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Dean Logan's Blog

Learning Litigation from a Tragedy: The "Station Fire Course"

Posted by David Logan on 10/28/2011 at 09:58 AM

Out of the tragedy at the Station nightclub in West Warwick, R.I.— the deadliest nightclub fire in U.S. history— came the first litigation under a new federal statute, the Multiparty, Multiforum Trial Jurisdiction Act, which allows the consolidation of mass torts that have parties in more than one state in a single federal court. Leading the array of talented lawyers representing the hundreds of plaintiffs and their families was [Mark Mandell](#), a top litigator who—among many other honors— has served as president of the American Trial Lawyers Association (ATLA) and who has numerous million dollar verdicts and settlements in his 3+ decades at the bar. Already a highly regarded member of the RWU Adjunct Faculty, Mark conceived a course that took a select group of students deep into the litigation, which resulted in a settlement of \$175 million.

The students learned the pre-filing strategy, the shaping of novel legal theories that brought in the maximum number of deep-pocket defendants, and the incredibly complex system developed to treat such a large group of claimants fairly, from a remarkable array of litigators from both sides of the case, Duke Law Prof. Francis McGovern (who oversaw the distribution of funds), and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Tracy Breton, who discussed the extensive coverage in the media. Perhaps the greatest impact came when the students met some of the plaintiffs who relied upon Mark and his co-counsel to receive fair compensation for their horrific losses. For a more detailed discussion of the fire and the successful litigation read more [here](#).

Below are pics from one of the remarkable class sessions.



Prof. Mandell sets the stage



Prof. McGovern poses a hypo



A rapt audience



Sharing a light moment



Prof. Mandell, Kristen and Jeff Dahl (the court-appointed claims administrators),
RWU President Dr. Donald Farish, Dean Logan, Prof. McGovern