Even before they are admitted to the bar, students at the University of Chicago Law School can put their developing expertise to work and actually practice law in one of our many clinics. Our clinical programs are both broad and deep, offering students experience in criminal and civil law, in public service and the private sector, in litigation and transactional work and advocacy. The hard work of our students and faculty benefits diverse populations, from small-business owners to domestic violence victims to endangered flora and fauna.

Within these varied clinical opportunities, the first experience many students have in practicing law is in the public interest. The Law School takes great pride in the role we played in creating and developing the experiential models used by law schools today, having been part of the founding of clinical legal education. The cases and subjects chosen by clinical professors are picked with an eye on maximum impact, for the larger community and for the students. In that way, our students working from the Arthur O. Kane Center for Clinical Legal Education may have influence all around the city, and sometimes well beyond.

For a long time, student demand for these spots outnumbered supply. We have remedied that in recent years. Already in 2012, three new clinics have opened. And this winter, for the first time in recent memory, there were unclaimed spots in a few clinics. We know that demand has a way of catching up with supply, so we will carefully monitor the available opportunities to ensure that any student who wants a clinic experience can have one.

In these pages, we introduce you to some of our newest clinical programs and reacquaint you with the amazing work of some of our longer-standing ones. For more information about all of our clinics, visit http://www.law.uchicago.edu/clinics.
The first director of the new Abrams Environmental Law Clinic comes to the Law School from a job as challenging as it was important: to help facilitate the economic recovery of individuals and businesses after the Gulf oil spill.

Mark Templeton was Executive Director of the Office of the Independent Trustees of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Trust, which was created to compensate parties for losses suffered after the spill. Templeton’s job was to help oversee the assets that BP deposited into the trust and hold BP to the terms of the trust agreement.

The Law School chose Templeton from a list of many qualified candidates to head the new clinic, which opened in January. Templeton’s vision for the clinic divides the workload at about two-thirds litigation or other adversarial work, with the remaining third encompassing a policy advocacy component. The model is very similar to that of Professor Mark Heyrman’s Mental Health Project, which has successfully pushed for mental-health reforms and legislation in addition to individual client representation since its beginnings.

“The goal is for our students to be able to analyze and address environmental challenges from a multiplicity of perspectives,” Templeton said.

The environmental law clinic aims to solve critical environmental problems throughout Chicago and the Great Lakes region. The clinic works with clients to sue those who pollute illegally, to fight for stricter permits, to advocate for changes to regulations and laws, to hold environmental agencies accountable, and to develop new approaches for improving the environment. In the clinic’s first quarter this past winter, students began working to protect a state park from pollution from proposed mining development and to protect wetlands from a proposed slaughterhouse operation, among other projects.

Templeton leads students as they learn environmental law and procedures for addressing problems through the courts or administrative tribunals. Students in the program gain a number of core advocacy competencies, such as counseling clients, conducting investigations, performing legal research, planning cases, and advocating orally and in writing.

Prior to Templeton’s work on the oil spill, he was director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, formulating environmental protection and energy policy for the state. As head of the department, he led an agency which administers Missouri’s state parks, addresses water quantity concerns, performs geologic surveys, assists in developing renewable energy sources, and coordinates state energy policy. The department also works to protect the public from air, water, and other environmental pollution.

Before that, Templeton worked for the management consulting firm McKinsey and Company and as Chief Operations Officer and Associate Dean for Finance and Administration at Yale Law School. He earned his undergraduate degree in social studies from Harvard College and his JD from Yale Law School.
Some University of Chicago law students want to be prosecutors, seeking justice by representing the government and public’s interest in law enforcement. Others want to be defense lawyers, providing the advocacy to defendants promised in the U.S. Constitution.

A single clinic allows each type of student to have this opportunity. The Prosecution and Defense Clinic, launched this year, is the brainchild of Lisa Noller, ’95, who worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Chicago for over 10 years. Noller’s idea was that students would receive credit for working 12 to 14 hours per week in either prosecution or defense offices while taking a companion course on criminal justice.

“Only a few law schools offer students an opportunity to participate in a field clinic where they can work alongside prosecutors,” Noller noted. “It is even more unique for students to have an opportunity to work in either a more traditional defense setting, or a prosecutor’s office, (and) then to gather weekly to learn from each other’s experiences.”

The clinic is open to second- and third-year students, and Noller and her co-teacher, defense attorney Gabriel Plotkin, helped students with contacts for internships. Ultimately, however, securing the posts was up to the students themselves. This year’s students are working in both state and federal courts, and the clinic runs the second and third quarters of the academic year.

Noller and Plotkin’s partnership gives students exposure to both sides of the courtroom.

“Though they represent different clients, both prosecutors and public defense attorneys seek to do justice,” Noller said. “We are proud the Law School has given us the opportunity to bring students together to meaningfully discuss how they can achieve this common goal.”

“Of course Lisa wants all of the students to become prosecutors,” Plotkin said. “And I want them all to become defense attorneys.”

Noller and Plotkin have developed a series of readings and other materials that all the students find relevant, regardless of their placement. The course, which addresses both substantive law and theoretical issues about criminal justice, also contains a practical component by following a federal court robbery case from arrest through trial through the pleadings and facts of that case. At the end of the second quarter, students turn in a ten-page written product. Ideally, it is something that was done through the internship itself, such as a memo, brief, or motion. However, several of the interns spend most of their time in court and do not produce much written work. Those students turn in a research paper.

The offices that take the students on are appreciative that they are being educated in a related course at the same time they’re interning, Plotkin said. The added knowledge helps them do their jobs better.

“We have been getting very good feedback on the students, they are really doing great work in their internships,” he added.
Students Use Legal Skills to Fight Domestic Violence

Another of 2012’s new clinic projects came to be because two students, Eileen Ho, ’12, and Mishan Wroe, ’13, were troubled that the Law School lacked a project related to domestic violence. Thanks to their advocacy, the Gendered Violence Clinic is now a reality.

The clinic was created in tandem with LAF (Legal Assistance Foundation). Neha Lall, a staff attorney with LAF, runs the program, consists of 12 hours of internship at LAF and a two-hour seminar each week.

The students deal directly with clients, who include domestic and sexual violence survivors, and help them with protective orders, divorce and custody proceedings, visa applications, housing and eviction matters, unemployment insurance hearings, and more.

“First and foremost, we want the students to become comfortable talking to clients, preparing documents and going to court,” Lall said. “Here at LAF we try to make sure that they get lots of hands-on experience so that they can increase their understanding in multiple legal areas.”

The clinic is good experience for both students who want public interest careers and those who plan to go into private practice but want to do substantial pro bono work. The legal education they get in the clinic helps no matter their career aspirations.

“The goal is to increase understanding of various types of civil and criminal systems that address gender-based violence,” Lall explains. “This is not a course with a narrow focus. We expose students to all the major issues facing victims of violence.”

Besides gaining hands-on experience at LAF, students study a different topic each week in Lall’s seminar. They learn about cases from around the country dealing with domestic violence, sexual assault, and child protection issues, and Lall often brings in guest speakers.

Students learn quickly, Lall said, that while many of LAF’s clients are poor, “gender violence takes place among all economic groups.”

So far in the clinic’s short history, the students are earning rave reviews at LAF. Lall said.

“They are so wonderful and enthusiastic, and all the attorneys have really positive things to say about the quality of their work and their interest level.”
The project previously compelled the city to create lists of police officers who received numerous complaints in a short period of time. Unfortunately, the lists were always produced under protective orders, which frustrated the students who were unable to obtain them. The project partnered with journalist Jamie Kalven to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the names. The city refused, saying the names were not public record, and the project filed suit on behalf of Kalven to challenge the argument. Ultimately, the project received a partial victory when the judge ruled that lists of police officers who accumulated the most official misconduct complaints in Chicago were not exempt from disclosure under FOIA and must be produced, though the ruling also granted summary judgment in favor of the city on the exemptions for the individual complaint registries.

“Overall, we have the greatest respect for police officers who protect and serve,” Futterman said. “There is nothing more noble, or more important than the job of a police officer.”

That said, the public must keep an eye on law enforcement because the job is so critical, he added. “We entrust police with awesome powers—the power to arrest, the power to take an individual’s freedom, the power to use force, even the power to kill. With those powers come responsibility and accountability to each of us.”
What do food trucks have to do with economic liberty? A lot, according to the Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship. The clinic’s mission is to help lower-income small-business entrepreneurs with the legal support they need to be successful. The clinic’s latest effort is a campaign to ensure open public access to new sources of food—namely, from food trucks. The grassroots campaign, titled “My Streets, My Eats,” seeks to increase the opportunities for food trucks, sidewalk carts, and other mobile food vendors within Chicago.

Historically, street vending has been a major source of opportunity for entrepreneurs of every sort due to low start-up costs and easy entrance into the market. Increasingly, however, that opportunity has been confined by restrictive local ordinances designed to protect existing business interests at the expense of entrepreneurs. In the case of mobile food vending in Chicago, those restrictions include no food preparation on the truck or at the cart, no serving food before 10 a.m., and no stopping to serve customers within 200 feet of any restaurant.

“That means in Chicago it is illegal to put toppings on a hot dog from a cart. It is illegal to have a donut truck serving breakfast, and it is illegal for a truck or a cart to be just about anywhere in the Loop,” said clinic director Elizabeth Kregor. Chicago is far from alone in these restrictions, though it is one of the worst offenders.

While 45 of the largest cities in the U.S. had at least one of these restrictions in place, and 31 cities had two or more restrictions, Chicago was identified as having all except a stop-and-wait restriction.

By raising public awareness of the current restrictions, the clinic hopes to inform and persuade Chicago’s Mayor and City Council to rethink the current approach to mobile food vendors. A new, comprehensive ordinance, properly drafted, would clarify the rights and responsibilities of mobile food vendors and make it easier for entrepreneurs to take their food to the streets. This new ordinance will ideally remove some of the worst obstacles, such as the proximity ban, in favor of regulations that are narrowly tailored to promote health and safety.

“In the IJ clinic’s history, this is the first major grassroots campaign we have launched to work on a legal issue,” Kregor said. “Really, the whole ‘My Streets, My Eats’ campaign is an effort to spread the word and get lots of Chicagoans involved in contacting aldermen and pressuring them to pass a law as soon as possible that’s as strong as possible.”