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Vanessa Rodriguez's Post

Clinics Collaborate on 'Crimmigration'

Posted by Vanessa Rodriguez on 04/19/2016 at 10:32 AM



Each semester at RWU Law, two of the school's great [clinical programs](#) schedule classes to bridge the gap between major legal areas. The [Immigration Clinic](#), directed by [Deborah Gonzalez](#), and the [Criminal Defense Clinic](#), directed by [Andy Horwitz](#), come together to learn how the various aspects of these practices areas intertwine. Both clinics are run out of the [Providence Downtown Campus](#) and hold classes to learn more about the substantive law surrounding the clinic practice areas.

There are some major differences between the areas of Criminal Law and Immigration Law, the most important being that criminal defense involves criminal procedure, whereas immigration is a civil proceeding (despite what you may think). However, these two areas are very much affected by one another when you are representing a client in a criminal proceeding, who also has legal or lawful presence issues concerning immigration.

During "Crimmigration" classes, students work on hypothetical scenarios in which each clinic breaks down the issues that arise within their respective practice areas. The students then discuss the concerns and conflicts that arise when trying to meet the client objectives in the relative proceedings.

Student attorneys from the Immigration Clinic begin by giving the Criminal Defense student attorneys a brief overview of the relevant immigration terminology and federal laws that are applicable to clients, who may have committed a crime or who are in criminal proceedings. The Immigration Clinic students explain the various consequences relating to the conviction of crimes and the impact of criminal proceedings on a client's immigration claim. Then student attorneys from the Criminal Defense Clinic begin to strategize *their* approach to the scenarios, keeping in mind the relative Immigration ramifications. They analyze the relevant state penal laws and develop arguments to present to prosecutors with the goal of minimizing the effect of the crime upon a client's immigration claim.

"Crimmigration" classes allow student attorneys to anticipate real-life scenarios they may encounter, should they continue to pursue careers in either or both of these fields. And Immigration Law continues to grow as a hot-button issue, with crimes and criminal activity playing an integral part in an immigrant client's objectives. It is of the utmost importance that students are aware of the intersection between these two legal areas, in order to provide the most effective and proficient legal representation.