SLS CLINICS – FAQs

How can I learn about the work of each individual clinic?
Start with the clinic Details Sheet. One side has a grid of all 11 clinics and a thumbnail description of the work in each clinic. Go from there to the Mills Legal Clinic website, where you can explore the page of each clinic describing its clients and work. Check out the clinic Facebook page and blog, too, for stories of the amazing work that clinic students have been doing, including featured “Day in the Life” stories. Want more details? Contact any of the clinic faculty or supervising attorneys, clinic director Juliet Brodie, or Associate Director Judy Gielniak. Any and all will be happy to chat with you personally, and to direct you to current and former students for their perspectives.

Is the Mills Legal Clinic one law firm, or eleven?
MLC is a single law firm, which is why students enrolled in all the clinics can sit in a common space, and talk about their clients, cases, and projects without violating attorney-client privilege or confidentiality rules. (The exception is the Criminal Prosecution Clinic, which, for conflict of interest reasons, is not within the MLC.)

You say law students function as the “first chair” attorneys for their clients. But how is this possible, since they aren’t actual attorneys?
Before the start of your clinical quarter, you become “certified” under California court rules. This involves some paperwork (clinic staff will walk you through it), and once it’s done you are permitted to practice law, as defined in the rules, under the supervision of the clinic instructors. You will get your own unique certified law student number, which functions as your bar number during your clinic quarter.

Will I get the training and supervision I need to be capable of representing my clients?
All of the clinics start with an intensive training week to orient you to the substantive law and introductory skills you’ll need to work with clients. After that initial training, the clinics transition into a weekly rhythm of one-on-one (or two-on-one) supervision, seminars, workshops, and case rounds. Training and supervision are continual, and include moots of important events (board meetings, court appearances, presentations) and extensive debriefing afterwards. Nothing goes out the door—no letter, no document, no email, no phone call—until you’re ready.

All of the clinics look awesome! How should I choose?
All of the clinics offer exceptional experiences; you really can’t go wrong. That being said, we recommend that you think about (1) the mode(s) of lawyering that each clinic engages (trial-level litigation, appellate, policy, report-writing, transactions), (2) the types of clients the clinic represents (individuals, organizations, community groups), and (3) the subject matter(s) that the clinic touches (criminal, IP, international, etc.). Then think about what you most want or need to learn to round out your education. Some students like to use clinic to hone a skill they know they want to use in their practice; others recognize the opportunity to experience something brand new in clinic.
I keep hearing about lawyering “skills” I need to learn, but what are they specifically?
Lawyers need to know how to read, find, analyze, and understand law. But that’s not enough. No matter where they practice, lawyers also need to know how to communicate effectively and efficiently in writing and in speaking; they need to know how to analyze a problem from a client’s perspective and how to apply law to a client’s actual situation, be it in business or in their personal life. Lawyers need to appreciate that “facts” are not fixed or pre-packaged, but that “facts” is a lawyer’s word for actual human experience and are as messy and indeterminate as that experience. Lawyers need to be able to handle the stress of being professionally responsible for the important matters of others. Lawyers need to be able to handle uncertainty and be able to give competent, sound advice in the face of it. Finally, lawyers need to know how to interact appropriately with other professionals in the legal system and in other disciplines. The best way to learn this stuff is by doing, with close, personal supervision—in the clinics.

How many credits do I earn for full-time clinic?
12.

How are the 12 credits graded?
You will get three grades, one for each of three 4-credit courses. Each course is graded on the H/P system.

Can I do more than one clinic?
You can take up to 27 clinic credits while at SLS. It is thus possible to do two full-time clinics while at SLS, and every year some students do that.

Can I do a clinic part-time?
All of the SLS clinics are full-time. The only way to do part-time clinic is by enrolling in the Advanced Clinic after your initial full-time clinical quarter. Most, but not all, clinics offer advanced clinic opportunities. Some students continue in the advanced clinic for multiple quarters, using the 15 credits left after full-time clinic in small bunches every quarter.

Are there any exceptions to the rule that I can’t take any other credit-bearing classes during my full-time clinic quarter?
The purpose of the full-time quarter is to get you fully immersed into your role as a lawyer. In fact, the most important part of clinic might be the opportunity for structured transition from “student” to “attorney.” Accordingly, undistracted commitment to your practice is required. That being said, at the discretion of your clinic director, a handful of credit-bearing SLS activities may be deemed compatible with clinic, provided they do not demand your attention during business hours. If you have a question about a specific activity, contact Judy Gieleniak or Juliet Brodie.

Which clinics are offered in which quarters next year?
The clinic Details Sheet lists which clinics are operating in which quarters next year. Use it and the SLS course grid to plan your approach to clinic applications.

**How do I apply?**
Application instructions, forms and links will be sent to you and available on our website Monday, June 8. Please read and follow the application instructions for completing and submitting your applications. (For the most part, the applications consist of a resume, personal statement and, for some clinics, a transcript and writing sample).

**Do I need to apply to take an Advanced Clinic?**
No. Advanced Clinic enrollment is coordinated with clinic faculty. Please reach out to the respective clinic director for information on opportunities.

**Can I apply to multiple clinics? How does that work? What if I get in to more than one?**
You can (and should!) apply to multiple clinics and multiple quarters, but you will be enrolled in only one—your highest choice among the clinics to which you are admitted. The key is ranking your applications among all clinics and quarters to which you are applying with “1” representing your highest priority (e.g. 1 = Youth and Education in Winter; 2 = Youth and Education in Spring; 3 = Immigrants’ Rights in Winter…etc). Clinic instructors will consider your application to their clinic, but will not know whether you have applied to multiple clinics or in what order. Thus, if you are admitted to more than one clinic, or to more than one quarter of the same clinic, you will be “matched” to the one you ranked higher.

**When does the application and decision process happen?**
Applications will be accepted beginning Monday, June 8, 2015, and will close at 10:00 a.m. PDT June 18, 2015. You will be notified of the results of your applications by June 26, 2015.

**What if I change my mind after I’m admitted?**
Clinic enrollment is binding due to the nature and the planning involved in clinical education. Please keep this in mind when applying to take a clinic.

---

1 If interested in applying to take two different full-time clinics each in a different quarter next year, you will be able to indicate this during the application process. Note: priority for this is given to students not already admitted to a clinic.