



Adjunct Professors Offer Students Real-World Experiences

by Bridget Lynch '98

Coming directly from courtrooms, law firms, government agencies, nonprofits, and corporations, adjunct professors bring a vital, practical component to law school education. This year alone, more than 50 adjunct professors at Lewis & Clark are sharing their experiences and giving students a more complete picture of what it means to be a lawyer.

"We deal with the very practical application of the law," says Fred Lenszer, senior deputy at the Multnomah County district attorney's office and instructor of the Criminal Law Clinical Internship seminar. "We get away from the theoretical. Our instruction is very, very functional: when do I stand up, when do I sit down, when do I say something, when do I shut up? It's the basics that nobody thinks about until they are in the situation, and then they've got some judge glaring at them, and they don't know what is going on. That's our role—providing real-world experience that augments the academic. Academics are crucial, but adjuncts can fill another role as we are actually out here practicing."

Edward Sullivan, attorney with Garvey Schubert Barer and instructor of the Land Use seminar, has a similar view of his work at Lewis & Clark. "My role at the Law School is that of somebody with experience," he says. "I teach a seminar; basically it's a moot court on how to talk to city councils and commissioners on planning matters.

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Learning from Sullivan, who is in the 2007 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America* in the area of land use and zoning law, gives students a close-up view of the techniques that work in the world.

"In my class, we're dealing with time limits, dealing with questions out of the blue, and responses," says Sullivan. These issues, according to Sullivan, are ones that attorneys must handle to navigate the hurdles of practicing land use law.

In addition to teaching from their own experiences, adjunct professors open doors that allow students to learn by doing. In Marilyn Cover's Street Law seminar, students take their legal education to high school classrooms as part of the Classroom Law Project.

"It's such a wonderful opportunity for a law student to take a break from the ivory tower and come out into the real world in a different way," says Cover, who is also the executive director of the Classroom Law Project. "Some of them take the Street Law seminar because they know they are really shy, or they know they can talk law stuff with law students or their colleagues, but they're not sure they will have the ability to communicate with nonlawyers. In teaching high school students, they have the opportunity to practice that communication skill. They work hard at unpacking the law, step by step, in ways similar to what they may later do in front a jury. I always say, 'If you can help high school students really get it, you're going to be in good shape.'"

By addressing some of the practical laws that one encounters every day, Cover's seminar, which she has been teaching at Lewis & Clark since 1979, helps make social studies more fun and interesting to high school students. It also helps the Classroom Law Project's worthy cause. "The Street Law seminar is a perfect opportunity to groom future volunteers for the Classroom Law Project," Cover says. "I completed this program when I was in law school, and it led me to an incredible career that I otherwise would never have given myself permission to go explore."

Cover is not the only adjunct professor who benefits from taking time to work with students at the Law School. Lenszer finds teaching the Criminal



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Law Clinical Internship seminar to be a good way to keep an eye on up-and-coming legal talent. “It’s a nice scouting ground for us; we see some really good people in class,” he says.

Judge Diarmuid O’Scannlain of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals teaches the Supreme Court seminar. His busy travel schedule means he has to schedule the course for Friday evenings, but he is more than happy to make time for the class.

“I love the chance to stay in touch with the academic community and law

students,” O’Scannlain says. “At the same time, the class keeps me up to speed on the current Supreme Court term’s docket. It’s really of mutual benefit, as I see it.”

Adjunct faculty members, though experts themselves, often find that teaching affords them many learning opportunities.

“I learn from the students as much as they learn from me,” says Sullivan of the Land Use seminar. “I’ve learned a lot from them about graphics. I’m from the carbon-paper age, so they’ve shown me how well a desktop computer can put together a good presentation. They think in depth, they do research that sometimes I hadn’t anticipated, and they’re a fresh pair of eyes. It makes me think deeper and in a more critical manner about what I do in my practice.”

One of the most significant benefits adjunct professors offer students is the chance to examine the realities of different kinds of legal work. By teaching specialized seminars that draw from their own experiences and by creating new opportunities for students to learn

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outside the classroom, adjunct faculty members give students insight into what it might be like to practice a certain area of law.

“I think most students who go to law school don’t know what they want to do in the long term,” Lenszer says. “It’s funny. One of the most common things we hear in interviews when we ask, ‘Why did you pick Lewis & Clark?’ is ‘Because of the environmental program.’ It’s a great program. But a lot of people get there and, for practical or personal reasons, their career goals change and they want to try something else. . . . This is a good way to find out on a basic level what they’d do on a day-to-day basis. It is a nice way to sort of kick tires and see if this is for you.”