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## Trending@RWU Law: Dean Yelnosky's Post: Celebrating the Class of 2015

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# ***Dean Yelnosky's Post***

## **CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2015**

Posted by Michael Yelnosky on 06/01/2015 at 09:49 AM

Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> began a week-long celebration of the graduation of the Class of 2015, culminating in commencement exercises on Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. Monday's event was a reception for the class at the Glen Manor House in nearby Portsmouth. It was a beautiful evening, the gardens were showing unmistakable signs of spring, and the views of the Sakonnet Passage were as breathtaking as ever.



**Casey O'Brien '15, Winner of the Marine Affairs Achievement Award and**

**Dennis Esposito, Interim Director of the Marine Affairs Institute**

The evening began with a brief ceremony during which a host of student, faculty, and staff awards were presented. In addition, the graduating members of the honors program and all graduates who had performed 100 hours or more of pro bono legal service were recognized.



**Valedictorian Nicole Manzo**



**Jodi Haley and Rachelle Abbruzzi, Staff Members of the Year**



**Judge Judith Savage, Adjunct Professor of the Year and President Farish**





**Christine Chavez, Dean's Academic Achievement Award Recipient**



**Eliza Vorenberg, Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, and Laurie Barron of the Feinsein Center for Pro Bono and Experiential Education with Neal Manchester of the Feinsein Foundation**

The rest of the evening was a spirited mixer. Members of the graduating class, state and federal judges, law school board members, faculty, staff, law school administrators, and President Farish enjoyed each other's company (not to mention great food and drink).









On Thursday night at the President's home we had the chance to meet and get to know, in an informal setting, our Honorary Degree recipients: Chief Justice Roderick L. Ireland (retired) of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts; and Robert B. Mann, criminal defense lawyer extraordinaire. It was another beautiful evening, and leading lawyers, judges, and members of the faculty and staff came to meet the guests of honor.

Dean Andy Horwitz, Director of the Criminal Defense Clinic, gave an intensely heartfelt and respectful introduction of Mr. Mann, who then made moving remarks about his children, the privilege of representing those accused of crimes by the state, and his hope that new lawyers would be as happy practicing law as he has been. Deborah Johnson, Director of Diversity and Outreach, Coordinator of International Programs, and Adjunct Professor then introduced Chief Justice Ireland. Deborah had been his student at Northeastern, and she had closely followed his career and always thought of him as a role model. She talked about how important his elevation to the court was to her and so many others (Chief Justice Ireland was the first African-American appointed to the Court in its 323-year history and first to become Chief Justice), and she thanked him for the lessons he taught her in and outside the classroom. It was a lovely tribute to the Justice. Chief Justice Ireland then talked about those whose shoulders he was standing on and went to great lengths to give credit and thanks to his wife, Alice Alexander, a remarkable academic lawyer in her own right. She served as assistant dean and director of cooperative education at Northeastern Law School for twenty years.





**Dean Andy Horwitz and Robert B. Mann**



**Chief Justice Roderick Ireland and Deborah Johnson**

The next day (you guessed it) the weather was beautiful for Commencement. Professor John Chung, Full-Time Faculty Member of the Year, led the procession, and when the pipes and drums “hit it” the mixed emotions of Commencement began to set in. This was a celebration to be sure, but the graduates would be leaving this place and each other, and that was bittersweet.









Chief Justice Ireland's Commencement Address was a gem. His three lessons for the class: 1) Be humble, 2) Be prepared, and 3) Make a difference. His words and his example were an inspiration.



Valedictorian Nicole Marie Manzo was similarly inspiring. She made a very convincing and heart-warming case that the three years of law school are, despite the attendant misery, the best three years of a lawyer's life.





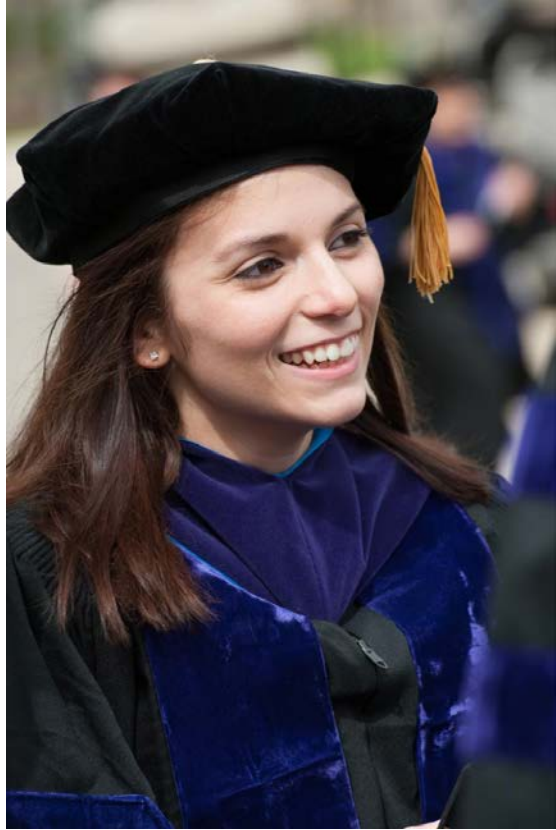
After the ceremony, as has become the tradition, the graduates had to run the gauntlet of the faculty, staff, and administration, and hugs were exchanged liberally.





And the celebration continued.









I have had the privilege to attend upwards of 20 commencement ceremonies during my time in legal education, and they never get old. The personal story of each and every one of our graduates is special, and their paths after they leave here are similarly personal and unique. Being able to celebrate their success and think about and follow them into their future is a privilege.