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Michael Donnelly-Boylen's Post

Welcome, Class of 2018!

Posted by Michael Donnelly-Boylen on 08/18/2015 at 10:37 AM

Every year, I have the pleasure of kicking off Orientation by introducing the newest class to themselves. I enjoy sorting through the files and finding interesting tidbits that will give them a sense of the depth and quality of their fellow classmates. At RWU we truly value having students with a wide range of personal and professional accomplishments who will bring those life experiences to bear in classroom discussions. As you will see, the Class of 2018 is outstanding and only adds to our tradition. Here are excerpts from my remarks:



I am so glad to see the Class of 2018 has finally arrived; we've been waiting very patiently for you! We, in the Admissions Office, have had the distinct privilege of getting to know you over the last year. Thank you for sharing your amazing personal stories with us.

Students in your class attended a wide variety of colleges and universities all around the country including the University of New Mexico, Baylor, Boston University, the University of Oklahoma, Michigan State, the University of Oregon, Brown, and Berklee College of Music.

But some schools sent us more than others. The five schools that sent us the most students are (*in reverse order*): Providence College, Salve Regina University, our own Roger Williams University, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island. In fact, URI students make up 11% of your class.



In your class you will find a lobbyist, a bus driver, a pharmacist, a grants manager specializing in addictions and substance abuse, a Latin Teacher from a Bronx high school, and even a homicide detective who worked in Key West.

Members of your class have worked to send specially engineered stoves to Darfur to extend their fuel supplies, have spoken around the country on the issues of bullying and the rights of the disabled, have worked to improve primary care and behavioral health services in rural Oregon, have volunteered at abandoned baby shelters in South Africa, have helped to rebuild Alabama after the tornados, and have assisted refugees in Nashville, Tennessee. Someone here today investigated child mistreatment cases in Arkansas while someone else created and implemented a self-esteem curriculum for the YWCA of Haiti.



A large number of your classmates report working on ways to combat hunger and homelessness including someone who testified in front of the Texas state legislature on school lunch programs. For some members of your class the struggles of hunger and homelessness have been deeply personal.

A handful of you have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Someone here has hosted his own radio talk show. Someone else is a stand-up comedian who has performed in many of New York City's established comedy clubs. And more than one of you have managed the careers of entertainers including someone who had a 3 year stint as a band manager.



You have made the most of your college experience. We have the captain of Sacred Heart University's Golf Team, the Editor-in-Chief of Catholic University's student newspaper, the President of UMASS Dartmouth's Pre-Law Society, and the founder and President of University of California – Riverside's Afghan Student Association. One of the members of your class was on Roger Williams University's national championship sailing team. Someone headed the gay/straight alliance at their college, someone ran the Special Olympics at their school, and someone else chaired their college's Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Your class has been very politically active. You have interned and worked for numerous United States Senators and Congress people including Senators Whitehouse, Warren, and Harkin and Congressmen Capuano, Cicilline, Clyburn, Adler, and Garcia. You have worked on many gubernatorial, congressional and mayoral races throughout the US. Two of you worked on the recent Providence mayoral campaign for candidates Brett Smiley and Michael Solomon.



Your class has interned in an amazing array of places. These include the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, Probate Court in Lansing, Michigan, Superior Court in Rhode Island, the Ocean Country Prosecutor's Office in New Jersey, NCIS in Groton, Connecticut, the Childhood Lead Paint Action Project in Providence, the Clinton Foundation in New York City, the Human Rights Campaign in Washington, DC, and the Ministry of Finance and Planning in Jamaica.

At the law school that houses the highly regarded Marine Affairs Institute, it should not be shocking that a number of your classmates have done interesting things involving both oceans and the environment. Your classmates have worked with ferry services on Cape Cod Bay and the Long Island Sound. Someone has done research on the virus that is infecting Atlantic oysters, someone else has worked as a soil scientist with the USDA in Redwood National Park, and another classmate has worked through AmeriCorps to improve water quality in Appalachian Ohio.



Some 35% of your class is made up of native Rhode Islanders, meaning nearly two thirds of you are re-locating to the area. 20% of your class hails from the other New England states, 22% from the rest of the Northeast, 14% from the South, 5% from the West and 4% from the Central US.

Your class speaks a wide variety of languages including Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Haitian Creole, Cape Verdean Creole, and Hawaiian.

Fifty-five percent of your class is made up of women, 44% by men. The average age of your class is 25, with 7% of you 30 years of age or older. A number of you are married and some have children. 9% of your class identifies as a member of the LGBT community and 24% of your class comes from racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in the legal profession.

And on a final note, while law schools have been suffering declining enrollments and lowering their academic standards for the last couple of years, I am extremely pleased to report our enrollment is robust again this year – even up a little – and your class's academic quality is consistent with the class before you. You have joined a thriving law school community.

It has been a pleasure getting to know all of you over the last year. Please don't be strangers to the Admissions Office. Feel free to stop in and say hello.

And, on behalf of all of us at RWU Law, welcome to law school.