

Teaching Excellence at Yale

Experiential learning in law clinics fosters critical and social thinking.

Muneer Ahmad, Deputy Dean for Experiential Education, Clinical Professor of Law, and Director, Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization, champions the immersive role that clinics play in legal education. Ahmad describes how clinics immerse students in field-based activities that “develop their critical thinking skills and critical lenses,” prompting students to integrate knowledge with practice through real-time events.

While clinics are typically positioned as capstones to programs, Ahmad praises how Yale Law School (YLS) “integrates clinical education with students’ classroom learning.” By weaving field experiences alongside classroom knowledge, YLS can “invest lots of resources over time at a slower pace.” As Ahmad observes, interacting with individual and organizational clients, community advocates, and other practitioners familiarizes students with “the social and relational aspects of lawyering” as well, linking their knowledge with human engagement.

In January 2017, [Ahmad and his colleagues, Michael Wishnie and Marisol Orihuela, led a Yale Law clinic in the first lawsuit against the first Muslim Ban executive order](#). While much of the experience



occurred outside of class, the joint action allowed students to gain a variety of field skills while using class to develop and reflect on their core legal knowledge and monitor national events throughout their curriculum. Ahmad and his colleagues in the Worker & Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic have built “a curriculum around clients that integrates substantive knowledge, skills, and ethical roles as students develop their professional identity.”

Research confirms that successive experiential opportunities can benefit student learning. By integrating fieldwork throughout the program, YLS gives students numerous opportunities to understand the value and application of their learning in real time, with relevant scenarios. Later in 2017,



Teaching Excellence at Yale

Continued from Page 1:

Ahmad's clinic also challenged revisions to DACA. Ahmad explains, "We gave students an extraordinary lawyering opportunity on the front lines, working on one of the most significant issues of our time."

Research and resources exploring the impact of the impact of clinical and experiential learning:

Carolyn Grose, Director of Skills Integration and Professor of Law at Mitchell Hamline School of Law, discusses the theory and practice of modern clinical pedagogy, and places clinical pedagogy in the context of the law school curriculum. [Read "Beyond Skills Training, Revisited: The Clinical Education Spiral," in the journal *Clinical Law Review*.](#)

Jeffrey Scott Coker, Dean of Westminster College and Professor of Biology, et. al. discuss the impact of experiential learning breadth and depth on graduating seniors, arguing for the value of both in experiential curricula. [Read "Impacts of Experiential Learning Depth and Breadth on Student Outcomes" in the *Journal of Experiential Education*.](#)

Yale's Center for Teaching and Learning offers [a web-based resource on experiential learning](#) that explores theory and research, examples, and pedagogical recommendations.

Share with us or a colleague:

View this edition of Teaching Excellence at Yale on the CTL website:

<http://ctl.yale.edu/TeachingExcellence>

Send us your feedback and suggestions by emailing: dpctl@yale.edu

Follow us on Twitter or Instagram: [@YaleCTL](#)

To opt-out of the email version of this newsletter, please visit Yale's messaging service website < <http://messages.yale.edu/subscribe/> >