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December 15, 2016

Newsroom

Gift Supports Diversity Programming

A generous gift from the law firm of Nixon Peabody will support the school's Martin Luther King Jr. Keynote Address and Diversity Symposium Dinner at RWU Law.



BRISTOL, December 14, 2016 – The law firm of **Nixon Peabody LLP** in Providence has made a gift to Roger Williams University School of Law in support of the school's [Martin Luther King, Jr., Keynote Address](#) and Diversity Symposium Dinner.

"Nixon Peabody looks forward to advancing its commitment to diversity in the practice of law through its exciting new partnership with the Law School," said **Andrew Prescott**, managing partner of Nixon Peabody LLP's Providence office. "The MLK Jr. Lecture and Diversity Symposium represent important opportunities for our firm to engage with the law school and diverse communities around issues of critical importance to the Rhode Island legal community and the state as a whole."

The gift addresses an important part of the school's mission, said **Dean Michael Yelnosky**.

"We are thankful for Nixon Peabody's support of two of our signature programs," Yelnosky said. "The firm has a history of support for RWU Law, and we look forward to working with them more closely." Nixon Peabody currently employs five RWU Law graduates, including **Neal Pandozzi '99**, who recently became a partner, and **Armando Batastini '98**, who is 2016-2017 president of the Rhode Island Bar Association.

"Nixon Peabody's gift presents us an important opportunity to partner with members of the Rhode Island bench and bar – and beyond – to support our students' commitment to social justice and to help diversify the pipeline to law school," said **Deborah Johnson**, RWU Law's Director of Diversity and Outreach.

“This generous gift is also a tremendous show of support for the school’s diversity and inclusion initiatives,” Johnson added. “Our annual **Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Week** allows us to bring distinguished lawyers, judges and professors to deliver a lecture focused not only on the work of Dr. King and his contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, but also on how our students can use their legal training to continue his legacy and to advance social justice. Our signature **Diversity Symposium Dinner** has become a favorite, filled-to-capacity annual event that brings diverse lawyers, judges, law professors, and law students together with local college and high school students from diverse backgrounds to talk about legal issues that are important to communities traditionally underrepresented in the legal profession.”

Rhode Island’s only law school, Roger Williams Law is driven by the belief that a legal education is vitally enhanced by diverse classroom experiences in which concepts are challenged and considered from different perspectives. [RWU Law’s most recent 1L class is 26 percent diverse; its overall student body diversity is 23 percent](#) (these figures specifically reflect racial and ethnic diversity).

“At RWU Law we recruit diverse students, we support them, and we have substantial curricular and co-curricular programs that put issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and law front and center,” Yelnosky explained. “We are committed to diversity and inclusion because our students grow more, both intellectually and personally, if their classmates come from different backgrounds. A diverse student body also helps prepare our students for practice in an increasingly diverse country and world. And part of our commitment to diversity and inclusion is about making sure that the legal profession is open to all.”

The firm’s gift will be made in increments over three years, from 2016 to 2018.