

Disability Law Clinic (B 553)
Spring 2018
Weng
Problem Solving Portfolio

One goal of the DLC is to develop your proficiency in collaborative and culturally appropriate problem solving, whether the problem is a large-scale one like figuring out how to obtain disability benefits for a client, a more discrete one like how to get an opinion letter from a medical provider, or a potentially inchoate one like how to work more effectively with a client or colleague or how to handle the emotional effects of client representation. Using the problem solving model in [Essential Lawyering Skills \(5th ed.\)](#), culturally appropriate interactions, and broad and deep information gathering, you will tackle many problems of all sizes and complexity this semester.

As a reminder, the problem solving model we use follows these steps:

1. Identify the problem to be solved
2. Gather and evaluate information and raw materials (law and facts)
3. Generate solutions or alternative courses of action
4. Evaluate solutions (consequences and impact)
5. Choose a solution (i.e., make a decision)
6. Implement the chosen solution

To assess your proficiency at the end of the semester, you will prepare a small portfolio of your problem-solving skills over the course of the semester. The portfolio will consist of three documents:

- A. Two assessments of problems you addressed during the semester. One assessment will address a problem you did not solve as well as you would like; the other will address a problem you solved to your satisfaction. Each assessment will
 - 1) Describe the problem (type and context) and how you tackled it, including whether/how you used the model; how you handled cultural differences; and how you gathered and evaluated information; and
 - 2) Evaluate your problem solving (some possible inquiries: How effective was your solution? What were the easy steps of the problem solving model? The more challenging steps? What had you planned going into the problem, based on prior experience or the readings? What were the patterns in your approach? What changed from one problem to the other? How effective were your approaches? What worked and what didn't?);
- B. One assessment of your problem solving progress during the semester and a plan for continued progress. This assessment will identify the level of proficiency you achieved using the problem solving proficiency spectrum below (see p. 5); analyze the progress you made over the course of the semester, referring to the two problem assessments also contained in the portfolio and any other problems of your choosing as part of the data in your analysis; and develop a

plan for continued progress moving forward. In essence, this assessment addresses the “problem” of your continued growth as a problem solver. To use the proficiency spectrum, read the whole chart and then decide which level (from the list on the left) best describes your proficiency at problem solving at the end of the semester. If you decide you are between two levels, that is fine; just explain the decision. Some questions you might consider: What helped/hindered your growth in problem solving? What were the patterns in your approach to problem solving? What changed from addressing one problem to another? How did your knowledge of who you are affect your growth? How did being human-centered affect your growth? What do you want to work on to continue growing? How will you get that practice?

In choosing the two problems to analyze, focus on problems that helped you to grow. The growth you describe might be more the pure skill of problem solving or contextualized to specific lawyering situations, like theory development or client interaction. Problems that are not suitable include those that currently leave you overwhelmed, paralyzed, or raw – that you haven’t yet been able to reflect on or learn from without further processing than you have time for while completing this assignment. You might want to keep a list of problems that would be suitable for including in the portfolio, as the semester unfolds. You might also write up one of your examples during the semester rather than do both at the end. I am available to consult about examples to include in the portfolio.

Each document in the portfolio should be double-spaced, with 1” margins, in 11- or 12-point font, and contain a maximum of 1250 words. I am available to review any draft for content and suitability. I will not line edit.

The two problem assessments are worth 40 points of the portfolio grade (20% each), and the semester assessment and plan is worth 60 points of the portfolio grade. The final portfolio grade is worth 50% of your DLC grade.

The grading rubrics follow on the next two pages.

Rubrics

INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM ASSESSMENTS (2, EACH WORTH 20 POINTS)

Criteria	Excellent: A, A-	Competent: B+, B, B-	Developing: C+ & below
Choice of Problem (10%)	Identifies a problem that was challenging to you personally and complicated substantively without being insurmountable	Identifies a problem that was not reasonably challenging or complicated	Identifies a problem for which you did not implement/evaluate a solution or which you did not process sufficiently to learn from
Description of the Problem and your Problem Solving (30%)	Provides vivid, specific details that allow me to understand the problem, its context, the stakeholders, and your thought processes, emotions, and actions in solving the problem using the model we learned	Provides sufficient detail to allow me to understand what was going on but missing the details that tell me what you did and why	Provides perfunctory detail that doesn't allow me to understand what was going on
Evaluation (50%)	Assesses the effectiveness of your problem-solving, in terms of both the outcome and collaborative process. Explains your conclusions with support from your description of the problem and your problem solving efforts, the readings, or other life experiences.	Assesses effectiveness without sufficient support to allow me to understand the assessment.	Assessment is incomplete (only outcome or process but not both) OR lacks support
Writing Mechanics (10%)	0-3 grammar, spelling, or usage errors. 0 run-ons or fragments. Logical organization with appropriate roadmap, signposts, and transitions. Clear, supported conclusion.	4-8 grammar, spelling, or usage errors. 1-2 run-ons or fragments. Logical organization but missing roadmap, signpost, or transitions. Vague OR unsupported conclusion.	>8 grammar, spelling, or usage errors. >2 run-ons or fragments. Confusing organization. Missing conclusion.

SEMESTER ASSESSMENT & PLAN (1, WORTH 60 POINTS)

Criteria	Excellent: A, A-	Competent: B+, B, B-	Developing: C+ & below
<p>Analysis: Look back: Where did your skill level start and end? How did you develop your problem solving skills? How collaborative & human-centered were you? What internal or external factors, including the Model we used, helped/hindered? (45%)</p>	<p>Assesses the proficiency of your problem-solving over the course of the semester, using the proficiency spectrum provided on p. 5. Provides detailed support from your teamwork, class work, and client work, including the two assessments included in the portfolio; the Model and course readings; or other life experiences to allow me to understand the assessment.</p>	<p>Assesses proficiency without sufficient support from your work, the Model, readings, or life experiences to allow me to understand the assessment.</p>	<p>Lacks an assessment from the proficiency spectrum OR support (e.g., states conclusions or opinions without explanation based in fact)</p>
<p>Synthesis: Look ahead: What will you do next to build on the learning of this semester? How will you transfer your learning to new contexts? What priorities will help you to grow over the next year? (45%)</p>	<p>Identifies 1-2 challenges, steps, or explorations that you're taking on as a result of the analysis, which will allow you to build on this learning (e.g., new context, connection to new learning). Explains these challenges, etc. with sufficient detail for me to understand what you will do and why.</p>	<p>Identifies 1-2 next challenges, steps, or explorations but these are more backwards looking (what I've already learned) rather than forward looking (how I will I improve or use this learning in a different context); OR Lacks sufficient detail for me to understand either what you will do or why.</p>	<p>Identifies too many challenges, steps or explorations (>2); OR lacks detail.</p>
<p>Writing Mechanics (10%)</p>	<p>0-3 grammar, spelling, or usage errors. 0 run-ons or fragments. Logical organization with accurate roadmap, signposts, and transitions. Clear, supported conclusion.</p>	<p>4-8 grammar, spelling, or usage errors. 1-2 run-ons or fragments. Logical organization but missing roadmap, signpost, or transitions. Vague OR unsupported conclusion.</p>	<p>>8 grammar, spelling, or usage errors. >2 run-ons or fragments. Confusing organization. Missing conclusion.</p>

PROBLEM SOLVING PROFICIENCY SPECTRUM

Level	Definition	Example
Perceiving	Actively using sensory cues to attend to the behavioral skill	I have read the Problem Solving Model and observed a more experienced person problem solve, using the Model.
Imitating	Copying the behavior	I have attempted to problem solve using the Model, with direction and feedback from an experienced person. I am motivated to learn the behavior.
Practicing	Trying the behavior over and over	I have repeated problem solving using the Model, and my problem solving has become more automatic and smooth. The experienced person need not be present.
Naturalizing	Performing two or more skills in combination or sequence, with consistency and ease	I have been able to combine problem solving with other technical lawyering skills or professional behaviors independently and with little mental or physical exertion.