MEET ADJUNCT CLINICAL PROFESSOR RICHARD DVORAK WHO TEACHES THE PRISONERS’ RIGHTS PROJECT

ADJUNCT PROF. RICHARD DVORAK

Richard Dvorak teaches the Prisoners’ Rights Project. He maintains a full-time practice concentrating in civil-rights and criminal defense litigation. Mr. Dvorak has almost 20 years of experience in the field of civil rights, criminal defense and appellate advocacy. He has extensive experience in Section 1983 civil rights litigation on behalf of prisoners and detainees in prisons and jails. Mr. Dvorak obtained a $4.75 million settlement on behalf of an injured detainee at the Cook County Jail, and has obtained several six-figure settlements and verdicts against the Cook County Jail, IDOC, and other jails and prisons. He has also been the class representative in class actions on behalf of prisoners and detainees seeking to improve their conditions of confinement. As an appellate advocate, Mr. Dvorak has obtained victories in every Appellate Court in Illinois, the Illinois Supreme Court, and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mr. Dvorak is a member of the Illinois Bar, the Northern District of Illinois, Central District of Illinois, Southern District of Illinois, Eastern District of Wisconsin, Northern District of Indiana, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court.

NEWS FLASH! ASSOCIATE CLINICAL PROFESSOR WENDY VAUGHN VOTED BY THE FACULTY TO BE PROMOTED TO CLINICAL PROFESSOR AND HAVE A SIX-YEAR CONTRACT RENEWED! CONGRATULATIONS TO PROF. VAUGHN!
CIVIL JUSTICE CLINIC (ROCKFORD)

I am extremely proud of the students in the Civil Justice Clinic this semester. They have been burning the midnight oil and going above and beyond the call of duty to provide representation of the highest quality to their clients. Many of the Civil Justice Clinic students are still hard at work during the winter break representing their clients at hearings and trials scheduled in December.

Carlos Arteaga and Kaitlyn Linsner have worked together to protect their client and her child from abuse by conducting an order of protection trial in juvenile court that has included drafting and arguing pre-trial motions and engaging in extensive witness preparation. Kaitlyn and Carlos have conducted several days of trial, which has included the direct examination of a police officer, a therapist, and a child advocacy center’s forensic interviewer. Carlos and Kaitlyn each represent an elderly client for whom they are drafting wills and powers of attorney.

Cassandra Crandall and Megan Rooney have met their clients’ goals in two domestic violence order of protection cases. They amended pleadings and drafted motions in each case, conducted fact investigation, and prepared for trial. They obtained a two-year order of protection in one case and negotiated with opposing counsel to get a comprehensive settlement and agreed order that included protections for their client and her children’s safety, as well as possession of the marital residence, financial support, and a supervised parenting time schedule. Cassandra and Megan are also representing two seniors by drafting their estate planning documents, including a life estate provision.

Megan Rooney and Mitchell Hixenbaugh have made multiple appearances in court and started a trial to extend their client’s order of protection. Megan and Mitch drafted and argued a pre-trial motion requesting the appointment of legal counsel for a minor child and have conducted the direct examination of two witnesses. This trial will resume later in December. Mitch has provided counsel and advice to his elderly client about her estate planning needs.

Lu Harmening has represented two clients with complex estate planning needs. Lu has researched and drafted provisions related to testamentary trusts and the rule against perpetuities (it is really a thing!). Lu has advised her clients of their options and finalized her clients’ wills and advance directives.

Tia McMeans and Vaughn Richardson have represented a survivor of domestic violence in an order of protection matter that is still pending trial in December. Tia and Vaughn amended pleadings, negotiated with the opposing party on multiple occasions, researched parentage and the legal requirements for requesting that a Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity be vacated, engaged in fact investigation, and prepared for trial. Tia and Vaughn have engaged in a joint representation with an elderly couple, provided advice and counsel to their clients regarding the risks of joint representation, drafted a notice acknowledgment of these risks, and drafted their clients’ wills and power of attorney documents. Vaughn is continuing to provide advice and counsel to her client who is experiencing domestic violence about resources in the community and to facilitate her reporting of a number of potential crimes to law enforcement.

Thank you, Civil Justice Clinic students! It has been a pleasure working with you!

HEALTH ADVOCACY CLINIC (AURORA)

It has been a busy and productive semester in the Health Advocacy Clinic. 3Ls Kate McIlvanie and Emily Rosenberger have been working hard to prepare for an upcoming administrative law hearing that is occurring on December 2. Their client, who suffers from various conditions impacting her spine as well as arms/hands/fingers, is appealing the denial of her Social Security disability benefits. Emily and Kate reviewed medical records, interviewed the client’s son and physician, drafted a pre-hearing memorandum and are finalizing an opening statement, direct examination of the client and cross-examination of the vocational expert for the hearing. 3Ls Jared Krueger, Adam Wood, Jennifer Valencia-Salas and Jill Lackore have been interviewing clients, ordering and charting medical records and analyzing legal theories in Social Security disability cases. 3Ls Seth Koll and Jessica Johnson hosted a Power of Attorney Day at Hesed House’s Harbor Program. They assisted chronically-homeless residents with completing POAs for Health Care and sharing information about the clinic.
CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC (ROCKFORD)

The Criminal Defense Clinic’s four students (Spencer Chikahisa, Lauren Edmunds, Robert Perrone, Laura Peters) have represented thirteen clients this semester. Students have engaged in fact investigation, issue spotting, legal analysis and legal research. They have developed defense strategies and prepared motions for discovery and bond reduction. In addition, each student has appeared in bond court to argue for a reduced cash bond or recognizance bond. They have interviewed their clients and witnesses. The students have engaged in plea negotiations with the State’s attorney. For one client, the negotiation resulted in a disposition that will avoid a felony conviction and have the case dismissed if they successfully complete their special probation. One of our adult clients for whom we filed a petition to be removed from the sex offender registry for an offense as a juvenile has an evidentiary hearing scheduled in December. The students will be preparing their opening statement and closing argument as well as preparing for the direct examination of their client and witnesses. Another client has a case that currently appears to be headed for a jury trial. If so, the students will prepare for and conduct the jury trial from opening statement through closing argument, any pre-trial motions and jury instructions.

PRISONERS’ RIGHTS PROJECT (DEKALB)

The Prisoner’s Rights Project’s four students have begun the process of trying to get their two federal civil rights cases ready for trial in the Spring semester. The students have interviewed their clients, sent out and answered discovery, and begun the process of preparing depositions of the prison guards. They are hoping to have federal jury trials in the Spring semester.

The cases include a claim of excessive force case against a prison guard for slamming the client up against a wall, causing severe back injury to the client. The other case is a claim of deliberate indifference case against that same prison guard (different plaintiff/client) for failing to intervene to prevent one inmate from beating another inmate, even though the guard was told ahead of time by the prisoner about the pending beating.

CLINICAL PROGRAM FACULTY

Professor Paul J. Cain  
Clinical Professor and Interim Clinic Director  
Director, Criminal Defense Clinic  
Zeke Giorgi Legal Clinic - Rockford

Professor Colleen Boraca  
Clinical Associate Professor  
Director, Health Advocacy Clinic  
Hesed House – Aurora

Professor Wendy Hinton Vaughn  
Clinical Associate Professor  
Director, Civil Justice Clinic  
Zeke Giorgi Legal Clinic - Rockford