

PRO BONO STUDENTS CANADA COMBINE BUSINESS AND LEGAL EXPERTISE

Local non-profit organizations can benefit from a one-two punch provided by law and business students at The University of Western Ontario.

The PINSS Project (Pro Bono/Ivey NPO Support Services) was launched in 2009 and offers free consulting for organizations that are faced with issues that have both legal and strategic elements. PINSS is a partnership between Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) at Western Law and Ivey Connects, a student-run group at The Richard Ivey School of Business. A lawyer-mentor from PBSC and a faculty member from the Ivey Business School supervise the students.

“Many issues faced by non-profit organizations are complex and involve strategic and legal challenges,” says Sahil Zaman, Coordinator of Pro Bono Students Canada at Western Law. “By combining our expertise, we are able to offer a unique

HELPING HANDS

LAW STUDENTS SERVE THE COMMUNITY AND GAIN
VALUABLE EXPERIENCE THROUGH CLINICAL EDUCATION



(l-r) Caitlin Reid, Family Law Project Coordinator, Teri Muszak, PBSC Assistant Coordinator and Sahil Zaman, PBSC Coordinator

service that serves the practical needs of these organizations.”

In 2009-2010, PINSS students helped two organizations expand their reach. The Great Lakes Blues Society (GLBS) and Conservatory Canada.

GLBS wanted to bolster its financial position to better serve its mandates of promoting blues music in elementary schools and blues music shows in London. PINSS students informed GLBS of the possible implications of incorporation, pursuing charitable status, and possible ways of increasing membership as well as non-dues income. The society was impressed with the depth and quality of both the legal and management report.

The students assisted Conservatory Canada with their plans to expand their music training programs to other jurisdictions. The situation was rife with legal and strategic issues, but the students were up to the complex task. “The experience was 100% positive for our organization,” said Victoria Warwick, Conservatory Canada’s Executive Director. “The students from both the business and legal side were insightful, providing useful information that was delivered with professionalism. Our Board of Directors was impressed with how quickly they ‘got it!’”

THE SPORT SOLUTION CLINIC ON THE FRONT LINES OF ADVOCACY

The Sport Solution is a free legal service offered by AthletesCAN and Western Law to Canadian national team members. Run by Western Law students and program managers Dan Strickland and Jonathon Barnett, it is the only program of its kind in North America

Established in 1992, AthletesCAN is the collective voice of Canada's national team athletes. The organization was founded to fight for athletes' rights at a time when athletes did not have a say in important decisions that affected them.

"While advocacy continues to be a mainstay, the organization has expanded its scope of services to provide leadership training opportunities and support services for athletes. It is designed to build future leaders, offset the cost of living and enable athletes to focus full time on their sport," says Andrew Nisker '07, President of AthletesCAN.



Daniel Strickland and Jon Barnett of The Sport Solution Clinic

"The Sport Solution program is on the front line of our advocacy work for athletes and remains one of our core services in our quest to ensure a fair and equitable sport system and build a stronger sport culture in Canada," he adds.

The program helps athletes understand the legal aspects of sport. "Amateur sports are becoming more and more commercialized. Athletes are required to sign 80-90 page athlete agreements which cover everything from training requirements to the use of the athlete's image," says Strickland. "We help athletes understand these contracts and ensure they don't sign anything they shouldn't." The program also helps athletes understand funding and discipline issues, anti-doping rules and the appeal process.

"It's a really rewarding experience," says Barnett. "I am very grateful to have the opportunity to do what we do here at the clinic."

WESTERN BUSINESS LAW CLINIC HELPS LAUNCH DREAMS

For Chris Hanz and George Klein, the recession could not have come at a better time. The two entrepreneurs launched their renewable oil company, Orontas, in March 2009, just as global markets bottomed out. What appeared to be a dire situation turned into a great opportunity, as Orontas began introducing environmentally friendly oil products to businesses that were in the midst of re-thinking their models.

"The only reason Orontas exists is because of the recession," says Klein, a 1996 Western Philosophy graduate.

The recession did not clear the many other obstacles facing a new company - notably steep legal bills. "When you look at our business plan or our strategy, the major barrier to entry is legal costs," says Klein.

That is where the Western Business Law Clinic stepped in. Staffed by law students, the clinic offers affordable legal services



John Mather, Eva Zucker and Ron Fichter of Western's Business Law Clinic

to new and small businesses in Ontario, including Orontas. The Clinic's Director is Richard McLaren, a law professor with extensive practical experience as a commercial lawyer.

"The Clinic gives students what they crave - practical experience," says John Mather, one of the clinic's 2010-11 student directors. "In return, small businesses receive valuable legal assistance that would otherwise cost them thousands of dollars."

Local lawyers generously mentor the Clinic's students throughout the year, allowing the Clinic to offer the best possible services, from incorporations to contracts to liability assessments.

That service, Hanz says, is impressive. "As a start-up we received much more enthusiasm and attention to detail from the Clinic than we had experienced with traditional law firms."

Other clients share the sentiment. "The quality of work that I get back is superb," says Bryan Getchell, who provides socio-demographic research with his firm Transformit Inc. "There is always a need for the community to provide start-up resources. The Clinic does that."

Mather says he and co-director Gordon Cassie hope to expand this role. "We are here to help businesses that cannot afford big legal bills but are driven to be productive members of the local business community."

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES CONTINUES TO GROW

As Community Legal Services (CLS) celebrates its 40th year, it is pushing forward into new areas of law.

Intellectual property law has been added as a pilot project in addition to the existing areas of law, which include Criminal, Landlord and tenant, Small Claims Court and consumer law, Wills and powers of attorney, Mediations, Academic appeals, Immigration (students only) and Public legal education.

The intellectual property project is part of a research grant obtained by Professors Margaret Ann Wilkinson and Mark Perry. Guidance and advice are being offered to clients by students under the supervision of CLS Director Doug Ferguson.

Jason Voss has earned the respect of the bench and bar with the high quality of work performed by CLS students. CLS has brought several Charter challenges, and is taking an increasing number of appeals to the Superior Court.



CLS Director Doug Ferguson speaks with students Ahmed Farahat and Nicole Stoner

Margaret Capes has done outstanding work in landlord and tenant law and public legal education. CLS has one of the largest public legal education programs in Canada thanks to her efforts.

Sue Latta has quickly established a busy immigration practice for graduate students and post-docs seeking permanent residence or skilled employee status.

Deanna Harris just finished a term as the first articling student in CLS and with her call to the bar is handling mainly criminal cases.

The CLS team set a goal of becoming the best student legal clinic in Canada. It just might have made it.

The Faculty of Law at The University of Western Ontario is hosting the Canadian Clinical Legal Education Conference (CCLEC) at Western Law on October 22-23. Please join us as we debate the future of legal education in Canada. For more information visit www.law.uwo.ca/conferences/CanadianLegalEd

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTRE IMPLEMENTS INAUGURAL PROGRAM

The Dispute Resolution Centre (DRC) at Western Law enjoyed tremendous growth in the 2009-2010 academic year.

The DRC designed and implemented its inaugural Certificate Program in Community Mediation. In September eight students from Western Law were selected as Student Interns at the DRC. The Interns participated in weekly community-based mediation training sessions consisting of mock mediations, with supervisory feedback provided at the end of each session. In addition to this hands-on experience, each intern was responsible for running a community file. These files included providing seminars in alternative dispute resolution for students on campus and assisting troubled youth to communicate more effectively with those around them. Interns were responsible for conducting intake phone calls and for setting up live mediations as requested by citizens from the community.



Law student Jaime Bell (right) of the Dispute Resolution Centre

The DRC also designed and implemented its first weekend training course in community-based mediation. This one-day intensive training seminar allowed students from the faculty of law to learn the fundamental skills and basics of conducting an interest-based mediation. The course was taught by the Student Coordinators and Interns at the DRC, and the students responded extremely well to this peer-to-peer learning environment.

Alternative Dispute Resolution is becoming an undeniable reality in the litigation process. Community Legal Services and the Dispute Resolution Centre provide opportunities for students to become comfortable with the skills necessary for new lawyers to respond to this new reality. [wl](#)