



2020

## Clinical Legal Education on the Ground: A Conversation

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### Citation Information

Buhler, Sarah; Johnson, Chantelle; Blenkinsop, Nicholas; Jensen, Leif; and Pidskalny, Kim. "Clinical Legal Education on the Ground: A Conversation." *Journal of Law and Social Policy* 32. (2020): 127-137. <https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/jlsp/vol32/iss1/8>

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## Clinical Legal Education on the Ground: A Conversation

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BLENKINSOP, LEIF JENSEN & KIM PIDSKALNY

COMMUNITY LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES FOR SASKATOON INNER CITY (CLASSIC) is a community-based legal clinic in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. CLASSIC, which was established in 2007 through the work of a small group of law students, hosts the University of Saskatchewan College of Law's Intensive Clinical Law program, providing full-time clinical placements to approximately ten upper-year law students each term in its Walk-In Advocacy Clinic program. Clinical students obtain a full semester's worth of academic credits: they work at CLASSIC Monday to Thursday each week and attend an academic clinical seminar on Friday mornings. The clinical program runs throughout the year in three terms: fall, winter, and summer. CLASSIC also provides multiple pro bono placements for law students who want to volunteer. CLASSIC is structured as a not-for-profit organization with a community board. Funding has been an ongoing struggle: the clinic receives no legal aid funding and is funded through a wide (and tenuous) set of grants from organizations including the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan, the provincial Ministry of Justice, and the College of Law. CLASSIC's mission is to work "toward social justice with low-income, marginalized Saskatchewan residents, with a commitment to Indigenous peoples, through a legal clinic that is guided by the needs of the community. This engages law and interdisciplinary students through experiential learning, providing insights into the cultural and social reality of law and fosters an ethic of social justice."<sup>1</sup> CLASSIC has served well over ten thousand clients in the areas of housing law, immigration and refugee law, prison law, criminal law, human rights law, and many more areas. In the fall of 2018, Clinical Law professor Sarah Buhler sat down with four CLASSIC staff members (Executive Director Chantelle Johnson, Supervising Lawyers Nicholas Blenkinsop and Leif Jensen, and Legal Assistant Kim Pidskalny) to discuss their perspectives on issues relating to the challenges and rewards of clinical legal education. The conversation (edited for length and clarity) is reproduced here.

**Sarah:** *Thanks everyone for agreeing to participate in this conversation about clinical legal education from the perspective of supervising lawyers, frontline administrative staff and clinic leadership. First, I ask each person to introduce themselves and their connections to clinical legal education and CLASSIC.*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): My name is Chantelle Johnson. I'm the Executive Director at CLASSIC, and have been so for about six years.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): My name is Leif Jensen. I've had a number of different roles at CLASSIC. While I was a law student I was a student in the intensive program, and then a student manager. After graduating, I was on the CLASSIC board and participated in CLASSIC's Legal

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<sup>1</sup> See "Classic Law," online: <classiclaw.ca/> [perma.cc/T6VD-THVF].

Advice Clinic,<sup>2</sup> giving half-hour advice to clients. Currently, I am one of the supervising lawyers here, and have been in this role for about a year.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): My name is Nicholas Blenkinsop. I'm one of the supervising lawyers. I didn't really become involved in clinical legal education until I started working at CLASSIC, although I did have a background as an outdoor experiential educator before going to law school, so there is a connection there to experiential education.

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): My name is Kim Pidskalny. I'm the legal assistant here, and I've been with CLASSIC for about five years.

**Sarah:** *What are your motivations for being involved in clinical legal education?*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Honestly, my motivation for being involved in clinical legal education was secondary to my motivation to do something with respect to social justice, particularly because we live in Saskatchewan where access to justice or social justice issues have always been—there's been quite a gap. So, I stumbled into clinical legal education as a result of applying for cause-related work.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I'd agree that the cause-related work in CLASSIC's mandate is probably the number one reason. But as someone who benefited immensely from the clinical experience, I also wanted to be on the other side of it.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I'd echo what Chantelle and Leif said. I came to CLASSIC for the purpose of doing the work that CLASSIC does.

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): I kind of just stumbled into CLASSIC with no legal background—I just needed a job. But, it's kind of stuck with me!

**Sarah:** *So, it seems like most of you don't have "clinical legal educator" as your primary identity here. Is that fair? How do you think about your identities as educators? Because educating students is part of CLASSIC's mandate.<sup>3</sup> Everyone spoke about a primary identity being a social justice lawyer, or working for social justice.*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): When we think about it, of course we're educators and it takes up a lot of our time and we take it very seriously. I wonder sometimes if the fact that we don't initially identify with that is because we're not really respected for it, and we're not really noticed for it, and it sometimes feels like it's taken for granted in that people assume that when students come to us they're just natural capacity builders, without actually acknowledging all the work that we do to ensure that their experiential education here is actually really grounded in pedagogy and substance and community justice principles.

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<sup>2</sup> The Legal Advice Clinic, one of CLASSIC's programs, is a summary legal advice clinic where volunteer lawyers provide half-hour summary advice in family law and indictable criminal law matters (these are areas heard at the Court of Queen's Bench in Saskatchewan where clinical students cannot appear).

<sup>3</sup> *Supra* note 1.

**Sarah:** *When you're talking about being recognized, are you talking about the law school or is it students who are not really recognizing that? Where is the lack of recognition?*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): I think the students absolutely recognize it. I think it's the rest of the communities that we deal with, specifically the law school and the major funders that we deal with. The focus seems to always be on the access to justice part of our mandate.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I think some of it might also just be how education more generally is treated. That whole piece about teaching is just assumed. In other words, it is often assumed that if you have knowledge, you also know how to transfer it. Which is obviously wrong, but shows that the knowledge of how to transfer information isn't valued in the same way that a law degree is. So, I think there's just a natural inclination towards focusing on the legal side of it.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I would say that when I came here not a lot of time was spent determining whether or not I was going to be a good educator: people were wondering what my legal skills were. The idea flows from the way that the practical aspect of law has been taught, which is: take individuals, have them go to law school, give them some abstract education, and then plunk them down in a work space, and they will learn how to practice law. I tend to think that that's misguided, particularly given experiential education theories. But if the number of credits that the two supervising lawyers are involved in teaching were to be compared to the number of credits that a professor at the university was involved in teaching, our course load would actually be higher than most of the professors at the university. But, we aren't professors at the university, and we aren't really considered externally as being teachers. We're considered to be lawyers.

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): I think that some students come here with the idea that they will contribute a lot to the work that the lawyers do here, but in reality—this is from an assistant perspective—I've seen the extra work that the lawyers have to put into supervising the students that come through here, and the weekend hours, and after the 9–5 hours, that go into just reading over what the students have done.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Every transfer period between semesters Kim clocks about a week's worth of overtime, right? And that's all that stuff that—when I say that's unappreciated or not recognized—like nobody really considers that.

**Sarah:** *Absolutely. This speaks to the often unacknowledged labour of this work of educating students. The next question has to do with the clinical legal education model, and comparing it to the pro bono, or volunteer model. CLASSIC has a history of trying to balance an intensive clinical program along with also hosting pro bono law students.*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Yeah, we've always had a bit of a philosophical divide between the students who come through the intensive clinical program and get a full-blown two-week orientation that's based on, not only lawyering, but community lawyering, and trauma-informed lawyering, and non-judgmental practice, and being really part of this community that we serve, versus volunteers who come in from more of a “oh, we're here to help you,” instead of “we're here to learn.” That is why we are going to trial-run not taking pro bono student volunteers, or not as

many for our walk-in advocacy program. We will focus on having pro bono students helping with other projects.

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): I think also with the type of files we take on now, it doesn't make sense for us to take on so many volunteers. Many of our clients are quite transient, and it's hard for our clients to contact us if the student is only here to volunteer for three hours a week. And then those files end up not moving forward because we either lose contact or are not able to find our client.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): Thinking about clinical legal education versus pro bono, it seems to me that the clinical law students—because they know they're being evaluated—are more committed than the volunteers are. I think that it's easier for volunteers to feel as though they're here doing us a service, and then they can just “peace out” rather than recognize what they are getting in return. That said, clearly we've had excellent volunteers, and I would tend to say that some of the best students we've had were ones that have come in as volunteers initially. The clinical legal education model that we have at CLASSIC includes a seminar, which is taught through the College of Law, which works to posit legal education in context. And, I think that that's incredibly valuable because of the richness of discussion. I think that there's a different complexity to a theory that gets discussed in those kinds of situations, and allows a different engagement with the files and the clients than happens in the volunteer-type setting.

**Sarah**: *So, you do see a difference in the quality of commitment, and sometimes in the quality of work, or the nuance that students are able to put into their work?*

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I would say that the work that is done by clinical students is, on average, higher, both in terms of their willingness to go an extra distance for their files, but also the fact they get more experience and therefore have more facility and know how to deal with matters at a much higher level by the time they're finished.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): The fact that the clinical students are here full-time with us and participate in reflective practice is a huge difference between the volunteers who sometimes believe they can go to CLASSIC and get lawyering skills to put on a resume.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): It also seems like even with the students who are all good and have equivalent levels of potential, it's just a better experience for the students to do the intensive clinical program than to volunteer.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): Another difference between the volunteer experience and the clinical legal education experience is that community builds up amongst the students, which generates self-reflection amongst the group, and the opportunity for them to ask questions of each other and reflect on each other's experiences. So, the students are required to reflect upon their files, and upon the readings that they're doing for the seminar, for the purposes of spending some time thinking about law and the practice of law. And so, that's a much richer experience. And while I don't think that the seminar part necessarily makes the person a better lawyer in terms of being able to write a better legal letter or do better legal research, I think it makes them a better lawyer by making them more humble and more compassionate.

**Sarah:** *You are actually answering the next question already, which is about the impact of the clinical legal education on students from your perspective.*

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): I have noticed that our volunteer lawyers who are alumni of CLASSIC treat clients differently, and I agree with Nicholas that the clinical experience does make them better lawyers, in terms of how they deliver the advice, and how respectful they are to our clients.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Even how they treat legal assistants!

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): Yes!

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I think from an education point of view it's just night and day. I was talking to someone recently who's doing a PhD, and who had worked briefly at Legal Aid, and one of her comments was that she never really felt like she understood criminal procedure, the class, until working for Legal Aid. I'm sure she got some sort of A grade but she didn't really understand it until she had handled disclosure. For me, when I was a student, that was absolutely true; I don't know how anyone can learn Criminal Procedure without handling disclosure, and I remember in particular my understanding of administrative law was a lot higher than it would otherwise have been because I'd done some administrative law work here and so was much more able to contextualize what I was learning in the black letter law courses.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Well I think there are different kinds of impacts. Some students come from very privileged backgrounds, and the impact that is made on them by working in the neighbourhood and with our clients is a lot of times pretty mind-blowing. I've had a lot of students crying in my office over the years about the shock of the reality that they are confronting. The other impact I've seen is students who don't necessarily fit into the shark tank of law school and that cut-throat, individualistic approach that is encouraged at law school, end up finding their place here. I've had a number of students say they were going to drop out of law school but then when they came to CLASSIC they found their place and decided to stick it out. You see students come here who don't have confidence but gain confidence by the end. You see students who have too much confidence becoming humbled by some of their experiences.

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): I think you also see students who come with an idea that they're only going to practise a certain area of law, like criminal law, and then they realize it's just not for them.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Or vice versa, how people think they're going to hate immigration law, but fall in love with it. Yeah, so it's a good way for people to explore different practice areas before they're actually in practice.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): Yeah, and just looking to the future I think that point in particular—the point about people who have a lot of privilege learning what a lot of clients have to deal with—that's going to come up more and more as tuition's increasing. I think it's at \$14,000 a year right now for the University of Saskatchewan?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> College of Law Tuition is currently \$13,653 for Canadian students according to <[admissions.usask.ca/money/tuition.php#Tuitionestimates](https://admissions.usask.ca/money/tuition.php#Tuitionestimates)> [perma.cc/CZ99-N4W9].

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): It's just more and more only privileged students can go to law school—the divide widens.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I also think that one of the ways in which clinical legal education can have a real effect on students is causing them to confront or gain access to areas that they wouldn't otherwise look into. Most intensive students now spend time in prison, and I think that that is an incredibly impactful experience that shouldn't be undervalued because not only does it personalize prisoners, but it causes these people who are going to have influence to have insight into what prisons are. And I think that those are the sorts of things that are interesting in discussing the clinical legal education model. It's sort of like, what sort of insights into the world of the clients that we work with can we give these students, whether or not they're going to practise in the area.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): And CLASSIC is really an integral part of the community that we operate in and serve. When students go to a rally or a march that's issue-specific, or attend a women's pamper night for the women who are our clients, or have a session with an Elder to learn about Indigenous laws, or reflect with the social work practicum students about how to assist a client who has disclosed about their residential school experience, I think the students can't help but be impacted. And you just don't get that through the volunteer kind of externship-style placement.

**Sarah**: *This is something that CLASSIC believes, right? That we need to be a part of the community in order to do good legal work in the community?*

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I think that CLASSIC's emphasis on that is really useful because that's true of any kind of legal practice, but in most types of legal practices it's implicit. If you're doing a lot of foreclosures, you need to know a lot of general background about what's going on in that world and you need to understand that community, but no one ever tells you that you have to learn all this history and culture. I think CLASSIC making it explicit is very helpful to just being a successful lawyer in any field because then you have a better understanding that that's something you're going to need to have to do.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Which is why I think the people who don't really thrive in the really competitive environment end up finding their fit here. Lots of our Indigenous students go to law school to help their community. And so then if you get into this competitive shark tank at law school it's a bit overwhelming and not a fit, and so the students will come here and feel a part of a lot of different communities.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): Speaking of externships, the bigger concern that I have with externships is that there may be some situations where the people who are in charge of the externship are not deliberate about doing experiential education. Experiential education is more than simply "learn by doing."

**Sarah**: *I'm reflecting that at the beginning of our discussion, everyone was saying "oh, I'm not really primarily an educator," but what I'm hearing is actually quite a deep investment in the education and development of the students that you're working with and that you're supervising. And also, that that's something that's different than if, you know, the law school was just going*

*to plunk students into different placements without that reflective practice or that programming. So, does that resonate?*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): It was occurring to me to as we were talking, that we're very clearly experiential educators who put a lot of thought into it.

**Sarah**: *I'm glad this has come out through the conversation, because I think there is a deeper investment in that. It's what you're doing all day every day—working with students and helping them develop and helping them reflect as part of your larger identities working for social justice. Does that sound fair? Like, is it maybe more of an intertwined identity than what we might have first been discussing?*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): Absolutely.

**Sarah**: *I'm wondering if we can talk more about the relationship that CLASSIC has with the wider community, including fellow organizations in our neighbourhood here, and clients, and also maybe the legal community. So how do these communities engage with clinical legal education?*

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): A lot of the clients that come through here have needs that are not just legal, so we do a lot of referrals, we work with a lot of other organizations. We just had an ID clinic where we also had Read Saskatoons there to talk about financial literacy. We also work with social workers.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): We have also developed relationships with some of the small businesses in our community. Recently we had a meeting with folks from a local coffeeshop and bakery about working in this neighbourhood, and the impacts of gentrification.<sup>6</sup>

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I find that a very difficult question to answer because we engage with a lot of different communities. We engage with the legal profession on a few different levels, both in terms of trying to seek funding from them, and to try to engage them in different situations where they're on the opposite side of files. And it's not really possible to speak about our various client communities as being unified. And then there are partner groups and different community-based organizations.

**Sarah**: *So, maybe it's a hard question, but how do those various communities engage with the students, and what do they think about the clinical legal education model?*

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I think that the answer is varied. With clients, if they've developed a really strong relationship with the student, and then the student leaves and a new student comes

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<sup>5</sup> READ Saskatoon is an organization focused on literacy. See "READ Saskatoon," online: <readsaskatoon.com/> [perma.cc/Q5E8-75SM].

<sup>6</sup> CLASSIC is located in Riversdale, a rapidly gentrifying Saskatoon neighbourhood. See e.g. Charles Hamilton, "This is ground zero for gentrification": Artist wants to keep the gentrification conversation happening in Riversdale" (8 September 2016), online: <thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/this-is-ground-zero-for-gentrification-artist-wants-to-keep-the-gentrification-conversation-happening-in-riversdale> [perma.cc/V4D5-9M9F].



in, that's difficult. If they've been around for a few years and they've gone through eight different students, then it's not as big a deal.

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): I think it also depends what term the student comes in. In the summer term we don't have a social work student. Having a social work student changes the way that a student is going to look at a file.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I think one of our more complicated relationships is with the legal profession generally. We're at an interesting point where enough of the legal profession has gone through CLASSIC when they were students, that there seems to be both a higher understanding of what CLASSIC does, but also incorrect understandings of what CLASSIC does. One of the things I'm finding is that there seems to be an assumption among a lot of my peers, as a relatively young lawyer, that CLASSIC does what you could call "simple law"—just straightforward law meant for self-reps to do. I think that's certainly true—that we do a fair amount of that kind of work—fair enough, but obviously our cases can be very, very complicated.

**Sarah**: *What about the relationship with the College of Law itself?*

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): What I'd like the College to know is the value of this program, and actually how much work goes into educating the students, and maybe I'd like them to know that we do feel undervalued. Like even an example is if there's a meeting with the College, it's never at CLASSIC. It's always at the university, things like that.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I wonder again whether or not some of that relates to the way in which CLASSIC was formed, in that it was initially a program that was started by law students at the College of Law. And so I think there's some of that sort of paternalism that goes along with it, or being taken for granted that goes along with it, without recognizing that CLASSIC is a separate organization that's offering a considerable service to the College of Law. And so it's different than the externships at a private law firm and/or private company where it's just sort of seen as those people are doing a service to the university by taking on and offering them experience. We're a not-for-profit that has a mandate and people it's trying to serve and a budget and all those kinds of things, and I don't think it is the same kind of relationship.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I think it's less so with the university administration, but with a lot of the professors I think it's too bad that there's not more of a relationship, or at least more of a kind of shared understanding of the mutual benefit. For a lot of students, experiences at CLASSIC contextualize their legal education. Another thing I've sometimes found is that when CLASSIC indicates that training students is a lot of work, some university staff are almost offended by that comment—like, they take offence at the statement that their students aren't ready to be helpful immediately.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I think it also gets back to the idea that experiential education is devalued. And perhaps it is about a misunderstanding of different styles of learning and education. Not everyone has considered that some of the curriculum is likely best taught in ways other than simply lecture-style, and is likely best learned by many of their students in ways other than simple lecture-style.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): I think there's real opportunity for CLASSIC and the College to learn more about each other and how we do things, and I think it was evidenced last year when we organized a little holiday gathering of some of the support staff from the College coming to CLASSIC for Christmas cookies, and they were at once shocked by how big it is here too. They were so excited to just get to see the office, and that was such a simple step.

**Sarah**: *I wanted to ask now about what you see the value of ACCLE (Association for Canadian Clinical Legal Education) to be for the work that you do, or maybe what it means to have a national association for clinical legal education from where you stand.*

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): I went to an ACCLE conference in Halifax when I was a clinical law student. I think that ACCLE's been doing very useful work, especially around Bill C-75.<sup>7</sup> I think it's really good to have a national organization for those kinds of issues. It seems like it would be helpful for some of the geographical issues that may come up from time to time, like if an affidavit needs to be signed in Vancouver, stuff like that; ACCLE creates a framework where it's a little more efficient to talk to the right people.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): In relation to Bill C-75, ACCLE has emerged as a voice that has a certain amount of resonance. ACCLE also has the ability through its conferences and otherwise to bring people together for the purposes of support. It can often feel a little bit isolating doing clinical legal education so this is important. I think that the opportunity to have respect attached to the particular kind of work that we do is of significance. In addition, while clinical legal education has different iterations across the country, there are clinics that work in most of the areas that we work in, and so there's also potential legal resources around how to confront these issues. I really hope that as time goes on ACCLE spends time thinking about and developing theory around clinical legal education in particular, and experiential legal education as well, in order to offer a framework to that discussion. I would like ACCLE to play a sort of potential self-reflective role for clinics to help generate best practices and pushing ahead those best practices.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): For me there's a bunch of different ways that ACCLE is valuable from my perspective. One is to just build a network of folks who actually understand what we do, because these—especially in Saskatchewan where we're the *only* clinic, it's pretty isolating and also pressure-ridden because we're the only one—people are constantly phoning us or emailing us to do things because there's nowhere else for them to go, and so I think just that network and understanding is important. It also gives people to call when you have questions about things. The other thing for me is its affirmation of our reality. CLASSIC has the worst funding model in all of Canada, and when I see that some clinics get 100 per cent of their funding from their legal aid system, or their university, it's just affirmation of the feelings that we live in our financial reality here every day. And then I think it's really cool to see the melding of the academic and the in-the-trenches workers, and I think that was a beautiful example with the Bill C-75 submission, right? Because the only way that that had the weight it had was to combine the practical realities with the academic research, into this one very well-written piece.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See article in this issue about ACCLE's advocacy on this issue.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

**Sarah:** *My final question is whether you have any closing thoughts about the challenges and benefits of being involved in clinical legal education.*

**Kim** (*Legal Assistant*): I think the benefits are that we get students who are great, and they become lawyers and they have that ethic with them, and they want to do the work that we do. Challenges are funding, the amount of time and effort that the lawyers put into supervising the students where they could put that time into working on the files themselves and would probably get through it faster.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): I mean the other major challenge is those cycle-out periods every three-and-a-half months when you need to transfer three hundred files. From my perspective the benefits are the added spark that working with students has—a lot of them come with an energy and an excitement. I think the other big benefit is seeing where our alumni end up. You see our alumni making media statements about things that are pressing social issues. You see them signing up to do volunteer work through Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan, so it's kind of like building the change and the culture of law for the future. The difficulties are those three-and-a-half month cycle-out periods and the administrative drag, and then just the impact it has on clients' lives that every three-and-a-half months we change students, and somebody—they may have built up a really good rapport with leaves, and that's so impactful for an agency with client-centred philosophy of practice. It kind of breaks my heart every term when you see clients have to get a new student, and the anxiety that that causes. I don't know how to get around that with the student model. A challenge for me is also our funding model because a lot of our funding comes from the client-side of the model, where we have to establish goals for how many clients we'll serve. But then we'll need to balance that with the strengths, skills, and abilities of the students who come to us, and if we get a group of students who aren't as strong, our file load could go down, which then actually could impact our sustainability moving forward because so much of our funding is only focused on the clients we serve and not on the experiential-learning side of our work.

**Leif** (*Supervising Lawyer*): My comments are similar. I think the biggest concern or risk is, basically, burnout, common in non-profits. I was surprised as to how difficult the supervising is. There are times where a student seems to be good, and then you realize that they just haven't been doing the things you've been telling them to do. But I think that the positive is the flip side of the same issue, which is the teaching can be really, really rewarding. Certainly, having the pep talk about “this is how you do an adjournment, it'll probably be fine” over and over three times a year does get repetitive, but on the other hand, seeing the expression on a student's face when they realize how many people in prison have not actually been convicted of anything is really good. A lot of people don't really realize, and if you do intellectually know it, you don't know it in the way you know it when you have a client who's in that situation, and I think that's really both rewarding and helpful to keep your perspective.

**Nicholas** (*Supervising Lawyer*): So, challenges. I think the biggest challenge is trying to figure out how to let go of control while also working to ensure that the level of service that is being provided is sufficiently high for you as a professional to be happy, and I think that that's a really difficult tension to figure out. I also think that there's a challenge around just the issue of capacity in that fundamentally I do view myself as being a lawyer, and as such, when push comes to shove, I think about file work, and the difficulty is the demands of time that are placed on me as a lawyer that

are associated with education, and the effect that has on my ability to schedule my file work. ‘Cause I’ll go home, and I’ll think to myself: “Oh yeah. This has to get out. I can put three hours in on it tomorrow.” And then being at the office with ten students coming to ask questions about forty files means I will manage to get forty-five minutes done on it, and it’s not a straight forty-five minutes. I do think that there’s a downside to having this changeover every three months. I think there’s also an upside to having a changeover every three months. Which is that every three months those students come in, open those files up and go “Wow, what happened?! What’s going on with this?!” I also think that one of the benefits is the opportunity to work in a number of different areas of law. I also think that one of the benefits is the community that can be created at CLASSIC with students, and not just the sort of, the spark that students bring, but the fact that the people who work together at CLASSIC feel really close and support each other well. And I think there’s sort of, yeah, something special about the work environment at CLASSIC, both with and without students that can be pretty special, and then I think there’s a long-term benefit of being able to see the impact that CLASSIC’s work has on people who are doing things that I don’t know that they necessarily would have done were they not to be exposed to the different areas of law during their time at CLASSIC. For example, we currently have a prison law practice group that meets, and I don’t know if that would exist if a number of those students hadn’t gone through CLASSIC. I think in terms of another challenge, as I get more experience as a lawyer and as I go through the experience of building a community of students and staff, I think it gets more difficult for me to invest in the community every four months, and it gets more difficult for me to relate to the new students, because I expect them all to be functioning at a much higher level than they are functioning at.

**Chantelle** (*Executive Director*): I think that on the benefits or the fun part, it is a little like having a sociology project every four months: “Let’s put these group of people together and see how it works out!” And it’s funny to see how sometimes they just gel, and sometimes they don’t. And also to see the real unlikely friendships that would have never happened but for CLASSIC.