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## RWU Law News: The E-Newsletter Of Roger Williams University School of Law September 2018

Roger Williams University School of Law

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September 13, 2018

# RWU Law News

The e-Newsletter of  
Roger Williams University School of Law



September 2018

## Diversity, Front and Center

RWU Law is more than twice as diverse as it was just seven years ago. It's a shift that challenges and deepens students' understanding of the communities they serve – and helps them change their world.

[Learn More](#)



## Diversity, Front and Center

RWU Law is more than twice as diverse as it was just seven years ago – a shift that's making the school stronger than ever ...



In this fall's entering class of 1Ls, fully 32 percent identify as racially and/or ethnically diverse, the highest number in the school's history.

Image Credit: James Jones.

September 12, 2018 Michael M. Bowden

Entering its 25th anniversary year, Roger Williams University School of Law has become an integral part of the Rhode Island and regional legal profession and the community at large. In each upcoming issue of the RWU Law e-newsletter this year, we will examine a different aspect of the school's evolution over that period in the areas of (1) diversity, (2) experiential learning, (3) public interest, and (4) affordability.

Diversity is an exciting place to begin. In this fall's entering class of 1Ls, fully 32 percent identify as racially and/or ethnically diverse, the highest number in the school's history – in a class that, incidentally, also includes the highest-ever percentage of women, at 56 percent. In addition, ten percent of the class identifies as LGBTQ.

*"These are not just numbers. The changes in and to our student body reflect the society our students and alumni serve."*

The result is a group of students with an extraordinary breadth of perspective and purpose. At RWU Law, classroom experiences are informed by diverse cultural and legal perspectives that challenge and deepen students' understanding of the communities they serve. And

they put that education to work while in law school and after they graduate – effectuating change, improving their communities, fighting for the disadvantaged and changing their world.

This outcome is the fruition of deliberate decisions that have more than doubled the school's diversity, explains RWU Law Director of Diversity and Outreach Deborah Johnson.

“When I arrived at Roger Williams in 2011, the ethnic and racial diversity in the first-year class was 15 percent,” she says. “Today, by contrast, when I walk through the hallways I see faces and hear conversations that reflect a vast array of backgrounds and experiences – faces and conversations that were barely seen or heard when this law school opened in 1993. The look and feel of the law school is very different than it used to be.”

It's a shift that has made Roger Williams stronger, notes Dean Michael J. Yelnosky. “I am proud to be part of an institution that recruits a diverse student body, that supports that student body, and that puts issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and law front and center inside and outside the classroom,” he says.

### Changing Realities

As Johnson explains, these demographic shifts within the law school reflect changing realities in American life and society.

“These are not just numbers,” she says. “These changes in and to our student body reflect the society our students and alumni serve. They also reflect the extension of opportunities to students who previously may not have had such opportunities. And they reflect victories for groups who have been historically marginalized and excluded from the legal profession.”

The school's LGBTQ population is a good example of this dynamic, Johnson notes.

“In the time that I've been here, the right to marry has been extended to same-sex couples and thus to an increasing number of members of our law school community,” she says. “That has meant more than words and numbers can speak.”

Dean Yelnosky explains that a recognition of these shifts is reflected in the law school's core values, noting:

1. “We genuinely believe that a diverse student body, faculty and staff improves the educational experience by creating the conditions for an intellectually and personally challenging exchange of ideas”;
2. “We believe that a diverse student body helps prepare all of our students for practice in an increasingly diverse profession, country, and world”; and
3. “We believe that diversity is a matter of social justice, because for far too long certain groups have been excluded from the legal profession and the privileges and responsibilities that come with membership in it.”

### The Road Ahead

Indeed, much has been accomplished, but plenty of work remains to be done.

“We can, should and absolutely must celebrate our increased diversity,” Johnson says. “But we must increasingly focus on issues of inclusion and continue our fight for equity – to ensure that all those who enter our doors feel welcomed and included as members of our community, and that all have fair and equal access to opportunities that will allow them to learn, grow, and thrive.”

Yelnosky is also hopeful that these goals will be fulfilled.

“We should be proud of what together we have accomplished,” he says, “and I am confident we will continue to make progress. The health of RWU Law, of the legal profession and of the society depend on it.”

## Meet Our New Faces



## Welcome New Faculty!

As a new academic year begins, Associate Professors Tara I. Allen and Christopher J. Ryan, Jr., are bringing fresh expertise to RWU's outstanding faculty.

[Read more ...](#)



## New Faculty for Fall '18

In the coming academic year, Associate Professors Tara I. Allen and Christopher J. Ryan, Jr., will bring fresh expertise to RWU's world-class faculty.



Professor Christopher J. Ryan, Jr., Professor Tara I. Allen

April 12, 2018

RWU Law is pleased to introduce the two latest additions to its faculty, both of whom will be joining the school as associate professors in July.

Associate Professor Tara I. Allen will be teaching Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, and Evidence. She joins us from the Federal Public Defenders Office for the



District of Rhode Island, where she has served as an Assistant Federal Public Defender since 2012, representing indigent defendants in federal criminal proceedings of all kinds. She has also worked in Federal Public Defender Offices in the Western District of Pennsylvania and the Eastern District of California. Prior to her work as a trial lawyer Professor Allen was a staff attorney in the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Ninth and Second Circuits.

Professor Allen will be a familiar face to many in the RWU Law family, as she has been teaching as an adjunct here (to rave reviews) for several years, and has served as an externship supervisor for RWU Law students placed in the federal defenders office. She also has teaching experience at U.C. Hastings and McGeorge School of Law. Professor Allen earned her B.A. from Wesleyan University and her J.D. from Northeastern.

Associate Professor Christopher J. Ryan, Jr., will teach Property, Wills and Trusts, and Statistics for Lawyers. He joins us from an American Bar Foundation Fellowship, where he conducted research on the job market for law school graduates. He is also in a Ph.D. program in Policy Studies at Vanderbilt University, and his dissertation focuses as well on the economics of attending law school.

Professor Ryan served as a law clerk to Judge Joseph M. Hood of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, and he was Director of Development at the University of Kentucky. He has also taught courses in business at the University of Louisville.

In addition to his scholarship about law schools and law school graduates Professor Ryan has written about a variety of intellectual property topics. He has a B.A. from Dartmouth College, a Master's in Education from Notre Dame, and a law degree from the University of Kentucky.

*Please join us in welcoming Professor Allen and Professor Ryan to our community!*



## Who is the Class of 2021?

Assistant Dean of Admissions Michael Donnelly-Boylan introduces RWU Law's incoming class – a notably strong, diverse, ambitious, accomplished and dedicated gathering of law students.

[Watch the video ...](#)

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## 'It Felt Like a Community'



### Molly Hamlin '18



Following a stellar RWU Law career, native Oregonian Molly Hamlin is putting her degree to work as a judicial clerk to the Honorable Debra Vogt, Presiding Judge of the Lane County Circuit Court, Eugene, Oregon.

## 'It Felt Like a Community'





Molly R. Hamlin

### **Molly R. Hamlin, RWU Class of 2018**

#### **Juris Doctor**

Molly Hamlin was born and raised in Oregon, and that's where she'll be putting her law degree to work – starting as a judicial clerk to the Honorable Debra K. Vogt, Presiding Judge of the Lane County Circuit Court in Eugene. (According to a 2018 *preLaw* Magazine survey, RWU Law has the nation's sixth highest percentage of graduates entering clerkships – the “royal road” to the legal profession.)

“Judge Vogt has a lot of history in the field,” Hamlin says. “She told me, ‘When I’m in the courtroom, you’ll be in the courtroom.’ So the clerkship should provide a lot of good experience, watching the proceedings; seeing attorneys at work.”

How did this daughter of the West Coast find herself in faraway Rhode Island? Her husband was stationed in Newport during his stint in the Navy, and the couple loved the area. “We had no family here; we didn’t

know anybody, really,” Hamlin says. “But I thought, I’m ready to experience something different. I’m going to go on an adventure!”

She applied to an array of law schools but loved Roger Williams’ beautiful seaside campus in Bristol – and the people made her feel at home.

“Whenever I’d visit, call or email anyone at RWU Law, they were so friendly and supportive and genuinely interested,” Hamlin recalls. “I immediately felt like they were going to support and partner with me in doing this. It felt like a community.”

That level of support became essential when family tragedy struck – Hamlin’s mother and brother both passed away unexpectedly. “RWU Law’s reaction is a testament to the school,” she said. “They adjusted my schedule when I needed to go home. The administration had my back on everything. I received multiple sympathy cards from my professors. Everyone was wonderful.”

While excelling in her class work – she is in the top 10 of her class and was a member of Law Review and Vice President of the Moot Court Board – Hamlin also immersed herself in practical training. She worked as a student attorney in RWU Law’s Veteran Disability Appeals Clinic and an intern with the Rhode Island Public Defender, did an Alternative Spring Break gig with the Committee for Public Counsel Services in Fall River, Mass., and – the crown jewel of her experiential résumé – scored a public interest externship in the Office of Governor Gina Raimondo, where she worked closely with one of the most respected lawyers in state government, executive counsel Claire Richards, who has served under four Rhode Island governors.

“She was wonderful,” Hamlin enthuses. “The way she interacted with people was fascinating to watch. She was just such a great advocate in everything she did.”

The work was equally fascinating.

“Every day was different,” Hamlin says. “You never knew what you’d walk into! One day I’d be doing policy research, the next day cataloguing what certain committees looked like in different surrounding states. Then there was a First Amendment issue, then a privilege issue; looking up statutes ...”

For Hamlin, it was something close to a dream job.

“I’ve always enjoyed research and writing,” she says. “I like both the logic of the law, and its humanity; both the discipline and the creativity involved. Besides, I kind of grew up around judges and lawyers. My mom worked at the courthouse in my hometown, and during college I worked summers as a file clerk at the Crook County Circuit Court. I used to see firsthand how people without an attorney were just completely confused and uninformed about their rights or the resources available to them.

And I thought, ‘You know? I think I can really help people in this way.’”

[Read Molly's Story](#)



Professor David Logan explains why Alex Jones "might be in for a



Congressman David Cicilline encourages MSNBC's Alex Witt to apply to RWU



**Dean Yelnosky Applauds**

constitutional  
surprise."

Law on national  
television!

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clip ...](#)

## Uniform Bar Exam Decision

RWU Law Dean applauds Rhode Island for decision to use a Uniform Bar Exam, says it opens 'huge market' for graduates.



Dean Michael J. Yelnosky

Image Credit: Peter Silvia/RWU Law

June 8, 2018

Ed Fitzpatrick

Roger Williams University School of Law Dean Michael J. Yelnosky on Friday applauded Rhode Island for deciding to use a Uniform Bar Exam rather than the more customized exam it has been administering for decades.

On Thursday, the state Supreme Court announced that Rhode Island will administer the Uniform Bar Exam, beginning in February 2019. The court's order follows a year-long

study by the Rhode Island Board of Bar Examiners, which recommended adoption of the Uniform Bar exam. In doing so, Rhode Island will join 29 states, including all of the New England states, plus Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*Local adoption of the Uniform Bar Exam opens up a huge market for our graduates to find the job that best suits them without the need to take multiple bar examinations.*

“Local adoption of the Uniform Bar Exam opens up a huge market for our graduates to find the job that best suits them without the need to take multiple bar examinations,” Yelnosky said. “It also brings Rhode Island’s bar licensing scheme into what has become the mainstream – a structure that is more national than local and that focuses on the wide breadth of largely uniform law as opposed to the much, much smaller areas of idiosyncratic state law.”

The content of the new bar examination will vary only slightly from the previous exam, and the passing score will not change. The major change – and it is dramatic – is that the score a test taker receives on the Uniform Bar Exam, is portable, meaning that it can be transferred to other Uniform Bar Exam jurisdictions for purposes of admission to practice in those jurisdictions. Currently, if a law school graduate sits for and passes the Rhode Island bar examination, he or she is eligible to practice only in Rhode Island.

Beginning in February, that same graduate would (assuming he or she obtains a passing score in the other jurisdictions) be eligible to seek admission to practice in the 31 Uniform Bar Exam jurisdictions. In its order, the state Supreme Court noted that “the UBE responds to today’s challenging legal job market and the

need for law school graduates to seek work in other jurisdictions.” Adoption of the Uniform Bar Exam will also benefit Rhode Island by “making it easier for law school graduates from around the country to bring their talents here,” the court wrote.

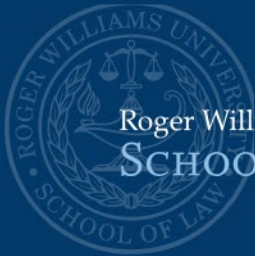
Dean applauds RI's decision to adopt the Uniform Bar Exam; says it opens 'huge market' for graduates.

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