Left to right: Center Faculty Director Elizabeth B. Cooper, Founder and Senior Counsel John D. Feerick ’61, Advisory Board Chair Fern Schair, Executive Director Dora Galacatos ’96, and Assistant Dean Robert J. Reilly ’75
The Feerick Center for Social Justice promotes the rights of and addresses the problems facing marginalized and low-income New Yorkers through the creation of strategies to reform policies, educate, and provide assistance to right wrongs.

Highly regarded for its efficacy and dedication to combating inequities, the Center works with wide-ranging networks to rally partners in the legal community and beyond to respond to the challenges of those in need.

Fordham Law faculty and students involved at the Center collaborate with the city’s nonprofit, legal services, and public sectors to create long-term innovative solutions critical to real change.

**Center Programs**

Feerick Center programs focus on two areas:

1) **Access to justice and problem solving**

2) **Academic and education programs**

Through its access to justice and problem solving programs, the Center addresses New York’s “justice gap,” which adversely affects the lives of individuals and communities living in poverty; the Center takes a problem-solving approach to improving policies and practices that affect vulnerable populations.

The Center uses its academic and education programs to develop innovative solutions to social problems by training and teaching law students and by engaging key stakeholders through seminars, speaker series, conferences, and colloquiums.
Access to Justice and Problem Solving

Problem:

Many vulnerable populations—seniors, unemployed heads of households, people living with disabilities—face consumer debt stemming from unjust practices and are unable to obtain a lawyer.

Solution:

Civil Legal Advice and Resource Office (CLARO)

CLARO volunteers—lawyers, law students, and experts on consumer issues—provide onsite consultations and assistance at clinics held in New York City Civil Court. In addition to general advice, volunteers assist with answers to discovery demands, preparation for upcoming court hearings, drawing up of motions to dismiss, opposing motions for summary judgment, and drafting non-court documents such as dispute letters and making bankruptcy referrals.

The Feerick Center oversees the CLARO programs in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island. These programs operate under the auspices of the New York State Access to Justice Program and its Director, Justice Fern A. Fisher, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts.

Partners:

Bronx CLARO: Bronx Legal Services, Bronx County Bar Association, New York City Bar Association, New York University Law Students for Economic Justice

Manhattan CLARO: Fordham Law School Consumer Law Advocates, Fordham Law School Consumer Law Clinic, Manhattan Legal Services, New York County Lawyers’ Association

Staten Island CLARO: Richmond County Bar Association, Staten Island Women’s Bar Association, Wagner College

Student Involvement in CLARO

One of Fordham Law’s many Public Interest Resource Center student groups, Consumer Law Advocates (CLA), co-sponsors the Manhattan CLARO Program. CLA Board Members work closely with the Feerick Center in operating the program and serve as administrators of CLARO sessions.

Every year, over 250 Fordham Law School J.D., LL.M., and other students volunteer with the CLARO program, working side-by-side with volunteer attorneys to serve consumers in need.

Debt Collection: A Top Consumer Complaint

The debt collection industry has a long history of problematic practices, including abusive and deceptive debt collection practices.

Since 2009, three CLARO programs have provided 15,487 hours of assistance to unrepresented individuals. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 1,327 CLARO visitors received assistance.
Problem:
Survivors of domestic violence often face economic abuse by batterers that leads to severe consumer issues, including denial of credit, employment, or housing.

Solution:
Domestic Violence and Consumer Law Project (DV CLARO)
Over the past two years the Feerick Center has helped organize and staff legal advice clinics for domestic violence survivors who are experiencing consumer debt and credit reporting issues. Legal services advocates with dual competence in domestic violence and consumer debt issues meet with survivors to provide legal advice to prepare them to represent themselves in court and, where necessary, refer them to legal service providers for full representation.

Partners:
Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyer Project
CAMBA Legal Services
Legal Aid Society
MFY Legal Services Inc.
New Destiny Housing
New York City Family Justice Center-Manhattan
New York Legal Assistance Group
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
Sanctuary for Families
Urban Justice Center

Problem:
Low- and moderate-income New Yorkers lack legal assistance in large part because legal services organizations are not adequately funded to staff their offices.

Solution:
New York State Chief Judge Lippman’s Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP): matching experienced lawyers with legal services offices to increase access to justice.

The Feerick Center recognizes that solving the “justice gap” through the AEP requires a two-pronged approach: 1) drawing experienced attorneys into new areas of law and 2) creating appropriate matches that will support their effectiveness with client groups with which they may not be familiar. To address both issues, the Center is developing training methods to enable emeritus lawyers to explore high-need practice areas such as housing, family, immigration, and consumer law.

In 2013, the Center completed work on a cross-cultural training curriculum made possible with funding from the New York Community Trust and specifically designed for AEP volunteers and host legal service organizations. In collaboration with Pro Bono Net, it also launched a listserv to update AEP volunteers and host organizations on upcoming events, rule changes, volunteer opportunities, best practices, and new trainings.

Because more than 60% of AEP attorneys and host organizations are located in the greater New York metropolitan area, the Feerick Center has begun to develop...
regional AEP networks in Erie, Albany, and Monroe counties, where the need for AEP attorneys is significant.

The AEP is an initiative undertaken by New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman and the Office of Court Administration. Chief Judge Lippman designated the Feerick Center to provide administrative and programmatic support to the AEP.

Partners:
- Erie County Bar Association
- Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York
- Monroe County Bar Association
- Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County
- New York State Bar Association
- New York State Courts Access to Justice Program
- New York State Interest on Lawyer Account Fund
- New York State Office of Court Administration
- Pro Bono Net

Problem:

Increasing numbers of children immigrating to the United States by themselves are denied access to justice and basic services.

Solution:

New York Unaccompanied Immigrant Children (UIC) Project

In fiscal year 2014, U.S. Customs and Border Protection apprehended nearly 70,000 unaccompanied children who were crossing the Mexico-United States border. Thousands of unaccompanied immigrant children seek to reunify with family members living in the New York metropolitan area. The Feerick Center’s UIC Project has created four working groups that focus on tackling the most pressing needs of unaccompanied children living in the New York area and the policy and institutional frameworks that affect their rights and access to services.

The Family Court Working Group seeks to improve access to New York State Family Courts for abused, neglected, and abandoned immigrant youth who are eligible to pursue Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). In March 2014, this working group issued a report with recommendations to improve the SIJS process and is now working with the New York State Office of Court Administration to implement those proposals. Over 30 immigration and children’s advocates assisted in data gathering and preparation of the Working Group’s report.

The Access to Legal Services Working Group focuses on expanding immigrant children’s access to competent legal representation. It has collaborated with a network of legal service providers to create a two-part training program on SIJS for court-appointed attorneys in the family courts.

The Fact Finding and Research Working Group seeks to strengthen understanding of the experiences of unaccompanied immigrant youth living in New York City communities and to develop appropriate recommendations to local and state policy makers. The Center has helped secure foundation grants to support a study on which it is collaborating with the Vera Institute of Justice. The study hired and trained two formerly unaccompanied immigrant youth to serve as peer researchers.

Since its inception in 2010, the AEP has enrolled over 800 attorneys.

Student Involvement in UIC
- Teaching the next generation of lawyers about the law, regulations, policies, and practices affecting migrant children
- Collaborating with the Fordham Law student group Immigrant Advocacy Project, as well as Catholic Charities Community Services, to train student and other volunteers to provide information and referrals to family and children undergoing immigration removal proceedings
to identify study participants, facilitate focus group discussions, and be involved in the study design, implementation, and dissemination.

The *Model State Statutes Working Group* is responding to the need for uniformity in the SIJS-related laws and procedures in state court proceedings. After conducting interviews with experts and practitioners in 10 states and with significant assistance from a pro bono partner at Orrick Herrington, the working group members and Feerick Center law student fellows drafted a model state statute to protect the rights of immigrant youth seeking SIJS relief. The Center is working with partners to promote the model state statute among key stakeholders around the nation.

**Partners:**

American Friends Service Committee  
Atlas DIY  
Catholic Charities Community Services  
Hofstra Law School Youth Advocacy Clinic  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Kids In Need of Defense  
New York County Lawyers’ Association  
New York Law School Safe Passage Project  
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe  
Rutgers School of Law Child Advocacy Clinic  
Vera Institute of Justice

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**Problem:**

*Homeless individuals encounter many civil legal problems in their attempt to stabilize their lives.*

**Solution:**

**Homeless Experience Legal Protection (HELP)**

HELP connects law firm attorneys with New Yorkers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in community-based centers. HELP volunteers provide limited legal advice on issues such as benefits, disability rights, employment, housing, consumer law, and child support. Particular effort is made to identify veterans who may be entitled to assistance stemming from their military service. The HELP Program has been coordinated with tremendous leadership and dedication by Fordham Law School alumnus Thomas Bisdale ’82.

**Partners:**

Center for Employment Opportunities  
Project Renewal–Third Street Shelter  
Urban Pathways–Olivieri Center for Homeless Adults  
Law firms (2014):  
DLA Piper  
O’Melveny & Myers LLP  
Proskauer Rose LLP  
Segal, McCambridge Singer & Mahoney  
Shearman & Sterling LLP
Problem:
Veterans returning from war, particularly those experiencing trauma, face unique legal challenges arising from their military service.

Solution:

**Veterans Advocacy Pilot Project**

Often veterans receive Other Than Honorable (OTH) or General discharges as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or related disorders connected to their military service. Such discharges can make it difficult for them to find work and also disqualifies them from benefits such as health care and education.

The Feerick Center has provided support to a pro bono legal assistance project (operated by the New York County Lawyers’ Association) to help veterans understand their options, appeal their discharges when appropriate, and navigate the military justice system. The Center has focused on identifying experts in discharge upgrades to provide support to pro bono attorneys in its partner organizations.

Partners:
- New York County Lawyers’ Association
- Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP
- Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP
- Urban Justice Center Veteran Advocacy Project
Problem:

Children of low-income families face many challenges in obtaining high-quality educational placements in the New York City public school system.

Solution:

**Legal Economic and Educational Advancement Project (LEEAP)**

The New York City high school application process is complex and confusing; often, schools provide insufficient information and support to students and their families. To address this problem, the Feerick Center places trained volunteers with community- and school-based partners to counsel students and assist them through the process. LEEAP’s partners often run after-school or specialized programs focused on the high school application process. The Center’s goal is to break the cycle of poor education and limited economic opportunity.

LEEAP has established the New York City High School Application Advisory Committee, consisting of social service organizations, school-based programs, education experts and advocates, academic researchers, and representatives from the New York City Department of Education. The Committee helps develop best practices in connection with services to assist students and families with the high school application process, sets policy for the LEEAP Project, and shares information among members.

LEEAP also assists families and students with the college application process. Most volunteers focus on assisting high school students with developing lists of potential colleges; in addition, volunteers help provide guidance in connection with college essays and the financial aid process.

**Partners:**

- Boys Town Passages Academy
- Bronx Bridges High School
- CAMBA
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation Middle Schools
- Student Success Center
- Frederick Douglass Academy II
- Goddard Riverside Beacon
- Goddard Riverside Star Learning Center
- Henry Street Settlement Middle School
- Student Success Center
- New York City Department of Education
- Queens Community House
- Resources for Children With Special Needs

In a year, 40 LEEAP volunteers devoted nearly 260 hours to assist over 50 students.
Academic and Educational Programs

As an integral component of Fordham Law School’s robust academic program, the Feerick Center educates students through its associated courses and invites them to participate in of the Center’s volunteer programs.

Social Justice Clinic / Family Justice Project

From 2012–14, the Social Justice Clinic ran a Family Justice Project, which focused on tackling the problems faced by families, who largely are low-income people of color, involved with the child welfare system. Following research and discussion with the New York City Administration of Children’s Services (ACS), organizations representing parents and children who have had contact with the child welfare system, as well as parents themselves, the project decided to focus on identifying ways to improve parent feedback and involvement with the child welfare system. The goal of this project was to give parents more of a voice with ACS and to provide the agency with systematic, actionable, qualitative, and quantitative data that would allow it to better serve the children and families of New York City.

In early 2013, the clinic hosted a Convening on Developing Parent Feedback Models at which 40 invited experts identified the essential elements of a successful framework and methodology to develop a comprehensive family feedback model. The Clinic’s students advanced this work by accomplishing the following:

- Interviewing parents, their advocates, children’s advocates, and members of ACS senior staff
- Researching existing parent feedback models across the United States
- Developing the format of and facilitating the convening
- Drafting the convening report, which was disseminated throughout the city’s child welfare community.

The Center maintains ongoing relationships with ACS and the convening participants and is eager to provide additional support when needed.

Seminars

The Center has offered a number of seminars over the years. Most recently, it has offered a seminar in children and immigration law in connection with its work related to unaccompanied immigrant children.

Conferences

The Feerick Center organizes a series of conferences annually to explore new trends and best practices in areas of its work. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Center held four conferences.

Until Civil Gideon

On November 1, 2013, the Feerick Center co-sponsored Until Civil Gideon: Expanding Access to Justice. Timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Gideon v. Wainwright ruling, which held that indigent defendants have a right to counsel in criminal proceedings, the conference convened leading scholars, as well as national and local leaders in the access to justice movement. Over 100 access-to-justice experts, court personnel, and legal services attorneys attended. The conference explored means of promoting access to justice in civil proceedings in the absence of a right to counsel, including involving non-lawyers, unbundling legal services, using technology and self-help, and assessing existing court-led initiatives. It also considered whether a form of civil Gideon is the only or best way to achieve justice in the civil context.

Partners:
Fordham Urban Law Journal
Fordham Urban Law Center

Representing Immigrant Youth: Ethics and Other Emerging Topics in Special Immigrant Juvenile Practice

On December 6, 2013, more than 100 practitioners, academics, experts, and students convened to discuss key issues within the field including cultural competency and trauma, courtroom advocacy techniques, and ethical challenges in representing immigrant children in SIJS-related petitions.

Partner:
New York County Lawyers’ Association
Sex Trafficking: Developments for Professionals Working in the Field

The legal landscape and treatment modalities are changing with regard to survivors and the criminal justice response to perpetrators of sex trafficking. To explore best practices and new developments to prosecute sex traffickers and address the needs of victims, the Feerick Center organized a conference for front-line staff at legal and social service providers. On June 17, 2014, the Center brought together over 125 practitioners and experts. The conference came six months after the New York State’s Human Trafficking Intervention Courts began operation and was an opportunity to examine their workings in terms of best practices and emerging issues and challenges. Highlighting new developments in mental health, practitioners focused on how chronic trauma affects survivors of sex trafficking, as well as new research on the neurological effects of trauma. Developing care protocols to meet the needs of LGBTQI and teens/children who have been traumatized through trafficking also was discussed. Conference participants compared New York State laws with those in other jurisdictions, as well as with the Uniform Law Commission’s model state statute, with a view toward improving how the state’s legal system treats victims.

Partners:
Center for Court Innovation
Covenant House New York
New York City Anti-Violence Project
New York County Lawyers’ Association
New York State Office of Court Administration
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Human Trafficking and Unaccompanied Children Programs, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance
Sanctuary for Families

Child Migration and Central America: A Humanitarian Crisis

In light of the exponential increase in the number of children fleeing violence and economic hardship in Central America and seeking to enter the United States during the summer of 2014, the Feerick Center organized a program on June 18, 2014, (co-sponsored by Fordham University’s Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs) to promote awareness of this crisis and the impact that it has and will continue to have on New York. Experts from both international and local humanitarian organizations examined the increasing insecurity in the northern triangle of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and the resulting implications for areas of high impact, such as New York.

Partner:
Fordham University Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs

Social Justice Programming and Education

The Feerick Center works to enhance awareness of social justice issues to a wider community through a speaker series at the Law School and the Fordham University Consortium on Social Justice.

The Social Justice Speaker Series brings four innovative and visionary speakers to the Law School each year to make presentations on important social justice or poverty issues. The Center selects leaders whose pathbreaking work has fundamentally changed policy or practice. These speakers challenge conventional thinking and illustrate, through their successes, ways in which problems rooted in poverty can be addressed and the conditions of poverty ameliorated. It plays a major role in the Center’s mission to nurture new generations of social justice lawyers. Since its founding, the Center has presented nearly 30 social justice speakers to instruct and inspire the Fordham community. On an annual basis, approximately 250 attendees attend these lectures.

The Feerick Center initiated the idea for the Fordham University Consortium on Social Justice to increase communication among the many centers and individuals at Fordham devoted to promoting social justice. The Consortium has initiated a series of programs to introduce and promote discussion among faculty members who are researching and teaching in related areas of social justice. The 2013-2014 convenings, the sixth and seventh in the series, brought together 25 faculty members from six schools of the University. The Consortium also helps the Feerick Center identify experts in other parts of the University with whom Center staff can collaborate.

Strategic Planning and Messaging

In 2014, the Feerick Center received a Taproot Foundation service grant to help with its communication strategy. An experienced team of pro bono marketing experts conducted extensive market research and devised a positioning statement and a number of key messages that articulate the Center’s mission for staff to use in written materials and oral presentations.

In the fall of 2014, the Center initiated a strategic planning process in anticipation of its 10-year anniversary in 2015-2016. The process will be completed in early spring 2015.
Honors

In 2013–2014, Feerick Center staff received the following recognitions:

• In May 2013, New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman appointed Fern Schair, the Center’s Advisory Board Chair, to co-lead the Committee on Non-Lawyers and the Justice Gap.

• In October 2013, the New York Law Journal awarded the Center’s Founder and Senior Counsel, John D. Feerick, with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

• In December 2013, MFY Legal Services, Inc. recognized Dora Galacatos, the Center’s Executive Director, with the Partner in Justice Award.

• In June 2014, the Nassau-Suffolk Chapter of the Fordham Law Alumni Association honored Robert J. Reilly, the Center’s Assistant Dean, for his many contributions to the Law School and broader community.

Staff and Students 2013–14

The Center carries out its wide-ranging work with the assistance of a team of grant-funded staff, student interns and fellows, and recent graduates. In addition, the Law School Dean’s Fellowship Program has provided critical support to the Center since its inception. The Center is deeply grateful to the following 2013-2014 staff and students for their many contributions:

• Priscilla Alabi, AmeriCorps VISTA Member and LEEAP Co-Coordinator (Educational Component)

• Rodrigo Ricku Bacus, Feerick Center McMahon Summer Fellow (New York Unaccompanied Immigrant Children Project)

• Lauren Irby, New York Women’s Bar Association Foundation Fellow (New York Unaccompanied Immigrant Children Project)

• Sofia Linarte, New York Women’s Bar Association Foundation Fellow (New York Unaccompanied Immigrant Children Project)

• Nicholas Macri, New York City Civic Corps Member (Attorney Emeritus Program)

• Katie McConnell, AmeriCorps VISTA Member (Attorney Emeritus Program)

• Carlie Roman, Siena College Summer Legal Intern

• Anna Stallmann, Fordham Law School Dean’s Fellow

• Sara Trongone, AmeriCorps VISTA Member and LEEAP Co-Coordinator (Consumer Component)

• Samantha Varn, New York City Civic Corps Member (Attorney Emeritus Program)
Permanent Staff

Olga Byrne, Project Director, New York Unaccompanied Immigrant Children Project
Elizabeth B. Cooper, Faculty Director
John D. Feerick, Founder and Senior Counsel; Norris Professor of Law
Dora Galacatos, Executive Director
Derek Hackett, Administrative Assistant to Professor John D. Feerick
Robert J. Reilly, Assistant Dean
Fern Schair, Center Advisory Board Chair
Wilma Tamayo-Abreu, Administrative and Programmatic Coordinator

Feerick Center Volunteers

Carlos Aubain, S.J.
Joan Vermeulen

Advisory Board Members

Honorable Denny Chin – United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit
Kevin J. Curnin, Esq. – Partner and Director of Public Service Project, Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP
James F. Gill, Esq. – Partner, Bryan Cave LLP
Bruce A. Green (Ex Officio) – Louis Stein Professor of Law, Fordham University School of Law; Director, Louis Stein Center for Law and Ethics, Fordham University School of Law
Peggy A. Healy, Esq. – Senior Vice President, Covenant House
Constantine N. Katsoris – Wilkinson Professor of Law, Fordham University School of Law
Mary Ellen Kris, Esq. – Consultant, United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries
Daniel Kronenfeld – Senior Fellow, Fund for the City of New York; former Director, Henry Street Settlement
Peter J. Madonia – Chief Operating Officer, The Rockefeller Foundation
Maura Kathleen Monaghan – Partner, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP
Jacqueline Nolan-Haley (Ex Officio) – Professor of Law, Fordham University School of Law; Director, Fordham ADR & Conflict Resolution Program
Rev. Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J. – President Emeritus, Fordham University

Ana L. Oliveira – President & CEO, The New York Women’s Foundation
Carlos G. Ortiz, Esq. – General Counsel, Goya Foods, Inc.
Marissa M. Peterson, Esq. – former General Counsel, American Arbitration Association; Adjunct Professor, Fordham University School of Law
Timothy G. Reynolds – Partner, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Robert C. Sheehan, Esq. – Pro Bono Partner, Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom
Herbert Sturz – Trustee, The Open Society Institute; Founding Chairman, The After-School Corp.
Honorable George Bundy Smith – Arbitrator, Mediator and Special Master for Disputes, Neutrals Panel, JAMS; former Associate Judge, New York State Court of Appeals
Irene Sullivan – Retired Partner, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
A. William Urquhart – Partner, Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP
Georgene Vairo – Professor of Law and William M. Raines Fellow, Loyola Law School; former Associate Dean, Fordham University School of Law
Donors and Contributors
(Gifts made between July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014)
The Feerick Center was created by Fordham Law School in September 2006 as a permanent legacy of the School’s Centennial celebration in honor of John Feerick, Dean of Fordham Law School from 1982 to 2002. The Feerick Center seeks to give substance to his commitment to social justice and Fordham Law School’s belief that lawyers must play a role in eradicating social injustices. As part of Fordham Law School, the Feerick Center is able to draw on the considerable resources of the School’s students and faculty to advance its work.

The Center expresses its deep gratitude to Joan Vermeulen for the drafting of this annual report.
law.fordham.edu/feerickcenter

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