

AALS 2021 Conference on Clinical Education

Students as Clients: Reflections on Models of University-Based Legal Services Wednesday, April 28, 12:30-1:15pm EST

For the narratives below, please consider the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of university-based legal services for: the (1) student-client, (2) clinical law student, (3) clinic, and (4) university
2. What are the challenges of university-based legal services for the (1) student-client, (2) clinical law student, (3) clinic, and (4) university

NARRATIVE 1:

Jonas is a second year law student who has been accepted into a study abroad program. As a DACA recipient, Jonas must apply for an Advance Parole document before traveling abroad. Because Jonas is a type A student, he is stressed that he can't plan ahead for his 3L fall semester. Jonas learns about the school's Immigration Clinic through the school's Diversity and Inclusion social media post.

After searching the Clinic website to find out if services are free, Jonas contacts the clinic to make an appointment. He is asked if he would prefer to meet with a staff attorney or a student attorney for his consultation. Jonas says that it doesn't matter to him. Two days later, Jonas walks across campus to his first legal consultation. As Jonas walks to his appointment, he is relieved to know that he is a step closer to understanding his options for the fall semester.

Jonas is greeted by Marcia, who introduces herself as a student attorney. After the introduction and initial screening, Jonas asks several questions which Marcia does not yet know how to answer. Jonas offers to start researching the legal issues. As part of their wrap-up, Jonas shares that he has several friends who are in the clinic program this year and wants to know if they will have access to his case file. Marcia says that she will discuss the intake and his concerns with her supervising attorney and get back to Jonas. The next day Jonas emails some links he found online to Marcia and copies her supervising attorney.

NARRATIVE 2:

Miriam, a senior economics major, has come to the Community Enterprise Clinic for help with turning a university student group into a standalone 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The matter has been assigned to Eva and Matt, both second year law students. Eva and Matt met with Miriam this week to discuss progress on the governance documents.

Eva: "Hi Miriam, it's good to see you again. How was your weekend?"

Miriam: "It was great! I hung out Friday night at Varsity Bar with my friends and then hit up a party."

Matt: "I love that bar. They have the best DJ."

Eva: "Totally. I actually think I may have seen you at that party. Was it the one on Maple Street?"

Miriam: "Yes! I thought I saw you from across the room but I wasn't sure it was you."

The next week, Eva and Matt presented an issue with Miriam during seminar case rounds. While they personally liked Miriam, she had not been the easiest client. She rarely responded to emails, claiming that she does not check her email all that often. She was often late to meetings, and cancelled once just five minutes before the meeting was supposed to start. She apologetically let them know that she had pulled an all nighter for an exam, and was too exhausted to meet. The clinic supervisor took notes on the whiteboard while the clinic students came up with solutions.

Overall, the work for Miriam's nonprofit was a good learning experience for Eva and Matt. They felt like they were able to help their client legally and with matters outside of the law. They introduced Miriam to their contacts at the School of Accounting's student tax clinic for help with tax filings and at the Graduate School of Design's *pro bono* program that helps student enterprises with their branding.

They did have one legal issue that caused them to involve their supervisor. Miriam wanted to transfer the funds held in the university student group's account to the new nonprofit organization. There was some onerous red tape related to university financial policies that Miriam needed help navigating. She wanted Eva and Matt to help her transfer the money while avoiding the bureaucracy. Matt and Eva were not sure how to help her, so they turned to their supervisor for help.