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Newsroom: RWU Law Emerges as Public Service Powerhouse

Roger Williams University School of Law

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Newsroom

RWU Law Emerges as Public Service Powerhouse

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BRISTOL, R.I., Dec. 22, 2009 – With a new immigration clinic, a major gift boosting its pro bono legal programs, prestigious awards from the Rhode Island Legal Services and the NAACP, a *National Jurist* rating as one of New England's top two public-interest law schools, and a growing regional visibility and impact, Roger Williams University School of Law in many ways came into its own in 2009.

The launch of RWU Law's new Immigration Clinic in September drew state and local leaders, judges, lawyers and community advocates to celebrate the state-of-the-art facility, which will enable law students, working under the guidance of a full-time professor, to get hands-on immigration law experience while serving needy clients from around the state and region.

Ramon Martinez, president and CEO of Progreso Latino, Inc., one of the state's largest ethnic advocacy groups, underscored the clinic's importance to Rhode Island's many immigrant communities, especially in conjunction with the Latino Policy Institute that launched at the University earlier in 2009, under the leadership of RWU Law professor Jorge Elorza.

In October, Providence lawyer Mark Mandell was honored for a \$250,000 challenge gift supporting the law school's Pro Bono Collaborative (PBC) in its mission to increase free services for the state's most needy and vulnerable communities. "Doing pro bono work combines the reality of legal justice with the principles of social justice," Mandell said, "and what can mean more than that?"

The PBC partners Rhode Island law firms and RWU law students with community-based organizations to provide project-based pro bono legal assistance to some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable populations.

Commencing with 2009's entering class, Logan noted, the law school raised its public service requirement. In order to graduate, law students must now complete at least 50 hours of unpaid, law-related public service, for which they receive no academic credit. Nonetheless, many students routinely exceed that minimum, Logan added.

Dean Logan himself has won a number of honors in 2009, highlighting his efforts in raising RWU Law's public service profile. Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS) honored the dean for his "dedication and commitment to equal justice in the law." RILS noted that RWU Law, under Logan's leadership, increased funding for students who work in public service jobs each summer, helped enable scholarships targeted at applicants who have a public-interest focus), and established a Public Interest Loan Repayment Assistance Program. During his time at RWU, bar pass rates have soared and the faculty became one of the most diverse in New England. In a recent survey, *National Jurist* magazine rated RWU Law alongside Northeastern as one of New England's top two public-interest law schools.

In November, Dean Logan was honored by the NAACP for his outstanding efforts toward achieving diversity and inclusiveness in legal education. The Providence Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People presented Logan with a Community Service Award at its 96th Annual Freedom Forum Dinner, at which Logan also served as the keynote speaker.

Next month, Logan will be honored yet again, as recipient of the American Association of Law School's Deborah L. Rhode Award for a "Dean who has made an outstanding contribution to increasing pro bono and public service opportunities in law school through scholarship, leadership, or service."

"In choosing to make public interest a priority through his vigorous fundraising, programmatic leadership, and academic excellence in public interest offerings, Dean Logan has infused a culture of public service into the law school and indeed, in the state of Rhode Island," said Deb Ellis, assistant dean for public interest law at New York University School of Law, and head of the AALS selection committee.