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50 Years of Clinical and Experiential Learning at Georgia Law

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This note proudly introduces a partnership between the *Georgia Law Review* Online Platform and the University of Georgia School of Law's Clinical Programs and Experiential Learning faculty to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of clinical legal education at Georgia Law. This initiative will highlight current and cutting-edge issues faced in the substantive law areas covered by our clinical programs via a series of articles co-written by Georgia Law faculty and students.

As Georgia Law looks towards the next fifty years of clinical teaching and experiential learning, it is appropriate to take a brief look at how far we have come over the past half-century.

Clinical legal education at Georgia Law started in 1967 when the Legal Aid Clinic was founded to address the needs of low-income residents for legal help in civil and criminal cases. In 1968, the clinic's first full-year of operation, students working alongside clinical faculty under the recently enacted Law School Legal Aid Agency Act, handled 210 criminal cases and 170 civil cases.¹ In 1970, the same year that Georgia allowed third-year law students to assist in the prosecution of cases, the Prosecutorial Justice Program was added with a course component enabling students to earn credits for their work.²

Professor Milner Ball, considered by many to be the father of public interest law at Georgia Law founded the Environmental Law Practicum³, an innovative interdisciplinary program which will be featured next month to kick off this series. He also founded the Public Interest Practicum in 1991 (which will be highlighted in November) and started the civil externship program (which has now grown to include a Corporate Counsel Externship program, and full-time Semester in Practice programs in D.C. and Atlanta).⁴

Since 1996, when Professor Alex Scherr joined the faculty as the first Director of Civil Clinics, our offerings have expanded.⁵ We now offer a broad range of experiential-learning opportunities, including criminal and civil litigation practice, transactional and in-house work, and judicial and governmental placements, where students gain valuable experience, skills, and insight. Over the past fifty years, thousands of Georgia Law students have learned the law through participation in a clinic. Nearly 90% of the class of 2018 participated in at least one clinic or externship course, with almost 50% taking two or more clinics.⁶

Beginning in 2019 when we open the Economic Opportunity Clinic, we will have 18 different clinical and externship options, several of which are housed in our new space in downtown Athens at the Bank of America Building. To see a full list of these clinical programs, please visit <http://law.uga.edu/clinics-externships-and-experiential-learning-programs>.

I hope you are as excited as I am to celebrate our Law Clinics@50 through this platform and partnership. Watch this space for postings throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Dean Eleanor Crosby Lanier
Associate Dean for Clinical Programs and Experiential Learning
& Mediation Clinic Director, University of Georgia School of Law

¹ GWEN Y. WOOD, A UNIQUE AND FORTUITOUS COMBINATION: AN ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA SCHOOL OF LAW 161 (1998).

² *Id.*

³ *Milner Ball Obituary*, ATHENS BANNER-HERALD (April 8, 2011), <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/OnlineAthens/obituary.aspx?pid=150085458>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Alexander W. Scherr*, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA SCHOOL OF LAW, <http://www.law.uga.edu/profile/alexander-w-scherr>. In addition to his involvement in expanding the clinical offerings at Georgia Law, Professor Scherr has been actively involved in promoting experiential learning as president of the Clinical Legal Education Association, chair of the Association of American Law Schools Clinical Advisory Committee, and a member of the AALS Clinical Section's Executive Committee.

Id.

⁶ Alexander W. Scherr, Remarks at the University of Georgia School of Law Commencement Ceremony (May 19, 2018), <https://monumentalmedia.com/uga0009>.