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Law School Report

Between two worlds *Bridging the gap between future lawyers and future doctors*

The little-explored nexus of law practice and medical care is the focus of a new joint venture between UB Law School and the University of Rochester Medical School.

Two UB Law faculty members, Catherine Cerulli '92 and Amy Campbell, are serving joint appointments in both the Law School and the medical school. The focus is one that is familiar from one of UB Law's most successful clinical programs: domestic violence.

"We are trying to bring evidence-based research – based on empirical findings, not anecdotal evidence – to improve services for domestic violence or interpersonal violence victims," says Cerulli, a clinical instructor at UB Law. As an assistant professor of psychiatry, she directs the Laboratory of Interpersonal Violence and Victimization at the University of Rochester Medical Center, the umbrella organization for the joint venture.

Cerulli worked as a prosecutor in Monroe County for four years, but says she became increasingly frustrated with the recidivism she saw. She has just completed a Ph.D. in criminal justice at the State University at Albany, which she said has equipped her with the research tools to try to get at the roots of epidemic domestic violence.

The Laboratory of Interpersonal Violence and Victimization has three focuses: education, research and community service.

In education, courses taught through the program offer course credit to both UB and U of R students. Courses are co-listed at both schools, with the result that law students and medical students sit side-by-side in the classroom – a quite uncommon situation. "This is to try to form relationships with the opposite profession in the formative years of their education," Cerulli says, "to be able to hear each other's perspective. The response from the students has been wonderful." She says the program offers additional class options for the many UB Law students who are based in Rochester.

In addition, Campbell, who graduated from Yale Law School and holds a master's degree in bioethics, has been commuting to Buffalo one day a week to teach a Law School seminar in bioethics.

"We are growing it by these linkages at first, then hoping to establish a more formal relationship," Campbell says. "Right now it is just law and perhaps social work students. The idea is to have



Catherine Cerulli '92

more law, medical students, public health, a bunch of different disciplines together.

"For me, what drives it is therapeutic jurisprudence. I am very interested in kids, especially kids with mental health issues. A lot of those are our more vulnerable populations.

"The question is, how can we make our legal actors more therapeutic or at least less anti-therapeutic? We want to bring sociology and psychology insights to bear on the law. How can we get them to start to approach these matters differently?"

"I am thrilled to be given the opportunity to do this work. I like its interdisciplinary character. For certain communities, this is the way we have to do things. We all have to figure out how to work together more effectively."

In research, the program seeks to "use science to create law," Cerulli says, through legislative analysis. For example, the researchers recently studied 220 homicide cases in Ohio to assess how the law was brought to bear on each case. What did the police do when they arrived on the scene? Did the district attorney win an indictment? What did the jury do? How did the judge approach sentencing? The intent was to apply statistical rigor to the question of how the laws are executed.

In community service, the program serves as a resource for diverse clients seeking information on issues related to domestic violence. A legislator's office may call for background to support a bill the lawmaker wants to propose; attorneys come seeking technical support on domestic violence cases in which they are involved. The program also advocates for advances in therapeutic justice, trying to make the courts and the bar more aware of the social services needs behind the cases they try.

Suzanne Tomkins '92, the UB Law clinical associate professor who runs the school's Family Violence Clinic, says another community service initiative arising out of the program is an attempt to coordinate the delivery of training for those who deal with targets of domestic violence. With federal money allocated through the state STOP program, she says, advocates are providing technical assistance and support to domestic violence initiatives throughout the 10 counties of Western New York.

The effort seeks to coordinate training efforts, such as new-employee training at shelters, with other advocacy groups, such as the umbrella New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.