Dean Logan's Blog: Noted Trial Lawyer Delivers Santoro Business Law Lecture

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Most people know Jan Schlichtmann from the riveting book *A Civil Action*, and later a movie where John Travolta portrayed the Massachusetts trial lawyer who went bankrupt from handling a toxic tort claim against deep-pocket corporate defendants. At first glance, Schlichtmann was an unusual choice to deliver a lecture that honors RWU Law's founding dean, Tony Santoro, who is one of his era's best teachers of Business Law courses. But like last year's speaker, Frank Fahrenkopf (the head of the American Gaming Association), Schlichtmann has used his legal training to pursue a fascinating, but nontraditional career path: Schlichtmann has made a career 180, spending much of his time now pursuing eco-friendly business investments north of Boston. Speaking at the Omni Providence Hotel about his latest venture, Oceanic Innovations, LLC, he described his hope to seed sustainable 21st century harbor-front development and marine industry based on the latest principles in ecological engineering, green chemistry, and biomimicry. Believing that “the interplay between food, energy, and water use is determinative of our quality of life,” Schlichtmannn said he is “driven by the desire to work with others in developing a vitalizing industrial metaphor that is symbiotic with nature.”

Schlichtmann was a riveting speaker, sprinkling his talk with nuggets from the experience of being portrayed by Hollywood, and emphasizing for the many students in attendance how a law degree can take you in many different directions, a core purpose of the Santoro Lecture.

Below are some pictures from the fascinating evening.