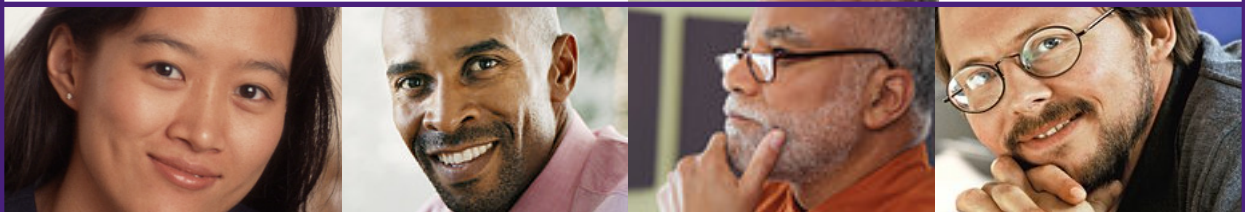




CENTER FOR
**Legal Aid
Education**

2006

YEAR END REPORT



Letter from the Board President

Dear Friends,



The Center Legal for Aid Education is only one year old and already it has captured national attention and won prestigious recognition. I hope you will read on and learn more about this inspiring initiative and what it might do for you or your legal services program. I also hope that you will get a glimpse of the small band of incredible people whose belief in justice and legal services has spawned CLAE and will strengthen our community and its legal advocacy for those in need.

I am proud to serve as the first president of the Board of Directors of the Center for Legal Aid Education and prouder still to be associated with Ellen Hemley and the exceptional people she has drawn, coaxed and recruited to work with her to create CLAE. Her work in New England is widely known and respected, and most advocates working there today have benefited personally from her training as a student, trainer, or both.

Until now, few other regions have enjoyed the type of coordinated, dynamic, sophisticated training curriculum that Ellen and her colleagues have developed on behalf of the New England legal services programs. Now with the creation of CLAE, we are able to offer the same high quality training, adapted to local needs, any where in the nation.

Get ready to read and be inspired. We hope that you take away some good ideas. Most of all, we hope that you will call us and challenge us with this type of question: why don't we have this kind of opportunity in my state? How can we get started?

Best Regards,
Willard P. Ogburn

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

With this 2006 Year-End report, we announce our new name – Center for Legal Aid Education – and describe some of our first year accomplishments as a new national organization. Twelve years ago, we witnessed the elimination of all federally funded structures to support legal aid advocacy coordination and training. Today there are still vast regions within our national community with limited or no formal continuing education. We created the Center for Legal Aid Education one year ago to address this problem.



Our basic premise is that continuing education, training and leadership development are essential elements of a high-quality, effective equal justice delivery system. We are all familiar with the rapid pace of change that affects our lives. As equal justice advocates, these changes implicate every aspect of our work – the demographics of the clients we serve, the technologies we use, the delivery systems we implement, our partners and collaborators, and the policies and laws that affect our clients' lives.

In 2006, the American Bar Association and the Legal Services Corporation each issued new practice standards and performance criteria that articulate aspirational and practical goals for civil legal aid providers. These documents speak volumes to the equal justice community's extensive professional development needs. We can no longer provide only lip service to the importance of life-long learning or entrust our community's learning needs to CLE providers or bar associations. Nor can we be satisfied with the kinds of ad hoc, episodic training that characterizes so much of our community's approach to continuing education.

Rather, we must embrace the fact that whether we are recent law school graduates or long-time equal justice veterans, change is the constant in our lives. If we accept this view, then the continuous pursuit of new knowledge, skills and attitudes is essential for all of us. But we must not stop there. We must also ensure that those opportunities are available for everyone within our community, regardless of where they work or how that work is funded.

The scope of our 2006 work is varied and dynamic. We offered our first Summer Institute in Seattle, presenting our unique Community Lawyering course. We adapted this course to meet the needs of advocates in the Gulf Coast states to use Community Lawyering techniques in disaster recovery. We provided consultation, technical assistance and training to legal aid providers in Mississippi. We delivered web-based training to equal justice advocates in far flung states around the country. We also launched a Leadership Institute in New England, while providing a core training curriculum for all advocates in that region.

Training and development are the threads we use to connect networks of new and experienced leaders. New lawyers bring passion and fresh ideas. Veterans bring experience and wisdom. Our purpose is to provide them the space to develop and pursue their passions for justice.

We have already begun to implement many of our 2007-08 goals but there is still a lot to do. We need your help to achieve our vision of an equal justice delivery system committed to life-long learning and high quality, effective legal services for all. We hope you will join us in the coming year.

Best regards,
Ellen Hemley

2006 Highlights

In 2006, the Center for Legal Aid Education sponsored ten training programs and launched two year-long fellowship programs, utilizing in-person, online and blended learning formats and bringing together close to four hundred equal justice advocates, community activists and private lawyers - as students and faculty - from organizations across the country. This year, we:

- Sponsored the first “CLAE at SU” Summer Institute in partnership with the Seattle University School of Law, giving west coast advocates access to our *Community Lawyering* curriculum; we will sponsor three Summer Institutes at SU in 2007;
- Sponsored our first Gulf Coast regional training, also on *Community Lawyering*, in Chatawa, Mississippi, in collaboration with the Mississippi Center for Justice and the Center for Law and Renewal and funded with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Florida Bar Foundation.
- Launched our first, year-long Leadership Institute for 12 fellows in New England. Each fellow is matched with a mentor. The fellows and mentors undergo a transformative year of training on core elements of establishing and maintaining effective leadership to benefit low-income clients.
- Received the American College of Trial Lawyers esteemed Emil Gumpert Award. We are honored to work with ACTL fellows as volunteers in our *Trial Skills Training*.
- Served as advisors and consultants to Mississippi legal aid programs as part of a year-long initiative to set standards and training for legal aid Call Center advocates in the state.
- Delivered five multi-day, in person courses for our New England members. These core curriculum courses included *Trial Skills*, *Administrative Hearing Skills*, *Case Planning and Discovery*, *Training of Trainers*, and *Basic Lawyering Skills Training*.
- Sponsored four web-based trainings through our national online campus to effectively bring *BLST Online* and *Negotiations Online* to advocates in fifteen states.
- Working with New Orleans Legal Services attorney Ranie Thompson, CLAE hosted a web-based training on FEMA recoupment issues for attorneys working with low-income survivors of Hurricane Katrina and other disasters.
- Created two new audio-visual resources for our Affirmative Litigation training. One presents a Motion to Dismiss before Federal District Court Judge William Young who also offers candid views on court practice. The other features Lucy Williams, Professor of Law at Northeastern University School of Law, in an animated presentation on Sovereign Immunity.
- Provided legal aid supervisors of course participants with support and information through our “supervisor track” so our students can effectively integrate their learning with their legal aid practice.
- In partnership with South Coastal Counties Legal Services, conducted a second 10 month training program for 25 AmeriCorps members working in fifteen legal aid programs in Massachusetts.

Overview of the Center for Legal Aid Education

What we do: The Center for Legal Aid Education provides continuing education, networking and training to a national community of equal justice advocates representing low-income, vulnerable and marginalized individuals and communities.

CLAE gives equal justice attorneys and staff the tools they need to achieve justice for their clients. Through our regional and national in-person and online campuses, we give advocates opportunities to meet their peers, practice skills, spread ideas, and connect to the values, vision and mission that make equal justice work so powerful.

Our Goals & Strategies: Our goal is to use training and continuing education to increase the capacity of the national equal justice community to effectively and creatively serve our client communities. We are pursuing this goal through several strategies.

Training Delivery & Ongoing Learning Communities:

- Foster development of regional training collaborations; CLAE offers an adaptable core curriculum – including in-person and web-based elements and oversight and management -- to regions that want to build their training capacity;
- Offer in-person continuing education and training to the national equal justice community through our two existing regional campuses in New England and Washington state;
- Offer web-based distance learning training to the national community through the CLAE online campus;
- Support ongoing learning communities that enable deeper relationships and sustain work on complex projects and learning goals.

Curriculum Design & Expansion:

- Recruit national training design teams to refine and expand our existing curriculum and develop new curriculum.

Faculty Development:

- Recruit and support a national cadre of course faculty.

Equal Justice Consulting & Technical Assistance:

- Provide support to individual equal justice organizations, states or regions.

What guides our work: CLAE strives for educational excellence premised on its commitments to:

- Client and community focus and engagement;
- Shared equal justice vision and core values incorporated into all aspects of learning and teaching;
- Life-long learning grounded in experience and refined through reflection;
- Innovation through continuous experimentation and unflinching evaluation;
- Strategic collaboration with equal justice partners;
- The critical role of professional development in building community, fostering diverse leadership, ensuring excellence in practice and accountability to equal justice core values.

Our approach: The Center for Legal Aid Education has a full-time staff devoted to the design and delivery of high-quality training programs. Our volunteers are experts in their fields who contribute their knowledge to the course development process; our experienced



Volunteer Fairlie Dalton debriefs opening arguments in March 06 Trial Training

training attorneys distil this input into training programs that use best practices in adult education.

We create detailed curricula, learning objectives, participant manuals, and trainer manuals for each course. The presence of dedicated staff ensures quality and the creation of more effective, replicable training courses.

Meet A Volunteer: Erika Tindill-Brodie



Erika Tindill-Brodie argues a Motion to Dismiss before Judge William J. Young.

You've served in several volunteer roles for CLAE, from starring in a training film to working on course design. Why do you volunteer?

Funny you should ask that, because when the time

came to film the motion to dismiss, I was kicking myself. Why did I agree to do this? I don't have time. I have a trial coming up. Why can't I say no?

But all along, I knew why I agreed. First, I'm younger and Black, and I knew that CLAE was trying to diversify its trainers. I feel more of an obligation to volunteer if it can show a face to legal services that looks more like our clients.

Second, it's critical to spread the word. There's a great need in the client community. Low-income people face legal problems and issues, and no other agency or social service group can help. If legal services won't do it, no one will. CLAE provides a really vital network and way for legal services advocates to come together to meet the needs of our clients.

How did you first run into CLAE?

I took *BLST* in 1999. I was new to legal services although not to legal practice. I'd been a domestic violence prosecutor in Florida for four years.

So as an attorney with four years of trial experience, did you get anything from BLST?

Oh yes. *BLST* gave me a sense of community, a network, the legal services history, and a context. I save all my training materials, because they have participant lists, and I've used those lists years later. I feel like I can call anyone on the list and say, "Hey, I met you at

BLST, and I want to ask you about something or get your advice."

One of CLAE's goals is to create ongoing learning communities. It sounds like you now have one.

Absolutely. CLAE created a network that normally I wouldn't have access to. You get stuck in your day-to-day grind, and volunteering is an opportunity to escape that and to meet new people with new ideas.

As an experienced practitioner and a Managing Attorney, would you see yourself taking another course?

Yes, because they are always revamping the curriculum to add new things. In fact, I'd love to go to the Structural Racism symposium, but I'm pregnant with my second child and due in March [2007], so I'll be busy then.

LSC Performance Criteria & ABA Standards Emphasize Training

When you choose a training provider, will their courses reinforce and support the best practices put forward recently by the Legal Services Corporation and the American Bar Association?

In 2006, the LSC and the ABA issued new "Performance Criteria" and "Standards of Practice for Providers of Civil Legal Assistance."

Both were created with the goal of quality assurance. Together they articulate expectations and standards related to every aspect of legal services work, from governing boards, delivery structures and internal systems and procedures to client relations and advocacy practices. They are both guided by the core



Larry Gardella of Alabama Legal Services presents a session at Gulf Coast Community Lawyering event on LSC Performance Criteria related to Community Lawyering.

values of responding to the needs of low income clients and communities, achieving lasting results that respond to low-income communities' most compelling legal needs, and treating persons served with dignity and respect.

Most legal services managing attorneys and program directors will agree with everything they read in the Performance Criteria and Standards, but they may be left with questions of how to bridge the gap between the ideal and the reality of day-to-day practice. Training can offer that bridge.

The commentary to the ABA's new Standard 6.5 is unequivocal on the importance of training. *"Training is an essential vehicle for ensuring the effective operation of a legal aid provider and its provision of high quality, effective assistance that responds to the needs of low income communities. [Training can] promote a culture that shares information, retains high quality staff and devises innovative methods to serve low income communities."*

The question for legal services programs now is: how can we ensure that the LSC & ABA best practices become part of our routine practice? The Center for Legal Aid Education offers training that can support legal aid programs in inculcating these best practices. For example, LSC Performance Area 3 and ABA Section 7 outline best practices related to specific legal aid advocacy skills – from client interviewing and counseling to motion practice, negotiation and litigation. CLAE's Core Curriculum covers all of these areas.

ABA Standard 6.5, referenced in the LSC Criteria, further enumerates the range of practices that training should address – including basic advocacy skills, emerging legal issues, leadership development, technology, human resources, and new staff orientation. It also describes the variety of training methods necessary to reach "individuals with different learning styles" and urges providers to take advantage of technology-based approaches that make training available to staff "isolated by geographic distance and other barriers." In addition to Standard 6.5, thirteen other ABA Standards reference the need for training.

CLAE offers events on cutting edge areas of practice, a unique Leadership Institute, core advocacy skills training, and other resources, and our web-based courses erase geographic barriers to training. As your region works to make the Performance Criteria and Standards a reality, consider how CLAE can support your efforts.

CLAE is committed to working with our national partners, including the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association, the Management Information Exchange, the Legal Services Corporation and the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defense to educate the national community about the new standards. In the coming year, we will update our Core Curriculum, add courses, and expand to new regions to make best practices become routine practice.

Community Lawyering coalesces an attorney's FEMA strategy

In the chaotic weeks after Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, Ranie Thompson was working for the ACLU in Jackson, Mississippi. Her family in New Orleans had evacuated, with the exception of one uncle who chose to ride out the storm at home, and they began to call her for help to sort through their suddenly topsy-turvy lives. Thompson realized that she needed to find

a way to move back home to Louisiana. She needed to be closer to her family, and she felt a growing urgency to

help the low-income people in her home state with disaster recovery. She left Mississippi and took a job at New Orleans Legal Services.



Attorney Ranie Thompson describes upcoming FEMA training

“We had to create every system from scratch,” Thompson explains, “and we also had the opportunity to build a New Orleans that was truly for the people. You can’t do that unless you are connected to the people and understand what the community base wants and needs. The concepts of *Community Lawyering* really put the pieces all together for me and showed me how to push this agenda forward.”

Thompson had taken CLAE’s *Basic Lawyering Skills Training* in 2004, and it helped her sharpen her skills and rethink her approach to client interviewing. She signed up for this year’s *Community Lawyering Training* in Mississippi with anticipation. The concepts of the *Community Lawyering* course would help her to coalesce a strategy to deal with a looming crisis for some of New Orleans’ poorest residents.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had handed out emergency cash assistance to thousands of storm survivors with minimal screening right after the storm. Many of those citizens received the \$2,000 minimum aid package and spent it immediately on food, clothing, shelter, evacuation transportation, and resettlement costs. In 2006, FEMA began notifying hundreds of recipients that, due to complex eligibility requirements, they were not entitled to the aid that they had already received. Through summary recoupment letters, they were ordered to return the money, in amounts ranging from \$900 to \$26,000. For the low-income clients that Thompson was seeing, that money was long gone, spent on basic subsistence. Clients also had no way to repay such a huge demand in the time allowed to them. “My first FEMA call was around August 2006,” Thompson recalls. “A mentally challenged client came in with a recoupment letter from FEMA demanding \$2,000, payable within 30 days. She was being accused of fraud, although she hadn’t even prepared the paperwork herself. Her skill in understanding these issues is limited. The notice had no option to negotiate or settle the claim, and it did not include any type of hardship waiver. When I tried to contact FEMA, no one there was willing to even listen to arguments or a defense on the case.” This case was the first of many, as more and more clients called or showed up with similar

demands to repay the expedited cash assistance. Clients had only 60 days to appeal the decision.

The issue is a ticking time bomb for the low-income community, as many poor people simply put the letter aside, unable to pay the amount asked. In the meantime, their cases are accruing interest and penalties, and they may have lost the right to appeal. So far, FEMA has not moved to the next stage of collections, but they can ultimately garnish these individual’s wages or government benefits, take their tax rebates, or pursue other means of collection.



“Before the *Community Lawyering* event,” Thompson says, “I didn’t think that making stakeholder contacts was my responsibility. But I realized that depending on someone else was delaying my ability to push my agenda forward. It was the missing piece in my strategy, connections to people who have the information I need. I take a more holistic approach and consider who might be able to help more broadly. For example, in the FEMA cases, I’ve been encouraging my clients to inform their Senators and Representatives, who are at the table right now on this issue in D.C. I’ve also brought in the private bar and briefed them on the possible need to pursue a class action suit on the issue.”

Before the *Community Lawyering* course, Thompson had already committed to leading an online training on FEMA issues for legal aid and pro bono attorneys nationally, but she was uncertain how to make it work. “Ross, Gene, and Ellen [from CLAE] helped me pull it all together. They helped me see how I could use the training to learn more about the extent of the (FEMA) problem. They also eased me into the world of online training.” Thompson hopes to continue the conversation with her colleagues on this issue in the coming months, with the support of CLAE.

American College of Trial Lawyers Bestows Highest Public Service Honor to CLAE

Last year, the American College of Trial Lawyers awarded its prestigious Emil Gumpert award, a \$50,000 prize, to CLAE for its innovative work to improve the administration of justice. The College considers this to be the highest honor it bestows on any program and selected CLAE from among sixty-seven applicants.



Former ACTL President Michael Cooper; CLAE Board President Willard Ogburn; Ellen Hemley; former ACTL Gumpert Chair Joseph Steinfield; and ACTL fellow Richard Zielinski at award luncheon in July, 06.

Boston attorney and then Gumpert Committee Chair Joseph Steinfield, praised CLAE as “a unique program that the American College is anxious to support, both with this grant and with the direct involvement of many Fellows of the College.” CLAE has already made good use of the Gumpert award to fund development of a new CD and DVD for its revised Affirmative Litigation training (described on next page.).

CLAE’s relationship with the ACTL predates the Emil Gumpert award. With the help of Boston attorney Richard Zielinski, former chair of the ACTL’s Committee on Teaching Trial & Appellate Advocacy and long-time CLAE supporter, we have sponsored three four-day Trial Skills training programs three times since 2003, training close to ninety legal aid attorneys.

This year’s program was open to legal aid attorneys nationally. For Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma attorney Kimberly Moore-Waite, the training was invaluable. “This was the first time I had the opportunity to practice trial skills from beginning to end and to receive such thorough

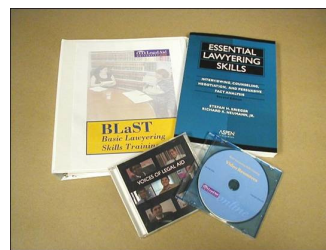
and helpful feedback.” Says Zielinski, “The American College is proud to be a continuing sponsor of this very worthwhile program. It gives us an opportunity to give something back to the members of the legal services community, who are among the true heroes of our profession.”

Distance Training Enhances Learning & Breaks Down Barriers

Because of cost, timing, and family needs, in-person legal aid training remains out of reach for many equal justice advocates. Internet-based training is a powerful, effective vehicle for equalizing training access, and the web-based format makes training more timely and accessible.

Beginning with the design of three core advocacy skills courses, CLAE pioneered an approach to web-based learning that maintains best practices in adult education. It also overcomes a number of traditional training barriers such as geographic distance and time. Over the last several years, CLAE has delivered these courses to advocates in over thirty states.

The first course, *Basic Lawyering Skills Training (BLST) Online*, focuses on client interviewing, counseling, case analysis and planning with an emphasis on holistic client advocacy. The course is delivered over four weeks and includes a mix of readings, class discussions and structured exercises centered on a fictional client, Mona Hawkins.



The second course, *Negotiations Online*, teaches the “seven element” negotiations framework developed by the Harvard Negotiation Project. In this two week course, students prepare for and conduct four sequenced mock negotiations and receive detailed feedback and critique from course facilitators.

Spotlight On: Affirmative Litigation

CLAE's newest web-based course, *Affirmative Litigation Training (ALT)*, is a "hybrid" course, combining web-based and in-person learning activities. Previously offered as a four-day in-person event, *ALT* is structured over five weeks,



J. William G. Young presides over a motion to dismiss arguments in the case of Rebecca Just v. Derby Shelter.

with the first four conducted through the CLAE online campus. There, students work through much of the dense substantive law that characterizes "affirmative

litigation" – jurisdiction, causes of action and state action; standing and mootness; exhaustion, preclusion and sovereign immunity. But rather than trying to cover this vast terrain in mere hours, as is done in the in-person version, the web-based format allows students to absorb the material with greater attention and apply it to a carefully designed case scenario and their own work as legal aid lawyers. They also draft a federal court complaint and argue a motion for preliminary relief. In the final week, students come together for a two-day in-person session in which they argue a motion to dismiss before a panel of judges and explore a range of litigation issues related to legal aid practice.

With funding from the American College of Trial Lawyers, CLAE developed two additional resources for the *ALT* course. The first features a lecture on Sovereign Immunity by Northeastern Law School Professor Lucy Williams. The second features a motion to dismiss argument before U.S. District Court Judge William Young. The arguments were expertly presented by Erika Tindill of New Haven Legal Assistance and Anne Louise Blanchard of Connecticut Legal Services. These resources will add immeasurably to the practice of emerging and seasoned litigators. The revised *ALT* is scheduled to begin in early summer 2007.

Regional Campuses: Washington State & New England

Seattle University School of Law

One of the first steps in developing national access to CLAE's in-person courses was the creation of a west-coast campus. CLAE was enormously fortunate to find the perfect partner in Seattle University School of Law in downtown Seattle.

Provost Susan L. Secker explains the relationship in these terms: "CLAE at SU' ... further distinguishes this law school as one that trains great lawyers who measure their success by the degree to which their efforts make this a more just and humane world."

CLAE's ability to establish the relationship with Seattle University School of Law was in large part the result of its relationship with Ada Shen-Jaffe, now serving as Public Interest Scholar in Residence. Shen-Jaffe, known for decades of leadership in the service of justice for the poorest and most marginalized people in society, explained her reasons for forging a relationship between Seattle U and the Center for Legal Aid Education. "I believe that strengthening our national equal

justice community's capacity to effectively transmit what we have learned to a capable and committed next generation of advocates is some of the most urgent and important work



Ada Shen-Jaffe welcomes participants to CLAE's first Summer Institute

we have to do, and my excitement about CLAE is rooted in its potential to make a unique and strategic contribution to this effort."

During 2006, CLAE sponsored the first of what will be annual summer institutes at SU, offering *Community Lawyering* training to legal aid staff from Washington and seven other states. Exploring core skills and attitudes associated with community-engaged legal practice, the

program also profiled examples of community lawyering initiatives undertaken by legal aid programs in the region. During 2007, the SU Summer Institutes will expand to three courses, providing a broad range of creative on-site training opportunities for a national audience of legal aid advocates.

The Legal Services Training Consortium of New England

Since its creation in fall 1999, the Training Consortium has provided hundreds of advocates each year with regular opportunities to learn



Andrew Cohen of Committee for Public Counsel Services presents opening argument during 06 Trial Skills training co-sponsored with the American College of Trial Lawyers

from each other and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to respond effectively to the many complex challenges their clients face. Seven years later, the Consortium

continues to distinguish itself as a national model – through the successes of its regional training structure, innovative use of technology, and ongoing design of new programs and resources that respond to its community’s emerging needs.

Consortium activities involve staff at many levels and with different interests, including programs for new lawyers, litigators, advocates working with community groups, hot-line staff, support staff, and advocacy directors. In 2006, the Consortium once again offered a wide range of learning opportunities for its members, including five “Core Curriculum” training programs – *Trial Skills*, *Basic Lawyering Skills*, *Case Planning & Discovery*, *Administrative Hearing Skills*, and *Training for Trainers* -- and the launch of the Leadership Institute. The Core Curriculum refers to training programs that teach basic advocacy and organizational skills that most legal aid advocates require at various developmental levels. Some of these programs, such as *Basic Lawyering Skills training*, are offered annually; others are offered on a bi-annual or less frequent schedule.

Featuring a new 18-month training calendar that enables advocates to more effectively plan their development, the Consortium’s 2007-08 schedule includes a number of Core Curriculum programs, a cutting edge *Advocacy Symposium on Structural Racism*, ongoing Leadership Institute programming as well as some new courses. See www.legalaideducation.org for more information about the Consortium’s 2007-08 activities.

Year Long Programs for Distinct Learner Communities

CLAE Learning Institutes support the professional development of participants over an extended period of time. Participants benefit not only from regular, periodic course events, but also from online activities that continue the learning between these gatherings. Through structured, long-term connections, we foster robust communities that enable deeper relationships and sustain work on complex projects and learning goals. Read about two of these efforts on the following pages.

AmeriCorps Institute

Legal Aid providers recognize the importance of recruiting and retaining talented lawyers and paralegals into legal services. To promote legal aid as a career option, South Coastal Counties Legal Services (SCCLS) in Massachusetts established the AmeriCorps Legal Assistance for Self-

Sufficiency Program in 2005. SCLS partnered with CLAE to train and support twenty-six fellows placed in legal aid programs throughout the state.



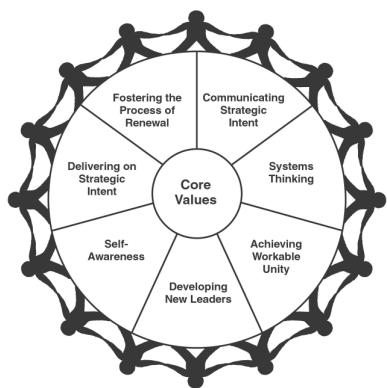
Second year AmeriCorps member Clay Fornier talks with another AmeriCorps member

Working with SCCLS and the fellows, CLAE created a sequence of training events that cover client interviewing and counseling,

administrative hearing skills, negotiation, and community-oriented advocacy. The results were immediate: several days after the first Administrative Hearing skills training, AmeriCorps fellow Sabrina Acloque represented her first client in a housing matter – and won! CLAE is now in the midst of a second year partnering with SCLS and the AmeriCorps program. Marking the program’s success is the fact that three fellows have returned for another year of service in the name of equal justice.

The NE Leadership Institute

The first generation of legal aid leaders is beginning to reach the end of their careers. This point was brought home dramatically in New England where, in 2006, five Executive Directors elected to leave their positions. We are



seeing similar major turnovers across the country. Developing a new class of talented, diverse and carefully nurtured emerging leaders is now

a community imperative. Recognizing this and the fact that effective leadership cannot be “taught” in single events, CLAE developed a cutting edge, year-long Leadership Institute.

CLAE has been in the forefront of the national equal justice community’s efforts to effectively develop and strengthen existing and emerging leaders. Over the last several years, CLAE developed a comprehensive leadership curriculum based on a set of seven core leadership competencies. Building on the initial curriculum, the Leadership Institute takes place over thirteen months and includes a combination of in-person and web-based training, structured leadership development opportunities, peer support and mentoring. Leadership competencies are introduced incrementally, reinforced through follow-up events and activities, and coupled with actual leadership practice and reflection.

Since its launch in September 2006, fellows and mentors have already attended two in-person retreats and participated in web-based learning activities. Martha Bergmark, President of the Mississippi Center for Justice and former NLADA Civil Legal Aid Director, set the tone of the Institute at the first retreat. In telling the story of how the MCJ was created and how MCJ and its many partners responded to unprecedented challenges in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, she provided a compelling model of what effective equal justice leadership can accomplish and how it can be developed.

Mentorship is a critical component of the Leadership Institute. Mentors are chosen based on their demonstrated leadership, commitment to legal aid and willingness to support others’ leadership development. Mentors participate in an initial training program and ongoing in-person and web-based support, to introduce them to the Leadership & Justice curriculum and the skills necessary to serve effectively as mentors.

Fellows work on leadership initiatives developed with support from their sponsoring programs. These initiatives address needs within legal aid organizations and the client communities they serve. They span management initiatives such as new hiring and recruitment programs to direct client service projects such as creation of a worker center for low wage immigrant workers.



Fellows participate in welcoming skit at LI retreat.

Mentors support their fellows in their chosen initiatives. They provide a seasoned view to help fellows navigate the politics of their initiatives, or craft a plethora of ideas and goals into a manageable and achievable initiative. For mentors and fellows, knowing what to ask for, what to suggest, and when to listen helps them cultivate relational skills at the very heart of effective leadership.

Leadership Institute: Focus on Astrid Lebron



*Leadership Institute
Fellow Astrid Lebron*

Fellow Astrid Lebron, Development Director at Connecticut Legal Services, describes her experience in the inaugural class of fellows for the first Leadership Institute.

Q: What's been the most significant aspect of the Leadership Institute for you?

A: I think that the self-evaluation and the

360-degree feedback has been the most eye-opening and useful piece. I think that we [the fellows] are all self-aware enough to know our areas of weakness but, like anyone, we try to hide from them or only deal with them if we absolutely have to. The process meant that you couldn't hide from the facts anymore, and it gave us a chance to be introspective. I had to face my challenges as a leader, deal with them, and make a plan. It's not just about being a leader; it's about being a *good* leader. It's made me much more self-aware, and given me an urgency to do it now. My leadership initiative is to increase the diversity of my legal services agency. In December 2006, after I decided on my initiative, I was promoted to Director of Development, and part of my job is serving as the permanent co-chair of our agency's hiring committee. I still face plenty of challenges, but I'm now in a decision-making position that can help me achieve my goals.

Q: Why did you want to participate in the Leadership Institute?

My executive director Steve Eppler-Epstein helped create the Leadership Institute. He told me about it, and it was very interesting to me. The goals of the Institute went directly to how I wanted to practice law and what I wanted my role to be within this organization. I've been with Connecticut Legal Services six and a half years. The Institute showed how I could influence things, even without vertical promotions. Horizontal opportunities could be

just as meaningful in terms of moving my agenda.

Q: Tell us about your mentor, Fran Fajana, and about the experience of having a mentor.

Fran is great. We're similar people, both very independent, so it's been a good match. Fran's given me space to pursue my goals. We talked a lot about my initiative. She's sensitive to these issues, and she knows what she's talking about, so I listen closely to what she has to say.

Also, it's just very motivating to see another woman of color in a position of power, using her power positively.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say about the experience so far?

The Leadership Institute has just been really motivating and inspiring. It's been a really good, really positive experience. Everyone associated with the Institute, and every encounter, has left me motivated and feeling I can take on the world.



Elam Lantz and Carolina Africano work on Carolina's leadership initiative

Equal Justice Consulting: A Single Point of Entry for Mississippi Clients

The impact of racism and poverty, exposed by Hurricane Katrina, came as no surprise to those who live and work in Mississippi. A 2005 National Census bureau survey revealed that Mississippi has the highest poverty rate and lowest median income nationally. In Mississippi, an extreme scarcity of resources for

legal services delivery accompanies the state's poverty. Mississippi ranks third from the bottom in per capita legal services funding nationwide, with sister states Alabama and Arkansas ranking first and second.

However, these challenges have not daunted Mississippi's equal justice advocates. On the contrary, staff from the MS Center for Legal Services, North MS Rural Legal Services, MS Volunteer Lawyers Project and the MS Center for Justice are among the most dedicated in the nation, striving to



strengthen and expand their delivery system. As part of this commitment, the Mississippi providers began work this year on creating a "single point of entry" for those seeking legal assistance throughout the state. As envisioned, this statewide call center will link clients with legal aid providers, and providers with each other and other elements of the justice system, including the courts and the legislature.

Faced with the aftermath of Katrina and unprecedented demands for services, the MS programs faced a daunting challenge in realizing their call center vision. The programs called on the Center for Legal Aid Education for assistance. In November 2006, CLAE staff met with close to thirty legal aid staff and pro bono volunteers from the four programs to map out a year-long process for achieving their goals. From this meeting grew a shared vision with the call center located at the very center of the Mississippi equal justice delivery system. The call center will provide information, advice and other limited assistance to clients whose legal problems cannot be referred for more extensive services. It will also be a vehicle for documenting and communicating the extent of the low-income community's needs. The two LSC-funded providers will jointly staff and manage the call center, and intake workers will participate through shared technology from locations throughout the state.

CLAE staff are actively researching model systems throughout the country and facilitating development of project goals and work plans. In

addition, they are working with vendors to understand and maximize the value of available technology, and collecting and developing logic models, flow charts, scripts and other protocols to guide system development. Beginning in March 07, CLAE will also conduct team building among front line staff and training on triage, screening and referral, and maximum effective use of available technology.

Gulf Coast Community Lawyering Training

For three days in early December, the Center for Legal Aid Education brought together close to fifty legal aid advocates and community leaders from throughout the Gulf Coast states for *Community Lawyering* training. The event was co-sponsored by the Mississippi Center for Justice and the Center for Law and Renewal with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Florida Bar Foundation. Advocates and community partners still struggling with challenges posed by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina learned new advocacy skills and shared information about their successes and challenges. Participants also met in state and regional groups to work on problems back home; they successfully built new relationships that will enhance their ability to address state and regional issues.



Yumeka Rushing facilitates group at Gulf Coast Community Lawyering event

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