

# Building bridges

Wayne State and University of Windsor partner to offer an environmental clinic

## Environmental Law

By Gary Gosselin

Law students in Detroit and Windsor wishing to focus on international environmental law just got another resource: The Transnational Environmental Law Clinic.

Students from Wayne State University and University of Windsor Law School are the beneficiaries of North America's first clinic of its kind, where they will learn practical applications of international environmental law.

"We have such a great relationship with Canada and long history of cooperation; it's a friendly border, and that lends itself to the U.S. and Canada working together," said Nick Schroeck, executive director of the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center (GLELC) and head of the Wayne Law Environmental Law Clinic, two resources with which the students will work closely.

"Wayne Law's already established Environmental Law Clinic, which works closely with the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center, provides an ideal base from which we will expand course offerings for our students on an international scale," Schroeck said.

Students will likely take some classes at each campus, he said.

Two Canadian students are participating in a pilot program for credit now under Windsor Law professor Marcia Valiante, and 15-20 students from both sides of the border are expected to attend the clinic in



**Nick Schroeck, executive director of the Environmental Law Center and head of the Wayne Law Environmental Law Clinic, helped get discussions rolling for the new law clinic.**

the fall semester Schroeck said.

"Our students at both law schools will be able to learn about another nation's legal system and take an active role in affecting environmental policy," said Valiante, who helped spearhead the collaboration with Schroeck and Wayne Law professor Noah Hall. "The countries face similar environmental challenges that we hope to address in a cooperative way for the benefit of citizens on both sides of the border."

"At University of Windsor, we put very high value on transnational issues and law and require all students to take on courses of a transnational nature; this is another offering that would fall into that category,"

UW Dean Bruce Elman told *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*. "We also put a very high emphasis in experiential learning; legal aid, assistance clinics ... and this adds to our offerings to enrich students' education."

Elman said his school has other cross-border initiatives, including a major program offering a dual Canadian and American J.D., working with University of Detroit Mercy School of Law to allow students to become qualified in the U.S. and Canada.

He also mentioned a collaboration between Wayne Law, U-D Mercy Law and Windsor Law in an intellectual law institute, in which students can take intellectual property courses at any of the three at no extra

charge, and counted as part of the programs.

The two schools also collaborated on past projects, including the 2009 Boundary Waters Treaty Centennial Symposium.

"In a sense, we pool our IP courses so we probably are able to offer more IP classes than any other law school in Canada or the U.S.," Elman said. "We are blessed with this bit of geography."

Representatives from the schools started meeting about a year ago. Last fall, the deans got together, met with faculty, and made the clinic a reality in time for the two winter semester students.

"It's an opportunity for students to see how each other's system works, and work on projects together and help promote regionalism — and not forget about our friends right across the river," Schroeck said. "It will be education, and hopefully shape some policy, too."

As part of the clinic and practical work, the students will work on real cross-border initiatives, and, as part of the classroom instruction, talk about treaties (like the North American Free Trade Agreement) and review potential trade impacts on the environment.

It doesn't make sense to have Canadian students working on Michigan cases and vice versa, Schroeck said, but there are broader issues that affect both countries. These include offshore wind-power generation, air quality, water quality, and, if anyone's looked at the Ambassador Bridge mess lately, cross-border traffic and its effects.

Elman said there has been a lot of focus on environmental issues, but said interest in the big-picture view is growing.

"I think there is a greater concern about the environment; when I was a student, the big deal was the Alaskan pipeline, and in retrospect, that was a localized problem," Elman said. "But I think now, with things such as the BP disaster and latest nuclear disaster in Japan, global warming, invasive species ..."

"I think the environment has become heightened in people's minds, and people will want to access lawyers to deal with some of the" issues, he said.

*If you would like to comment on this story, please contact Gary Gosselin at (248) 865-3103 or gary.gosselin@mi.lawyersweekly.com.*

## ON THE STAND

**Maureen M. McGinnis** Donald E. McGinnis Jr., P.C., Troy

Education: Michigan State University-Detroit College of Law | Specialties: Criminal and family law

The most resonant thing Maureen M. McGinnis said she learned in law school was how analyzing a problem is paramount in any attorney's role.

It would prove to be just as valid in her other role, as member of Troy's city council.

Instead of answering to a client, she's making decisions for the residents of the 12th largest city in Michigan.

"It's a stressful job, it tests who you are, and makes you think about something bigger than yourself," said McGinnis, who

also serves as chair of the Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Michigan.

Although she won the spot November 2009, McGinnis said that there would have been no downside had she lost in her maiden run for office.

"You gain the experience of the campaign process," she said. "I met many amazing people, and I got that much more educated about issues in my community."

In addition, she said her think-on-your-feet skills have been sharpened, especially with panel discussions. It's much different from the legal setting, she said.

"As an attorney, you try to control the information you're providing. You can't always do that here."

### The riskiest thing you ever did?

Bungee jumping. It was thrill-seeking for me, like, could I really do this? The first time, in Texas, I don't remember any fear at all, but the second time, in Las Vegas, I almost had to be pushed off the ledge. And I'm not sure how that happened; if I did it once, shouldn't the second time be easier?

### What scares you the most and why?

Facebook. It's so overwhelming.

I don't know if it's a time-management thing, as I hear stories about people who are so attached to it. So I've not allowed myself to even go there.

### Is there a personal memento you cherish?

I've worn the same St. Christopher medallion since I was 14. It was something I found, and I was interested in what it stood for. He was the patron saint of travels, and he's supposed to protect you when you're away from home. I've even worn it when standing at weddings.

### What do you like best to do to cut loose?

My sister lives in Colorado, and I did my undergrad at University of Colorado-Boulder, so I find any excuse to go there. I love snowboarding.

### Ever had a good wipeout while snowboarding?

Oh yeah. There have been quite a few. We call them "yard sales." I haven't broken any bones; only just suffered a shattered ego. And because they're real mountains, any wipeout you have in Colorado is exponentially bigger than any you'd have here at, say, Mount Holly.



LW photo by Douglas J. Levy



**Maureen M. McGinnis enjoys snowboarding in Colorado.**

### If you could go back and re-live one day in your life, which would it be?

The day I finished my freshman year at college. You learn so much about yourself in that

first period of time when you're away from your nest. And that day validated that going there was the best decision I could have made.

— DOUGLAS J. LEVY