



## AN INNOVATION LAB INSIDE A LAW SCHOOL?

This is the story of NuLawLab, the innovation laboratory of Northeastern University School of Law (NUSL)\*.

*(\*You can stop swatting at your tablet or computer. Your monitor is not dysfunctional. You read that right. An innovation laboratory at a law school.)*

Oxymoron? No. Heresy? Maybe. Necessary? Absolutely.



It was 45 years ago that NUSL revolutionized legal education by introducing the Cooperative Legal Education Program, requiring students to work almost a year in full-time law practice internships. Over the years other law schools joined NUSL in using hands-on training to develop legal professionals more thoroughly prepared to contribute to the their communities. But as experiential learning gained traction in the legal academy, the information and service needs of the public began to shift. Among many other factors, legal information began to be readily available for

free on the Internet. In short, law schools were preparing students for jobs in the legal profession that were in short supply. The good people at NUSL decided to tackle the problem head on. They embraced *design thinking*.

Just a few years back, Patricia Voorhies, a former NUSL staff member, picked up a copy of *Change by Design* by Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, introducing her to the concept of *design thinking*. She shared her enthusiasm with her colleagues, and soon, there was an appetite to learn more. IDEO put the NUSL team in touch with ExperiencePoint, and before long, faculty, staff and students were experiencing *design thinking* in action with the Experience-Innovation simulation.

With the ExperienceInnovation workshop as a catalyst, NUSL started trying their own hand at design thinking, launching an innovation laboratory to employ the radical collaboration mindset and specific tools they had learned. Thus, the NuLawLab was born, and has been staffed with people from the legal community, and the design community\*\*.

*(\*\*Again, take it easy on your machine. You also read that right. A law school that employs a professional artist/designer.)*

Specifically, these resident innovators are Dan Jackson (Executive Director, and the lawyer), and Jules Rochielle Sievert (Program Developer/Content Curator, and the artist). Dan



may have captured best their activities, aspirations and achievements in an interview:

"Over the course of some of the Lab's multidisciplinary collaborations, Jules and I will look at each other and say 'magic just happened.' It really does feel that way ... and we are not just using *design thinking* in specific projects, but we are using it to continually create the Lab .... If we can scale out this approach into the legal profession by graduating lawyers brimming with creative confidence, I think we stand a chance at achieving real change. The power of these ideas is a tremendous gift to our school and the Lab, and we are very fortunate to having been able to work with ExperiencePoint on this."

We're blushing here, Dan. While we'd love to accept credit, ExperienceInnovation was a half-day, first step in the journey. It did its part well, but NUSL is making the magic happen with incomparable commitment. For example, faculty, staff and students recently joined forces with artists and worker-led coalitions to produce a public art and advocacy initiative designed to educate.

Massachusetts domestic workers about their legal rights. Led by Studio REV-, with partners including NuLawLab, the MIT Center for Civic Media, the National Domestic Workers Alliance and other advocates and allies nationwide, this project aims to provide workers, advocates, and the public with tools to support the growing national movement for domestic worker justice.

What's next for the NuLawLab? As the world will continue to transform around them, can they remain relevant? Have they merely created a new paradigm in which they will get entrenched?



We think not. With *design thinking*, they've got the right exploratory and learning mindset, they've got the power of collaboration, and they've got a repeatable approach to creating new futures. Hey, if you can make change happen in the politically gridlocked arena of academia, you've done something really special. If you can make change happen in the conservative and change-resistant arena of law, you've really done something special. So if you can get a whole bunch of people in higher legal education actually excited to make change happen ... well then, there is probably nothing you can't do. NUSL, and the legal professionals they send into the world, will be just fine no matter what the world throws at them.

#### NuLawLab

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