

NEW FACES

At the same time that Cooley Law School is celebrating 25 years of graduating law classes, the school is also welcoming some newcomers to its faculty ranks



KIM O'LEARY

Kim O'Leary joined the Cooley faculty as an associate professor in May 2000 bringing with her much clinical experience as a legal educator. Prior to coming to Cooley, O'Leary was director of the University of Dayton's Clinical

Program where she served on many faculty committees, taught in the academic curriculum, published, and served as chair of the AALS Section on Clinic Education. She began her clinical teaching career at the Indiana School of Law in 1988.

Now at Cooley, O'Leary has been assigned to the Sixty Plus, Inc., Elderlaw Clinic, and could not be more excited. She loves the central role of clinical education at Cooley, along with the support for, and value in, the Sixty Plus program.

"I love clinical teaching, the methodology, the experiential learning," she said. "It (the Sixty Plus experience) gives them an opportunity to try out all the things they've learned and put it into use."

O'Leary's summer project was writing an article for non-clinical teachers about the concept of clinical teaching.

"We're looking at education theory based on learning theories for adults. Concepts stick better when you apply it."

Clinical teaching is a combination of theory, real experience, and dissection or reflection.

Studies show that adults don't learn from lectures, she explained. They just don't absorb the information when they listen to people talk.

"They were clearly getting it better when they did it themselves."

In January 2001, O'Leary will switch roles with the AALS clinical section, from Immediate Past President (her current post) to Newsletter Editor. The role will allow her to share the ideas she's built up for the newsletter and share the Cooley name with the 1,500 recipients of the document.

O'Leary likens her role at Sixty Plus to that of a coach. She meets with student teams, who in turn meet with the clients. She'll ask the teams how their week went, share legal theories with them, and guide them down the path of learning, asking questions like, "what do you think you should do?" As the semester progresses, the students initiate more and more on their own.

O'Leary is involved in the classroom component as well. O'Leary said the classes include role play and case dissection, ethical issues, and practical education on how to collaborate with colleagues.

"People come into law school and think there's only one way to do it. There are lots of ways to accomplish things," explained O'Leary.

That's one of the reasons O'Leary is thrilled to be on a faculty with so many clinical educators. "It's the excitement of mixing up ideas. That's really fun."

O'Leary has plans for improving Sixty Plus, Inc.'s exposure on the Cooley website.

"The law clinic as a website has a lot of interesting purposes," she said. "It reaches out to prospective students and the Social Services community, and eventually the client community."



EVELYN TOMBERS

The flexible scheduling and the honors scholarship program brought Evelyn Tombers (Lawrence Class, 1991) to Cooley, where she earned her J.D. *magna cum laude*. Following graduation, she served as a judicial law clerk for

Michigan Supreme Court Associate Justice Patricia J. Boyle. Since then, she has had a continuous relationship with the school. In 1991, she substitute taught Research & Writing and Scholarly Writing. She moved into an adjunct-faculty position in 1999; then she joined the full-time, tenure-track faculty in May 2000.

Before joining Cooley, Tombers was an appellate attorney with three different law firms. When the last one abruptly closed its Michigan office, Tombers decided to start her own office. At the same time, she was teaching three sections of Advanced Writing.

Although Tombers enjoyed teaching from the first time she taught, she felt compelled to go into private practice for a while.

“I felt I had no credibility because I had not been out in the work world.”

Her first career was in law enforcement and social work, and she also worked at a 9-1-1 dispatch center. After running a shelter in Florida for run-aways, Tombers grew frustrated with the prosecutor’s office there because it was very hard to get them to take any of the abuse cases, even when the issue was pretty cut-and-dried.

It was then that Tombers decided to focus her career in academia. As part of the new group of professors on the Research and Writing team, she is thrilled to get back into what she really enjoys — learning and teaching the skills that students need to be successful lawyers.



DENA BROWN

Dena Brown (Steere Class, 1995) set a course for herself even before earning her J.D. in the top 6 percent of her

class. She started at Cooley as a grading assistant. From there she moved on to teaching Scholarly Writing and Advanced Research and Writing before signing on as a tenure-track faculty member in May 2000. Like Tombers, she is assigned to the Research and Writing department.

“I just love teaching,” Brown said. “I really enjoy the interaction with students — I like feeling that I am

helping them achieve their goals. For me, the most satisfying thing is teaching them something they’re going to use.”

That fits; she’s enthusiastic about legal education from a student perspective as well.

“I loved law school,” she said. “When I say that, most people look at me like I’m crazy.”

Brown began a job clerking in the labor law section of a local law firm. She went on to work at two more Lansing law firms before starting work at Auto Owners doing insurance law. From 1996-1998, she also served as an instructor in the Legal Assistant Program at Lansing Community College.

The Research and Writing Department is a close crew and they get together weekly for lunch and discussion. They tend to take their work with them — like the time the team sat down to lunch where Brown remembers Tombers feeling compelled to get up and correct a chalkboard sign. “Special’s” did not need an apostrophe. Brown chuckles about the episode, but points out that poor training in the basics of grammar and punctuation can bring out the teacher — even at a simple lunch.



CINDY FAULKNER

The newest addition to the Cooley faculty is Cindy Faulkner (Durand Class, 1992) joining the staff as an assistant

professor September 1, 2000. Faulkner, while new to this position, is not new to Cooley. She has been associated with Cooley for over 11 years. Faulkner came to Cooley because of the progressive legal attitude in Michigan and to continue her education outside of her home state of Missouri. “I was here for three years and then going home.” However, Faulkner found a new and well loved home here.

She was given an opportunity to fill in as a Trial Workshop Instructor shortly after completing her education at Cooley. “I still refer to it as my manna from heaven. This opportunity impacted my life in more ways than I could imagine.” Faulkner continued to develop her trial skills through her own practice, attending NITA (National Institute of Trial Advocacy) training, ICLE training, and attending a Gerry Spence Trial Lawyer’s Seminar. Additionally, for the last four years, Faulkner has taken her teaching style to Widener University every May as a guest lecturer in their Intensive Trial Advocacy Program.

Her roles have expanded greatly. She is now in the Clinical and Professional Responsibility Department. Faulkner works with the 60+ (Elderlaw) Clinic students, supervises students in the externship program, assists with the administration of the Trial Workshop program, and serves as the faculty sponsor of the student newspaper, *The Pillar*.

“I love working with students. It is exhilarating to watch the light bulbs go on in their heads. Watching them realize how to resolve an issue, the way to present that issue in a compelling argument, and then seeing their satisfaction of a resolution is truly a gift they give me, over and over again.”

Faulkner’s personal light bulb is the issue of therapeutic jurisprudence. She is excited about sharing with the students an expanding view of the client. Clients need to be viewed as a whole person with a variety of reactions to a situation. “Merely resolving a legal issue does not always resolve the conflicts around it.” Faulkner believes that if students begin to look at the whole of the conflict, finding a more appropriate solution may ultimately benefit the clients, the system, and the profession. ■