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Newsroom

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Yelnosky on Tuition and Guarantee

RI Lawyers Weekly speaks with Dean Michael Yelnosky about Affordable Excellence, the Clinical Guarantee and "giving young lawyers leg up" in a today's market.

From Rhode Island Lawyer Weekly: "[A Quick Word With ... Michael J. Yelnosky: Law school dean aims to give young lawyers leg up](#)" by Pat Murphy



October 16, 2014: On Oct. 2, Roger Williams University School of Law announced that it will extend its Affordable Excellence program — an 18-percent tuition reduction first implemented for the current academic year — through 2015-2016, translating to a savings of approximately \$30,426 over the course of three years.

The school also will maintain this year's explicit "guarantee" that every qualified student be afforded a substantial clinical experience, which included the launching of its Community Economic Development Clinic and expansion of the Feinstein Center for Pro Bono and Experiential Education.

Lawyers Weekly spoke to Dean Michael J. Yelnosky about the both the economics and marketplace implications of the school's current direction, as well as what he sees for the future of RWU Law and the profession in general.

* * *

Q. *The reduction in tuition is, as you've noted, substantial. How did the school pay for it?*

A. Well, we're not a freestanding law school, and we received a lot of support from the university to help us to stay on budget. We also reduced expenses by consolidating services. For example, we used to have alumni offices both here at the law school and at the university; now there's a single office. And we've shared sacrifices. The faculty isn't making as much as at other institutions; I'm not making as much. But really, as a pretty young law school, we never really got bloated. We've always tried to be conservative, regardless of the changes in the market, so we've been able to do it without any bloodletting. [...]

Q. *What are the specifics of your clinical guarantee?*

A. I believe this most clearly sets us apart. Typical clinics and externships place with judges, government offices, etc. We do that as well, but in addition, a program like our Corporate Counsel Externship places students with in-house counsel in some of the biggest companies in the region, including G-tech, Textron and Fenway.

Also, there's our Semester in Practice program. Judges and others with whom students were placed in part-time externships said three days was good, but they'd learn a lot more if they were there full time. So the program allows students to spend a full semester in a single placement, for 12 credits instead of six, along with a co-requisite seminar.

And our Community Economic Development Clinic affords students the opportunity to work not just with established corporations, but with startups or undercapitalized companies. [...]

Q. *You spoke of projected enrollment numbers in the near future. What do you see generally for the future of the school and the law?*

A. We're already seeing it, but I believe there will be more and more legal education for non-JDs. By next year, we'll have a one-year masters in law for non-lawyers. Professionals see how law permeates all aspects of human activity. Take a human resources employee: With some exposure to the basics of the law — employment, discrimination, ERISA, labor law — how much more effective will they be than their counterparts without such knowledge? And could this trend lead to law as an undergraduate degree, like it is in so many other countries? There's a lot up for grabs.

For full story, click [here](#).

