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Dean Logan's Blog: Seventh Diversity Symposium Dinner is a Big Hit

Roger Williams University School of Law

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The Diversity Symposium Dinner is a unique program that brings lawyers, judges, law profs, and law students together with minority high school and college students for an evening of discussion on important legal issues. The event is a key part of our “pipeline efforts,” exposing young people from underrepresented populations to the possibility of a career in the law. Last week’s program, our 7th, was sold out, with the largest number of high school attendees ever. Many thanks to Lydia Hanhardt, our Director of Diversity, and Lorraine Lalli, our Dean of Students, for their efforts, and to a true friend of the law school, Beverly Ledbetter (Vice President and General Counsel at Brown University) for presiding.

The function is organized around “table talk,” with all tables a mix of lawyers, judges, and students, discussing a set of questions. This year’s focus was on the First Amendment, and the issues were framed by an excellent summary of the relevant law by one of Rhode Island’s leading civil liberties lawyers, Lynette Labinger. Then, the discussions at the ten tables began and, as befitting the topic, the conversations were spirited, with pointed comments made on whether the Constitution should protect flag burning, “hate speech codes,” and bullying. Then, a distinguished group took to the floor to discuss their perspectives on the issues raised, including Walter Stone (a senior partner at the leading firm Adler, Pollack & Sheehan), Joe Fernandez (formerly Providence City Solicitor and currently a candidate for state Attorney General), Jennifer Azevedo (a RI lawyer in private practice who handles cases at the request of the RI ACLU), and Damaris Tamm-Daniels (a 3L at Roger Williams Law).

One other highlight of the evening was the inspirational remarks by the newest member of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, Judge O. Rogeriee Thompson. It was a great evening. Below are some pictures of the participants from that fun and informative event.
Judge Bill Clifton and student guests

Just part of the crowd...

The RWU Law Crew
Professor Jorge Elorza with a URI student

Judge Thompson with her first law clerk, Angelyne Cooper