



College of Law

# Experiential Education

## 2023-24



### Greetings from the University of Wyoming College of Law!

Construction on the Alan K. Simpson Center for Legal and Experiential Learning (shown with the UW Arena Auditorium in the background) has us looking forward to operating all the college’s clinics in the same building.

At the UW College of Law, students begin the lifelong process of serving as thoughtful, responsible, and reflective lawyers. In 2023, our ten clinic and practicum programs saw 134 students put in more than 22,000 hours, serving clients in 20 of Wyoming’s 23 counties. The 95 students in the Externship Program worked more than 13,000 hours in placements in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nebraska, California, North Carolina, New York, Louisiana, and Texas.

Since 1971, the experiential learning programs at UW Law have prepared our graduates to enter the legal profession practice ready. Wyoming’s adoption of the NextGen Bar Exam—with its greater emphasis on practical skills—starting in 2027 is expected to give our graduates an even greater advantage.



### Family & Child Legal Advocacy Clinic



With the support and direction of Faculty Director Dona Playton and Student Director Jesselyn Burroughs, students in the Family & Child Legal Advocacy Clinic have been busy negotiating and litigating family law matters around the state.

Student attorneys made several court appearances in 2023, including representing a mother in a full-day divorce and child custody trial. They also prepared a case for service in Mexico under the Hague Convention on Service Abroad and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction. As a result, the client was able to see his daughter for the first time in over two years. He sent a video of her running into his arms at the airport, demonstrating the impact the clinic can have on families.

The student attorneys also advocated for children to be appointed a direct-representation attorney under the Indian Child Welfare Act and received a court order awarding them attorney's fees in a family law case where an opposing party and the attorney refused to timely comply with discovery requests. In other cases, student attorneys advocated for clients in mediation sessions, drafted QDROs (qualified domestic relation orders), prepared and responded to discovery, received temporary restraining and support orders, negotiated resolutions in complicated relocation cases, and celebrated the finalization of a case with a client and her children at Top Golf in Denver.

## *Civil Legal Services Clinic*



*Danielle Cover (second from left), Faculty Director of the Civil Legal Services Clinic, guides students in client-centered lawyering. Under her tutelage and the guidance of Adjunct Faculty Director Toni Hartzel (fourth from left), 15 students worked on 29 cases in 2023.*

The Civil Legal Services Clinic offers learning opportunities in general practice civil litigation and trial preparation. In 2023, students engaged in all aspects of trial preparation, including settlement negotiations, mediation, motion hearings, drafting of all varieties, and two trials.

Students handled cases ranging from complex property litigation to procedural cases such as adoptions and legal name changes. They've managed actions on issues including adverse possession, ouster, partition, divorce with and without children, government takings, custody modification, termination of parental rights, conservatorship, guardianship, property transfers, disestablishment and establishment of paternity, and many others.

Students April Baker and Morgan Nance took an adverse possession and prescriptive easement case to trial in Cody in 2023, the culmination of over two years of work by clinic students. The two full days of trial led to a ruling in favor of the client on all issues. Student Director Matt Misslin concluded a year-long ouster and partition case with late-game settlement efforts and trial, the results of which the clinic currently awaits.

In June 2024, Faculty Director Danielle Cover will hit a decade of dedicated leadership, and in the fall, she will step down for a purely doctrinal legal writing track with the College of Law. Leading the clinic going forward will be new Faculty Director Caryn Schreiber. Professor Schreiber comes to Wyoming from Rutgers Law School where she led the Housing Advocacy Clinic.



## Defender Aid Clinic



Above left: Students from the Defender Aid Clinic traveled to Massachusetts to visit a client who was convicted federally and who is pursuing a federal motion for sentence reduction.

Under new Faculty Director Meredith Esser and Student Director Sarah Kelley, the Defender Aid Clinic has been focused on postconviction support in the form of state motions for sentence reduction; state parole proceedings, including medical parole; and federal compassionate release and reductions in sentence. Clinic students won an evidentiary hearing in front of the Wyoming Board of Parole and filed an extensive petition for medical parole on behalf of a client with severe untreated medical issues.

## Prosecution Assistance Program



Student Director Kaylee Sims argued in front of the Eighth Judicial District Court in Converse County. Ingrid Bent collaborated with the Wyoming Attorney General's Office to draft an appellate brief and conduct an oral argument in front of the Wyoming Supreme Court. Both received favorable opinions for the State.

Students in the Prosecution Assistance Program in 2023 logged more than 2,100 hours as they collaborated with city, county, state, and federal offices. Courtroom experience is a focal point of the Prosecution Assistance Program, and students participated in motion hearings, jury trials, and other appellate arguments. The clinic handled four Wyoming District Court briefs and two Wyoming Supreme Court briefs in 2023. Students completed appellate briefs, research memorandums, motion responses, and other writing projects. Student Director Kaylee Sims and Faculty Director Darrell Jackson worked with students to improve their writing and ensure the clinic delivered high-quality work to every client.

Students in the program improved their professional skills and developed positive relationships with prosecutors across the state, including Sweetwater, Sublette, Fremont, Johnson, Natrona, Big Horn, Albany, and Laramie counties. Meeting with the attorneys who lectured during class allowed students to receive additional training and build their legal networks.

## *Energy, Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic*



*Clinic students met with Gov. Mark Gordon after they represented the State of Wyoming in hearings before the Wyoming Oil & Gas Conservation Commission and Industrial Siting Council.*

The EENR Law Clinic with Kipp Coddington as faculty director relaunched in 2023, continuing the collaboration between the College of Law and the Wyoming Attorney General's Office. Through classroom work, skill-building simulations, and supervised legal work in the Water and Natural Resources Division of the Wyoming Attorney General's Office, third-year law students prepared for the practice of energy, environmental, and natural resources law in the public or private sector.

## *International Human Rights Clinic*



*The International Human Rights Clinic traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with a range of officials, including Senator John Barrasso (center) and his staff. Professor Jerry Fowler (left) is faculty director.*

Students in the International Human Rights Clinic conducted research for a report tentatively titled, "Preserving Our Values, Protecting the Border: Asylum in an Age of Mass Migration." The report will make policy recommendations aimed at preserving access to asylum for people who are fleeing persecution while discouraging people without valid claims from arriving at the country's southern border without authorization to enter.



## Business Planning Practicum



Under the direction of Faculty Supervisor George Mocsary and Student Director Michael Partrick, students in the 2024 Business Planning Practicum learn to serve clients and develop sound business plans with the proper legal entity formation, such as profit corporations, nonprofit corporations, and LLCs. Students form the entities through the Wyoming Secretary of State's website, acquire EIN numbers from the IRS, and draft the necessary documentation. They tailor the documentation to each client's goals and conduct research to assist with legal questions or issues.

As Wyoming is a national leader in blockchain law, the practicum emphasizes blockchain technology, cryptocurrency, and the relevant law. Joining Professor Mocsary in teaching the course is Professor Del Wright, a leading blockchain and cryptocurrency scholar and author of *A Short & Happy Guide to Bitcoin, Blockchain, and Crypto*. He provides a thorough breakdown of the technologies and shares perspectives on how they're affected by new Wyoming laws.

## Estate Planning Practicum



Under the leadership of Faculty Supervisor Mario Rampulla and Student Director Carly Mansker, students in the Estate Planning Practicum provide estate planning work, including wills, advanced health care directives, and durable powers of attorney, along with substitute estate planning techniques such as transfer on death deeds. The practicum also handles estate administrative work, such as affidavits of survivorship and summary probate cases.

The practicum's first full probate, an exciting opportunity for students, was concluded in 2022. Since then, the practicum has taken complex cases, including other full probate matters, estate administration involving oil and gas rights, and navigating estate administration to beneficiaries receiving means tested

benefits. This new work has served as a building block for students to do more complex estate administration work in the future.

The practicum has developed standard probate and summary distribution forms, which students have tested and reviewed. Through collaboration with Access to Justice, the practicum hopes to see the forms implemented statewide, thereby increasing access to estate administration services for Wyomingites.

## *Legislation Practicum*



The College of Law added the Legislation Practicum, led by attorneys from the Wyoming Legislative Service Office, in 2023. Students learned to draft bills, conduct administrative rule reviews, and address legal issues within the legislature. Two students presented their drafts to committees. Connor Rhyne presented a bill draft on open banking amendments to the Select Committee on Blockchain, Financial Technology, and Digital Innovation Technology. Katherine Kleve presented a bill on fuel tax information deadlines to the Joint Transportation, Highways, and Military Affairs Interim Committee.

## *Local Government Assistance Practicum*

Students in the Local Government Practicum explored how local governments—cities and counties—operate within a state and federal framework. With guidance from practicing attorney mentors and Professor Sharon Buccino, students in 2023 addressed issues related to the scope of local authority, regulation of conduct, provision of services, and generation of revenue. They completed work for the City of Laramie, City of Gillette, Albany County, Natrona County, South Ogden City (Utah), the Colorado Municipal League, and the Wyoming Grant Services Coalition.

## *Law Externships*

Through the Externship Program students gain practical legal experience and earn course credit at the same time. Currently, the program offers more than [100 external field placements](#), both regionally and nationally. Through the dedicated support and mentorship of field placement supervisors, students learn in dynamic and varied legal positions, including criminal and civil litigation, judge's chambers, patent, employment, and health law. This spring, we welcomed Kipp Coddington as the program's new faculty director, and he is enthusiastic to continue to develop the course and expand on its placement choices.



## International Internships



Jacob Lirio (above) and Gaige Graham, both 2Ls, received support from the Bernstein International Human Rights Summer Internship Program in 2023. In Taiwan, Jacob worked at the intersection of human rights and environmental issues and conducted comparative legal research on legal standing for the protection of Taiwanese white dolphins. Gaige interned in Cape Town, South Africa, with the Refugee Legal Advocacy Center. The organization helps refugees start the asylum process, get their status approved, and file appeals. Three students will have international internships in 2024.

## What Students Say



**Hannah Clancy**

"The Civil Clinic was constantly a topic of discussion in my post-graduate interviews. The ability to tell a potential employer that I have multiple clients with a multitude of needs, and that I was able to see cases through to completion set me apart from other applicants."



**Jacob Lirio**

"My experience in Taiwan was exciting and transformative, providing me with invaluable insights and exposure. Above all, it helped me envision the kind of lawyer I want to become."



**Heather Bradford**

"The Estate Planning Practicum was a welcoming, warm environment, and Mario taught so many skills. I was able to draft wills and trusts and help with probate administration. I worked with clients I will always remember."



**Caitlyn Tucker**

"The Family and Child Legal Advocacy Clinic and Prof. Dona Playton help students understand how dynamics of families, child advocacy, and domestic violence intersect with the law. I recommend the clinic to anyone who wants to gain the advocacy skills to be successful in the practice of law."



## Student Competitions



Hailey Morton and Mary Bennett (above) represented UW at the ABA Regional Negotiation Competition in New York City this year, giving the College of Law a third-place finish among schools. UW offers five law competitions, providing opportunities to develop skills and earn recognition for individual and team excellence. Most are student-run.

## Summer Trial Institute



Summer Trial Institute provides rigorous courtroom training with experienced legal practitioners. “It’s a unique, on-your-feet experience,” says 2023 Director Shawna Geiger. “Students are introduced to future mentors and employers while showing all they’ve learned during these intense two weeks.”

## Wyoming Law Review





In January 2023 *Wyoming Law Review* Editor-in-Chief Hannah Mink (right), and Article Editors Jenna VonHofe and Logan Armstrong traveled to the Atacama Desert of Chile to prepare for a [special issue](#) on the conflict over the waters of the Silala River (Río Silala). In November, Dr. Ximena Fuentes, Associate Professor of Public International Law at the University of Chile, traveled from Santiago to give the keynote address at a College of Law event on the International Court of Justice's *Chile v. Bolivia* transboundary river case. Hannah moderated the Zoom discussion with contributing authors from around the globe. The event was sponsored by the UW College of Law International Human Rights Law and Advocacy Center and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.



The current issue of *Wyoming Law Review* is available [here](#). The editorial board (above) is partnering with the Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law to publish a special issue on carbon capture, utilization, and storage, which will be published in early summer. James Bell (left) is editor-in-chief.



We expect to be moved into the new Alan K. Simpson Center for Legal and Experiential Learning by fall. Visit us at <https://www.uwyo.edu/law/index.html> and follow us on social media to keep up with College of Law news and updates.

