



Sturm College of Law
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Public Interest Impact Report

Summer 2025

A Law School Committed to the Public Good

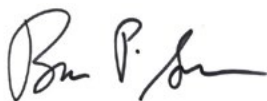
Among the nation's roughly 200 ABA-accredited law schools, the University of Denver Sturm College of Law has earned a distinguished – and distinctive – reputation for advancing the public good.

In 1904, we founded the American clinical legal education movement, permitting law students – for the first time – to represent clients under the supervision of experienced faculty members. Today, our Student Law Office – currently ranked #8 in the nation in clinical legal education by U.S. News & World Report – is known for its expert, ethical, and courageous representation of clients and for its outstanding pedagogy in the areas of interviewing, client counseling, fact investigation, discovery, motion practice, negotiation, and advocacy. As part of our comprehensive commitment to the public interest, we also support a novel collaboration with the Rocky Mountain Veterans Advocacy Project, which serves Veterans along the Front Range, and an expansive set of public interest externships.

Your generous and visionary support of these programs enables us to recruit outstanding students, shape the professional identities and career trajectories of our graduates, and provide vital support to non-profit organizations and government agencies.

Thank you for your philanthropy and partnership, which make it possible for us to offer our students a rigorous, respected, and public-spirited legal education that contributes to the communities we serve and advances the public good.

Sincerely



Bruce P. Smith
Dean and Professor of Law





Student Law Office Highlights

Community Economic Development Clinic

The Community Economic Development Clinic (CEDC), directed by Professor Joseph McKay, offers students the opportunity to represent nonprofit corporations, community-based associations, and small businesses. Under the supervision of licensed attorneys, students in the CEDC draft documents related to corporate formation, assist nonprofit organizations with applications for tax-exempt status, draft and negotiate contracts, and advance grassroots organizations with community revitalization.



2024-25 Highlights

- Students in the CEDC dedicated over 500 pro bono hours to entrepreneurs, small business owners, and nonprofit entities.
- The CEDC hosted workshops covering healthcare directives, I-9 compliance, and Name Image Likeness (NIL) agreements and offered training on expungement and record-sealing to help individuals with criminal convictions improve their employment prospects.
- In collaboration with the Denver-based Rocky Mountain Regional Office of the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the University of Colorado Boulder, the CEDC provided intellectual property (IP) training to Girl Scouts of Colorado, enabling participants to earn an IP Patch.
- The CEDC toured the Colorado State Capitol and met with the Chair of the House Committee on Business Affairs & Labor to discuss several bills that will impact small businesses across Colorado.



Student Testimonials

“The CEDC is a great way to get practical experience in transactional law. Through this opportunity, I’ve realized I love working with start-ups and entrepreneurs. Helping someone build their business is a unique experience – I’m grateful I was able to be part of this.”

– Lily Girton, JD '25

“My time with the CEDC has been incredibly rewarding and one of the highlights of my law school career. I have enjoyed interacting with clients from a variety of backgrounds and assisting them with starting their new businesses or nonprofits.”

– Jessica Wright, JD '25

Low Income Taxpayer Clinic



Funded by a grant from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and led by Professor Sabrina Strand, LLM'14, the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) serves as a critical resource for low-income taxpayers and taxpayers for whom English is a second language, saving them over \$1.5 million annually and providing a foundation for long-term financial stability. The clinic empowers JD students and students pursuing their Masters in Tax (MT) or Masters of Law in Taxation (LLM) to handle individual and small business tax issues while working directly with the IRS and Colorado Department of Revenue. Additionally, the LITC works to advance systemic improvements in the tax system, addressing issues that disproportionately impact low-income taxpayers.



2024-25 Highlights

- The LITC enrolled 32 students who represented 167 clients, reducing their tax liabilities by \$370,235 and securing an additional \$206,272 in refunds.
- The LITC petitioned three separate cases before the United States Tax Court, with all cases resulting in full concessions by the IRS.
- The LITC hosted a Taxpayer Settlement Day, during which clinical students were able to work with taxpayers and act as mediators to reach settlements with the IRS.
- The LITC partnered with the United Way of Colorado, Colorado Legal Services, University of Wyoming, Greenspoon Marder, and Second Chance Center to assist taxpayers seeking to receive COVID stimulus checks and Colorado TABOR refunds.





“ Student Testimonials

This clinic has been the most rewarding experience of my time in law school. Beyond the meaningful client work, the LITC fosters a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose that I have not encountered anywhere else in law school.

– Ethan Orisich, 3L

Since joining the LITC, I’ve had the privilege of working on numerous cases that have put money back into the hands of low-income taxpayers, restoring financial stability and supporting local communities. Without a doubt, the LITC is one of the most valuable experiential learning opportunities DU Law has to offer.

– Omar Ochoa, JD '25



The background of the page is a photograph of autumn leaves in shades of orange, yellow, and red. In the background, a blurred image of a building with a tower is visible against a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on a solid red rectangular area on the left side of the page.

Student Testimonials

"I served in the Army before law school, and I was thankful to have the opportunity as a law student to be part of an organization that helps fellow military Veterans. From working directly with clients to writing legal briefs, I feel that my time with the RMVAP has provided me with practical and useful skills that I will be able to rely on for the rest of my legal career."

- Brett Bailey, JD'23

Veterans Advocacy Project

The Veterans Advocacy Project (VAP), a collaboration between the Sturm College of Law and the Rocky Mountain Veterans Advocacy Project (RMVAP), provides an opportunity for students to assist Veterans along the Rocky Mountain Front Range with discharge upgrades and disability benefit compensation claims. The VAP is led by Brad Cummings, JD & LLM'20, MSL '17, MRLS '16, a former Special Agent with the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations. Since its launch in 2015, the VAP has assisted more than 400 Veterans in filing discharge upgrades to the Department of Defense and obtaining compensation and healthcare from the Department of Veterans Affairs, with over \$16.2 million recovered for Veterans.



2024-25 Highlights

- RMVAP provided outreach to an increasing number of rural Veterans across Colorado, hosting clinics and attending Stand Downs (resource fairs for Veterans experiencing homelessness) in Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Montrose, Grand Junction, Rifle, and Byers, Colorado.
- RMVAP dedicated a significant part of its rural outreach to serving Navajo Veterans living within the Navajo Nation by hosting two free legal clinics at the Nenahnezad Chapter House. During these events, RMVAP initiated representing over 40 Veterans seeking help with VA claims and discharge upgrades.
- Some of the first Navajo Nation Veterans represented by RMVAP are now receiving favorable outcomes. One Vietnam Veteran was recently granted 100% service connection for PTSD, after a 50-year wrongful denial, resulting in over \$60,000 in back pay and long-overdue recognition for his service.
- To date, the RMVAP has recovered well over \$1 million for Native American Veterans, including two discharge upgrades which changed discharge characterizations from Other than Honorable to Honorable.





Public Interest Externships

Among the largest and most respected legal externship programs in the nation, the Externship Program at the Sturm College of Law, directed by Associate Dean Alexi Freeman, permits students to earn academic credit under the guidance of law faculty and supervising employers while gaining valuable experience at nonprofit organizations, governmental bodies, and private sector employers. Each year, more than 600 students undertake externships with nearly 400 different organizations, including the Colorado Attorney General's Office, the Office of the Colorado State Public Defender, and the Wilderness Society. Over 90% of students complete at least one externship placement prior to graduation. Students working in unpaid nonprofit and governmental settings are eligible for stipends funded through alumni support.

Student Testimonials

In summer of 2024, I worked as a student attorney with the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau (HLAB), a student-run clinic and nonprofit at Harvard Law School. I worked on wage theft cases involving worker's rights disputes. Public service funds enabled me to have a summer experience that transformed my skills as a student lawyer and as a future civil legal aid attorney.

– Krista Jolivette, JD '25

Donor Highlight

In 2024, the Colorado Asian Pacific American Bar Foundation created the Bennett S. Aisenberg APABA Public Interest Fellowship Fund to honor the life and legacy of Bennett Aisenberg, a legendary Denver-based trial lawyer, humanitarian, and philanthropist. The Aisenberg Fellowship recognizes students at the Sturm College of Law who exhibit leadership, maturity, and responsibility and provides support for a summer placement at a governmental agency or nonprofit serving low-income individuals in Colorado.

Donor Testimonials

“Ben Aisenberg will forever be known for generously giving back to the legal community. The Bennett S. Aisenberg Fellowship allows students to give back to the community by sharing their talents and skills and hopefully instills a lifelong practice of using the law to do good.”

– APABA Foundation



**Thank you for your
support!**

**Together, we are showing
the world what DU can do.**

THE
DENVER DIFFERENCE
WHAT DU CAN DO

For more information visit: denverdifference.org