

Entrepreneurship and Community Development (“ECD”) Clinic FAQs for Students

What does the ECD Clinic do?

The ECD Clinic provides transactional legal representation to entrepreneurs, nonprofits, community groups, and small businesses. ECD Clinic clients seek to positively impact the St. Louis community in a variety of ways, including neighborhood revitalization, job creation, producing and preserving affordable housing, offering needed goods and services, and working to generate solutions to common community problems. Under the guidance and supervision of a full-time faculty member, law students provide legal services to ECD Clinic clients on a range of matters in the following three areas:

Community Development: The ECD Clinic assists community-based nonprofits, social entrepreneurs, neighborhood groups, and other members of the community with transactional matters including fiscal sponsorship, choice of entity and formation, obtaining and maintaining federal tax-exempt status, governance issues, contract drafting and review, regulatory compliance issues, and real estate matters (including, for example, those relating to vacant and abandoned property).

Entrepreneurship: The ECD Clinic assists entrepreneurs, start-ups, and small businesses with transactional matters including choice of entity and formation, occupational licensing and permitting, employment matters, contract drafting and review, regulatory compliance issues, and legal research.

Policy: The ECD Clinic works with advocates and community organizations to develop local and state policy solutions to advance entrepreneurship and community development in St. Louis and nationally.

What doesn’t the ECD Clinic do?

Generally, the ECD Clinic does not litigate, provide bankruptcy services, provide advice concerning securities law or tax law compliance, or provide intellectual property services. Also, the ECD Clinic does not field quick questions or accept walk-ins.

Who can become an ECD Clinic client?

Missouri residents, nonprofits, or for-profits that need legal assistance in the ECD Clinic’s practice areas may complete an ECD Clinic Client Intake Form to be considered to be an ECD Clinic client. Clients are selected considering a variety of factors, including the ECD Clinic’s current capacity, the suitability of the matter for student educational purposes, the applicant’s available resources and access to market-rate legal services (including the applicant’s income and family size), timing needs, and the applicant’s potential community impact. The ECD Clinic’s services are best suited

for applicants who have developed clear ideas, goals, and plans for their ventures (for example, as evidenced by a viable business plan or other written document).

What will I learn in the ECD Clinic?

The goal is for you to have opportunities to practice

- conducting transactional client interviews;
- using strategies to investigate, plan, and manage client work to help transactional clients reach stated goals;
- conducting legal research and applying it in ways that advance client goals;
- drafting legal documents;
- communicating with clients orally and in writing;
- recognizing professional and ethical obligations and knowing where to look for guidance; and
- using professional development strategies, including collaboration, self-assessment, and reflection.

After completing the classroom and clinic components of this course, you will be able to

- demonstrate at least basic competency with the following legal skills: communication (oral and written), legal drafting, fact investigation, research, client management, legal analysis, planning and strategy, ethical and professional judgment, timekeeping and time management, case management, cross-cultural competency, self-assessment and reflection, and collaboration;
- understand some of the historical, social, and systems contexts of entrepreneurship and community development law and practice; and
- understand some frameworks for situating the lawyer's role in community.

The ECD Clinic may be a good fit for you if you

- want to make an impact in the St. Louis community;
- are trying to decide whether a transactional or a litigation practice is the best fit or you already know you want to do transactional work and want the opportunity to develop transactional skills prior to graduation;
- want to experience direct communication and counseling (in person, by phone, and through written correspondence) with a variety of real clients; or
- want to learn to manage multiple legal matters and clients while developing your own professional judgment and identity.

How is the ECD Clinic different from working at a law firm, in-house legal department, or similar legal setting?

The primary difference is that, in the ECD Clinic, you are encouraged and expected to learn to take the lead on your client matters and to take responsibility for those matters under supportive supervision. The goal is for your supervisor to be "second chair" rather than the other way around.

When and how can I sign up for the ECD Clinic?

You can apply for the ECD Clinic by completing an application that becomes available prior to the general registration period each semester. Watch for announcements in the SLU Law News, or contact Professor Dana Malkus (dana.malkus@slu.edu).

Unless you have permission from Professor Malkus, you need to have completed half law school credit hours and Legal Profession before beginning your semester in the ECD Clinic. Therefore, you can apply during the semester just prior to the semester in which you will have completed those requirements. For most students, this means you can apply during your 2L and 3L years.

Can I register myself for the ECD Clinic?

No. Only the Professor Malkus can register you.

Can I drop the ECD Clinic just like any other law school class?

No. Once you are accepted into the ECD Clinic, you are expected to begin when the semester starts. In rare circumstances, a student accepted into the ECD Clinic will have a need to drop the ECD Clinic. In these circumstances, the accepted student will need to discuss the situation with Professor Malkus to obtain approval for withdrawal. Such approval is granted only under extraordinary circumstances.

How many hours per week do I need to work in the ECD Clinic for the live-client component? How is it graded?

As a Clinic I student, the minimum number of credits you can request for the live-client (non-classroom) component of the ECD Clinic is 3 credit hours (135 hours of client work over the course of the semester); the maximum number of credits you can request is 4 credit hours (180 hours of client work over the course of the semester).

As a Clinic II student (which you are eligible to take after completing a semester as a Clinic I student), the minimum number of credits you can request is 2 credit hours (90 total hours over the course of the semester); the maximum number of credits you can request is 3 credit hours (135 total hours over the course of the semester).

The live-client component is graded on a pass/fail basis.

How many credit hours is the classroom component? How is it graded?

The Clinic I classroom component is 2 credit hours; the class meets on Wednesdays from 4-5:50 p.m. The classroom component is graded on a letter-grade basis in accordance with School of Law grading policies and procedures.

The Clinic II classroom component is wrapped into the Clinic II hours and is not a separate course.

When will I know whether I have been accepted into the ECD Clinic?

You will be notified by email prior to general registration whether you have been accepted.

Whom should I contact if I have questions?

Please feel free to contact Professor Dana Malkus (dana.malkus@slu.edu).