Dear Colleagues,

With 2024 upon us, we returned to some sense of post-pandemic normalcy, yet we find ourselves in tumultuous times grappling with widening wars, political discord, and retrenchment in the progress towards social justice. Our campuses and the communities we serve are the site of many of these battles.   In the face of uncertainty and challenges in the year ahead, we are grateful for the collective courage, compassion and creativity of our clinical community, fueling us to action as we educate our students and fight for justice.

There is a lot happening with respect to clinical legal education.  On the one hand, it’s exciting to see the preparation for implementing ABA Standards 303(b) and (c) now bearing fruit. But clinicians at some schools are bearing most of the responsibility for that work, and many are trying to heed the call to educate students about racism and bias amidst a hostile political environment. Additionally, clinical education is more central than ever, to the point where the ABA is contemplating a further increase in experiential course requirements. But that will require a corresponding increase in resources to maintain our pedagogical values. The environment in which we are teaching and representing clients is also rapidly changing. We are trying to understand the impact of the NextGen Bar, alternative licensing pathways, and generative AI on our work.

These are just some of the issues raised by clinicians who attended our Section business meeting at the AALS Annual Meeting in early January.  To support our community as we navigate these issues, the Executive Committee identified several priorities for our work over the upcoming year, both at the Executive Committee level and through our committees.

First, we plan to build on the work of our predecessors, Anita and Norrinda, to reinvigorate our committees where needed, and strengthen the relationship between our committees and the Executive Committee, so that committees have the support they need to carry out the priorities of the Section.  Some of the committee work is focused on supporting teaching, including the developments in the profession we mentioned above, as well as expanding support for new teachers. Some work is focused on protecting and advancing the status of clinicians within the academy and in a politically divided world, which will happen both through the work of committees and directly through the EC.  Moreover, we want to make sure committee chairs and members are recognized for their work to support the Section, both within the Section and within their institutions.

We ask you to consider how you can support the work of the Section through committees. Please take a moment to [review the charges of each of the committees and sign up](https://forms.gle/9tLoZpcUczVZvngZA) for one or two that interest you, and to indicate your interest in leadership opportunities.

Second, in the spirit of ABA Standard 303(c), we hope to model best practices for DEI in our own organization, developing leadership pathways and a sense of belonging for the diverse range of voices within the clinical community. But we also continue our work externally to support schools and faculty as they are implementing the Standard, looking for ways for clinicians to offer leadership while inviting other parts of the academy into what should be a widespread and shared endeavor.

That dovetails with our final goal, which is to increase the visibility and reach of the Section across the broader clinical and AALS community. We will look for ways to expand our presence at the AALS Annual Meeting and across the academy, to build bridges and develop mutual respect through co-sponsorships and compelling events. We also aim to collaborate with the Clinical Legal Education Association and the Clinical Law Review to determine the best ways we can support clinicians in our respective roles. And we will look for more ways to further build a sense of community among clinicians.

Joining us in our work this year are the other members of the 2024 Executive Committee:

* Chair-Elect: Natalie Nanasi (SMU)
* Treasurer: Susan Hazeldean (Brooklyn)
* Secretary: Julie Dahlstrom (Boston)
* Immediate Past Co-Chair: Norrinda Brown Hayat (Fordham)
* Immediate Past Co-Chair:  Anita Sinha (American)
* Member: Anne Gordon (Duke)
* Member: Allison Freedman (New Mexico)
* Member: Beth Locker (Vermont)
* Member: Priya Baskaran (American)
* Member: Nira Geevargis (U.C. Law S.F.)

On behalf of the Executive Committee, thank you for the work you do in these uncertain times, with courage and steadiness in support of our clients, students, and colleagues.  We look forward to learning together and providing mutual support, including this May in St. Louis.

Be well,

Kele Stewart (Miami) and Sarah Shalf (University of Virginia)