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Dean Logan's Blog

Creative Lawyers + Innovative Law School = Cool Courses

Posted by David Logan on 04/05/2011 at 02:56 PM

One of the big advantages of being a Roger Williams law student is the chance to take electives from the best lawyers and judges in the state. Previous blogs have highlighted “[The Lessons of Litigation](#),” taught by one of the best-regarded federal judges in the country (Bruce Selya from the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit) and “[9/11 Litigation](#),” taught by Don Migliori, the lead lawyer for many of the personal injury actions pursued by the survivors and victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.



Two other unique litigation-oriented courses are on this year's schedule. The first, “Federal Practice/Federal Litigation” is actually team-taught: led by Federal District Judge Will Smith, joined by [Jane Rindsberg](#) from our faculty, and attorneys Brooks Magratten, Mike Daley '02, and Hinna Upal '07 from the leading firm [Pierce Atwood](#), this year-long course offers an in-depth look at federal practice. Here is a summary provided by Brooks:

“On day one students meet their client, Arthur Jackson. Mr. Jackson poured his life savings and sweat equity into his business, Flinders Aluminum Fabrication Corporation. One night the Flinders' plant burned to the ground. Flinders' insurer refused to pay. Mr. Jackson's bookkeeper and former lover, as well as the Fire Marshall, say the fire resulted from arson. Mr. Jackson now sues.”

“About one month into the course students organize into law firms and appear before Judge William E. Smith for a pretrial conference. About two months into the course students take depositions. At the beginning of the Spring semester students brief and argue motions for summary judgment before federal judges. Through March students learn all aspects of trial advocacy in a combination lecture and workshop format.”

“Finally, in mid-April, students try the case before a judge and jury. In a nutshell, the Federal Practice/Federal Litigation course is designed to take students through all steps one would encounter in prosecuting or defending a civil case today in federal court.”

“We have enjoyed the support of our Rhode Island federal court in offering this course. Judge Smith, as well as Magistrate Judges Almond and Martin have participated in hands-on instruction. My thanks also to Professor Jane Rindsberg and RWU Law alums (and my colleagues at Pierce Atwood) Michael Daly ('02) and Hinna Upal ('07), who have worked hard to make the course a success. Most classes enjoy a 3 to 1 student/faculty ratio which allows for intensive individual instruction and critique of litigation skills.”

“Our students have, I think, enjoyed the course, perhaps almost as much as the faculty have enjoyed teaching it.”

Our students also can learn from one of the country's leading trial lawyers, [Mark Mandell](#). Formerly the head of both the American and RI Trial Lawyers' Associations, Mark was lead counsel for the hundreds of consolidated cases arising out of the horrific [Station Fire in 2002](#).



Above is a picture of Mark with his students and below is his thumbnail description of his innovative course:

Advanced Trial Advocacy provides students a new and different perspective as to how to prepare and try cases. While conventional techniques and tools are acknowledged, focus is placed on the principles of Decision Science. The latest trial innovations are taught to and then practiced by students.