**Comenius University / International Journal of Clinical Legal Education Conference**

**ENCLE - IJCLE 2019 Improving the Future: Using Clinical Legal Education to Educate Lawyers for a Just Society**

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| Title  | Miss |
| Lead Presenter First Name | Hannah |
| Lead Presenter Last Name | Menard |
| Organisation of Lead Presenter | University of South Wales |
| Name/s and details of other presenters | Miss Gemma Sweetman, University of South Wales, Course Leader and Clinic Supervisor, United Kingdom |
| Title of Proposal  | Evaluating the impact that changes to increase student engagement have had on both students and the local community. |
| Summary of Proposal | This paper will present how changes made to the University of South Wales Legal Advice Clinic’s provision have addressed issues of student engagement. By adopting a more inclusive learning environment, introducing student firm learning contracts and by developing several new intra-curricular community based pro-bono projects, the Clinic has seen a huge increase in student engagement.This paper will discuss how this increased engagement has afforded students lacking social mobility, opportunities to build their self-confidence and raise aspirations, whilst also benefiting the community and inspiring students to continue to play an active role in widening access to justice. |
| Abstract Proposal | USW’s Legal Advice Clinic is based at its Treforest campus, near Pontypridd, where more often than not, people cannot afford to pay for legal advice. It is also an area of low participation in higher education. The Clinic is integrated into the University’s LL.B Legal Practice, a course combining a qualifying law degree with the postgraduate diploma in legal practice over only three years. The Clinic aims to assist the progression of students into professional practice, by embedding a pedagogy for employability into the curriculum. This is important, as the course student demographic is predominantly local/Welsh students, who often have lower expectations of graduate salaries and do not see themselves as being as socially mobile as other UK students. In their final year, students spend a day per week in the Clinic as part of their legal skills module. The module ran for the first time during academic year 2017/2018, with some students initially struggling to fully engage with clinical education. Initial findings showed a number of students struggled due to family/work commitments and due to the transition from ‘undergraduate’ to ‘postgraduate’ modules.To address this, substantial changes were made to the Clinic’s provision. These changes included creating a more inclusive learning environment (including flexible working arrangements), student firm learning contracts and the development of several new intra-curricular community based pro-bono projects (to complement casework already undertaken). This paper focuses on evaluating the impact of these changes. Using data collected, Hannah Menard (Clinic Director) and Gemma Sweetman (Course Leader) will demonstrate how student engagement improved and how this was key in placing students at the forefront of widening access to justice in the local community. Students quickly realised the crucial role they played, which resulted in the number of clients assisted by the Clinic more than tripling over a 12-month period. Further, students gained opportunities to develop local connections and access professional networks, which have begun to shape their future aspirations. Some have been inspired to pursue careers in areas of law they would not have otherwise considered (e.g. Housing), whilst others have been keen to continue volunteering in the Clinic post-graduation. The paper discusses how this mind-set is key to ensuring access to justice is upheld and how becoming involved in pro bono work whilst studying, gives students an early insight into the importance of this work and shapes their future values. |