to trial from the State included convictions on all three counts, with some jail time, and a 10 year suspended sentence to follow. The client simply did not want to do any time in jail or prison whatsoever, and he really didn’t want to spend 10 years on probation afterward. At trial, the State asked the jury to convict on all three counts and sentence him to 5 1/2 years in prison. During trial, the client testified on his own behalf. He had been well-prepared for both his direct examination and a very aggressive cross-examination by the State’s attorney. On day 3, the jury went out to deliberate and only took two hours to return verdicts of NOT GUILTY on counts 2 and 3, and a verdict of guilty on count 1. The great thing is the jury did not sentence the client to a single day of incarceration, just a $500.00 fine. This was a HUGE win for the client and for Amanda and Taos. Amanda was first chair, and Taos was second chair on this case. Both client and family were thrilled after the verdict was read and they received lots of hugs in the hallway. “One of those moments that validate what we do!”, said Amanda.

According to Taos “I don’t think we would be ready at this point in our careers if it wasn’t for the legal clinic”.

Laura Mealy Talbert, a December 2012 graduate of the COL, was in the Criminal Defense clinic for two semesters. Laura moved to Clovis after graduation and accepted a job as an Assistant District Attorney for the Ninth Judicial District. In Laura’s 1st jury trial, she obtained a guilty verdict on a 2nd degree felony of Trafficking a Controlled Substance (methamphetamine). According to a press release put out by the DA’s office, the jury deliberated only 35 minutes before returning the guilty verdict.

In addition to the guilty verdict she received in the above mentioned case, Laura has also received guilty verdicts on at least three additional big trials. In May 2014, man charged with Aggravated Driving While Under the Influence of Intoxicating Liquor, 5th offense, and Driving While License Revoked for DWI. Jury deliberated one hour before rendering guilty verdicts. Judge sentenced the maximum penalty of three years in prison.

In April 2014, jury finds man guilty of trafficking controlled substances and judge sentences him to 18 years in prison. The sentence will run
consecutive to his previous conviction, total sentence 36 years. Judge Tatum stated that defendant was a menace to society.

In June 2014, Laura prosecuted another drug trafficking case after a sting operation by the Region V Drug Task Force. A guilty verdict was handed down after one hour by the jury. Judge Tatum stated, “the poison that you’ve spread through this community cannot possibly be calculated.” “You are the number one public enemy in this community.”

Laura attributes a large portion of her success and job/trial readiness to the training she got from her supervising attorneys in the legal clinic and in working on real life cases while in the clinic as well.

Laura recruited one of her classmates, Zachary Bidner ’13, to apply for an ADA position in Clovis after graduation. He too was hired by the Ninth Judicial District. Both Laura and Zach are doing great things and making the Clinic very proud!

Donations for Clinic Scholarships & Awards

Re: Larry Siria Award, Kelly Beardslee Award, Cindy Foley Award and Cindy Foley Indigent Defense Fellowship

Dear Legal Clinic Alumni:

I hope this finds you each doing well. The OU Law Legal Clinic is continuing its incredible success and getting ready for the next academic calendar year. Thank you to all of you who stay connected and involved with the Clinic!

We are writing with regard to the awards established in honor of former clinic students, Larry Siria and Kelly Beardslee, and former clinic professor, Cindy Foley. The Siria Award was established in 1990 and is presented to the student who shows outstanding performance in the civil clinic and a desire to continue providing assistance to those less fortunate upon graduation. The Beardslee Award was established in 1995 and is presented to the outstanding criminal defense clinic student. The Cindy Foley Award is presented to a Clinic student who most exhibits passion, competence, determination and commitment in the representation of indigent clients. The Cindy Foley Memorial Indigent Defense Fellowship is awarded to a student during a summer semester in which the student will be working with an organization which provides no-cost legal defense services to the public.

Some of you may have had the privilege of knowing Larry, Kelly or Cindy. Many of you have been recipients of these important scholarships. We write to ask your assistance in maintaining the financial means to continue providing these awards. The OU Legal Clinic, and our alumni, are committed to honoring their memory by selecting students who will embody the devotion to indigent legal service that these three demonstrated.

There are many gift options available including monthly, yearly and one-time gift payment options. Please make a notation designating which fund you intend to support, and make your check out to the OU Foundation. You may also give online by visiting: https://www.oufoundation.org/OnlineGivingWeb/Giving/OnlineGiving/Law

Should you have any questions about donating, please email alumni@law.ou.edu. We truly appreciate your consideration and support!

Sincerely,

Faculty and Staff, OU Legal Clinic
The OU Legal Clinic

We’re so proud!!

The graduating clinic students receiving Academic Achievement Awards this year were: Megan L. Basham, Bonnie J. Blumert, Roy B. Brown, Megan M. Decker, Jordan W. Dikeman, Nicholas A. Elliott, Dylan D. Erwin, Melissa L. Harman, Shane M. Hill, David R. Jenkins, Matthew S. Lafon, Hayes T. Martin, Carrie D. Phillips, Ryan J. Riddel, and Leah E. Stein. Congratulations to each of them!

Purple cords worn by clinic graduates

The clinic faculty and staff responded to requests by our graduating students for recognition cords that could be worn with their academic regalia at graduation. The clinic selected purple cords to symbolize a student’s participation in the clinic. 2014 graduating students eligible to proudly wear the purple cord to honor their work in the clinic were: Bonnie Blumert, Nick Elliott, David Jenkins, Matthew Lafon, Shane Hill, Carrie Phillips, Leah Stein, Dylan Erwin, Megan Decker, Hayes Martin, Ryan Riddel, Megan Basham and Missy Harmon.

“Race Judicata”

Race Judicata, the annual 5k run and 1 mile walk hosted by the O.U. Law Student Bar Association, was held on Saturday, November 2, 2013. The race was once again held in memory of the late Cindy Foley, a faculty member of the O.U. Legal Clinic who dedicated her life to public service. A portion of the proceeds from that race helped to benefit the Cindy Foley Memorial Indigent Fellowship and Oklahoma Lawyers for Children. Many of the Foley/Bullard clan were present at that event along with many faculty, staff, students and others participating in the race to support these wonderful causes.

There will not be a 2014 race this fall, however, hopefully in Spring of 2015! Watch for a notice in the future! The good news is, you don’t have to run to donate. However, we welcome your participation and appreciate your support.

Marriages:
Zachary Privott (2010) & Karen May, April 2014
Hayley Meyer Lambourn (2011) & Robin Lambourn, June 2014

Amanda Higgins Toon (2010) & Heath Toon, August 2014

Future Clinic Students (i.e. babies):
Warren, August 2013, son of Sylvia Lanfair (2010) and David Lanfair
Wyatt, November 2013, son of Elizabeth Frame Ellison (2009) and Christopher Ellison (2009)
Leo Alexander, February 2014, son of Heather Hendricks (2005) and Brian Sauer
Hannah Marie, May 2014, daughter of Matt Russell (2010) and Lacey Swilley Russell
Gavin, July 2014, son of Candice Simmons Milard (2010) and Greg Milard
Ren, November 2013 and Gifford, February 2014, daughter and son of Blake Lynch (2009) and Amanda
Liam, August 2014, son of Ann Duffy Wilson (2012) and Andrew Wilson

“We want to know! Tell us your news”

Those of you who were students or faculty with the clinic know that “we are family.” When you stepped through the doors of the Clinic office you became part of our “clinic family”. We want to keep in touch with you and brag on you whenever possible.

Have news you want to share? Have you won that big case? Made a move to a new firm? Won an election? Gotten married? Had a baby? Taken the dream vacation? Published an article?

We want to include “your news” in future editions of the Clinic Newsletter. Please send your announcements about marriages, births, new employment, articles you have published, etc. to Lori at legalclinic@law.ou.edu. Also, be sure to frequent our Facebook page (OU Legal Clinic) for news and announcements.

Please update your contact information whenever necessary: address, phone (home and office), and e-mail address. All information can be e-mailed to legalclinic@law.ou.edu.

Help us spread your good news!