

U of C opens pro bono law clinic



EVA FERGUSON, CALGARY HERALD

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The University of Calgary. *CHRISTINA RYAN / CALGARY HERALD*

The University of Calgary has opened a new public interest law clinic, offering pro bono legal services and providing law students valuable work experience.

Thanks to a \$1-million donation from the Peacock Family Foundation, the Faculty of Law hopes to provide the free service for the public good, facilitating easier access to justice for the vulnerable and for those who cannot afford it.

“I am so excited, and feel so privileged to be part of this,” said Molly Naber-Sykes, executive director of the clinic.

“We’ve had such huge issues in this province in terms of helping the voiceless and the vulnerable. And this will really help fill that need.”

Along with Naber-Sykes, U of C law professors and students will work together to provide representation in the areas of public health, human rights, equality and environmental law.

In addition, research done in the clinic with policy-makers will contribute to advocating for law reform across the province.

Starting out “small and smart,” Naber-Sykes said the clinic will begin work in January, putting eight law students on one to two cases involving large groups of people.

She explained that most pro bono legal services in the city work with individual clients, so serving groups, such as farm workers or inmates, will be beneficial.

Naber-Sykes, who was a prosecutor with the Law Society of Alberta and has taught trial advocacy courses for both the Faculty of Law and the Legal Education Society of Alberta, has a wealth of experience as a lawyer and partner in a Calgary law firm.

Law students will work in the clinic on precedent-setting cases affecting Alberta’s vulnerable communities and the environment, allowing them to learn public interest advocacy and litigation skills.

While they won’t yet be qualified to give legal advice or appear in court on behalf of clients, Naber-Sykes explained she will support them in those areas.

“They will still be able to work with clients, do research on their behalf, educate them, and provide them with information they need.”

At the end of the day, she hopes the clinic will inspire a new generation of young lawyers to work pro bono for the greater good in Alberta and beyond.

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