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Law School News: Welcome, RWU Law Class Of 2025! 08-15-2022

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Law School News

Welcome, RWU Law Class of 2025!

At Roger's School of Law Orientation ceremony last week, a new class of 'Law Hawks' met their new law school, their new legal community — and each other.

August 15, 2022 | Michael M. Bowden



Michael Donnelly-Boylen, RWU Law Associate Dean of Enrollment and Strategic Initiatives, addresses the Class of 2025 as part of Orientation 2022.

As part of last week's Orientation activities, Michael Donnelly-Boylen, RWU Law's Associate Dean of Enrollment and Strategic Initiatives, addressed the Class of 2025.

While other speakers introduced the students to the State of Rhode Island, the School of Law itself, its wide and supportive alumni base, and the state's legal community, Donnelly-Boylen focused on introducing them to themselves.

Excerpts from his comments follow. Please note that all statistics cited are preliminary and not yet official.



Let me formally begin tonight's chorus by welcoming you to Roger and its School of Law. We are very excited for the Class of 2025, our newest Law Hawks. I'm going to tell you a little bit about this exciting class, and give you a sense of who you will be embarking on this law school journey with.

Look around you. The group you see here tonight will be your support system for the next three years and likely well beyond. If you look around the room, 74 percent of you are *not* from Rhode Island—essentially three-quarters of your class. And *half* of your class is not from New England. I want you to realize how many of you have come from far and wide to join us here on the shores of Mount Hope Bay. Welcome. We hope you enjoy it here as much as we do.

The most represented state in your class *is* Rhode Island, with 26 percent of your class. Fourteen percent of your class comes from Massachusetts, and another 14 percent comes from New York. New Jersey residents make up seven percent of your class, and folks from Connecticut make up five percent. There are seven Texans and seven Floridians in your class. And a fun fact: there are more people in your class from Idaho than from New Hampshire and Vermont combined.

There are a wide number of undergraduate schools represented in the class of 2025. Here's just a small sample of the schools that sent us two or more students this year: Arizona State, Holy Cross, Cornell, Loyola Maryland, the University of Houston, the University of Miami, and Boise State. President Miaoulis, I am pleased to tell you that

Roger Williams is our top undergraduate feeder school once again this year with 15 students enrolling—Go Hawks!

Other than Roger, our biggest feeder schools are URI, the University of Massachusetts—Dartmouth, Providence College, John Jay College in New York City, Rhode Island College, and Wheaton College in Massachusetts. Here's an interesting fact: one in five of your classmates majored in political science.

Sixty-eight percent of your class identifies as female, and 41 percent identifies as male, with one percent not falling into the gender binary. This continues a longstanding tradition here at the law school being majority female. The average age of your class is 26. That is higher than normal for us; in fact, 15 percent of your class is over the age of 30.

Some other interesting facts about your class:

- One in four of your classmates was the first in their family to attend college.
- One in four of your classmates identifies as a student of color.
- Your class speaks 15 languages. Eight percent of your class is fluent in Spanish, 4 percent in French and 2 percent in Russian. You also speak Luganda, Mandarin, American Sign Language, Japanese, Arabic, Polish, Tagalog, Korean, Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese, Punjabi, and Urdu. (Professor Gonzalez, who runs our Immigration Clinic, is going to be *very* excited!)
- The largest hometown of your class is *not* Cranston, Rhode Island (that's just the number-one hometown of our Rhode Island students). New York City is actually the place where the largest number of you have been living this past year.
- Nine percent of your class went to community college and earned an associate's degree before enrolling in a bachelor's program.
- Four of you have already published academic papers.
- Three percent of your class served in the military; thank you for your service.
- At least three percent of your class are parents.
- Thirteen percent of your class identifies as members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- There are nine NCAA Division I athletes in your class. They played field hockey, football, golf, lacrosse, rowing, and gymnastics. One of you even won the national dance championship.
- The most common employer in your class is a little unusual: Eight of you worked for either the YMCA or the YWCA.
- The most common job we found, other than paralegals: Thirteen of you are or were lifeguards.
- Another fun fact: there are five Eagle Scouts in your class.
- One of the themes that came across really quickly as we reviewed your applications is that your class is extremely musical, whether it's *a cappella*, church choir, the UCLA Marching Band, or opera. You also play a range of instruments, including flute, saxophone, tuba, and cello. (I sense a Class of 2025 band coming soon!)

- In your class, you will find teachers, police officers, handymen, accountants; even a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives.
- Someone in your class was a research analyst for the Utah state auditor. Someone else worked in South Korea for a nonprofit that deals with maritime-border issues, while someone else founded a nonprofit health clinic in Uganda. Your classmates have worked for immigration agencies in Arizona, as guardians *ad litem* in Florida, and even as New York City election inspectors. Someone worked at a nonprofit in Maine helping COVID patients without homes find a place to recover, and another drafted a federal bill promoting gun control. Someone in your class was even a two-time debate champion in Pakistan.
- You have interned for Senator Collins, Portman, and Whitehouse, as well as Congressman Lance of New Jersey, Langevin of Rhode Island, Long of Maryland, McCaul of Texas—you have been *very* active politically, on both sides of the aisle
- You've told us some interesting facts about yourselves, like: One of you consults for an oyster company, another one is a yoga podcaster. Someone ran antique auctions. And one of you is so into Taylor Swift that you included it on your resume. (I really like your vibe, I have to admit.)

I want to stop here for a moment, and acknowledge that some of you spent all your free time working, just to make it through college financially. We also see you. We see you if you worked as a barista at Starbucks, sold Panera in Vegas, served pie in Maine, delivered Domino's in Idaho, or worked your way up at Penske Trucks. And for the person in your class who worked at McDonald's, I see you in particular: six years there myself, through both high school and college.

I know some of you right now are sitting here thinking you don't belong here – that somehow, I made a mistake admitting you. Imposter syndrome is real. Let me tell you a story I've never shared here publicly. When I first started here at Roger Williams, one of the faculty members nonchalantly asked me where my father worked. I froze, unsure how to answer. You see, the answer was a law firm—but not in the way the professor meant it. My dad was the janitor. In that moment, I was sure I did not belong here. That moment has stuck with me for many years, but I stand here today.

Some of you are going to have moments just like that, when something or someone makes you feel like you don't belong here. Roger Williams is not perfect. But I promise you, we are trying. If I belong at this podium, I assure you that *you* belong in that seat. I did not make a mistake. And for those of you who struggle with imposter syndrome, trust me when I tell you that many of us feel like we are just “faking it until we make it” too. I also promise you that many more of your classmates will feel that way over the next few weeks. Let's all work to normalize discussing the fact that we're feeling that way.

Your class marks a personal milestone for me. You are the 20th class I've had the privilege of admitting to Roger Williams. My team and I are excited to be on this journey with you. Those of us in the Admissions Office have been eagerly awaiting you for a

very long time. We won't be forgetting about you, and I ask you not to forget about us. Many of you have met our team of student admissions counselors. We hope that some of you, in the future, will join that team, helping to bring in the next generation of Law Hawks.

I'm very excited to see all that the class of 2025 will achieve as they learn the tools that will allow them to change the world. On behalf of all of us at Roger Williams University: *Welcome to Law School!*