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Dean Logan's Blog: RWU Law Hosts Important Public Interest Conference

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For 24 years, the Robert Cover Public Interest Retreat has been a highlight of the academic year for the law students, lawyers, and legal academics who are committed to the tough, but deeply rewarding work of public interest practice. Sponsored by SALT (the Society of American Law Teachers), this year’s program was sponsored by RWU Law and attendees from 27 law schools sold out all the available reservations.

Here is some commentary: first, from Hazel Weiser (Executive Director of SALT):

“Roger Williams law students, led by the charismatic Jamie Rhodes (2L), organized the Cover Retreat in a way that captured the true spirit and intention of its founders…. His leadership, enthusiasm, understanding of human nature, and exceptional organizational skills, coupled with his commitment to public service offered an exemplar to all those in attendance….at this life changing weekend.”

Now, some words from our own Prof. Mary Holper, who headed workshops at the Retreat on Immigration Law (she heads the RWU Immigration Clinic) and her experience as an Equal Justice Law Fellow before beginning her teaching career at Boston College.

“Last weekend was the twenty-fourth annual Cover Retreat. The retreat, named after Robert M. Cover, a beloved law professor, legal scholar, and social activist at Yale Law School, is a gathering of public interest-minded students and practitioners. One goal of the retreat is networking; however, the retreat also helps students find a national support network in their choice of public interest careers, which often involve tough work for little pay. The retreat is also a great opportunity for practitioners to meet others in the various fields of public interest legal work, and to connect with future attorneys in their fields. Practitioners represented a range of subject matters, including immigration, criminal defense, impact litigation, environmental law, and many fields of poverty law. Finally, the retreat provides an easy, casual atmosphere in which students and practitioners can discuss life as a public interest lawyer, while still having time to enjoy snowshoeing or snow tubing in an idyllic New Hampshire setting.”

“Each year, a different law school volunteers to organize the retreat. RWU second-year law student Jamie Rhodes took on this daunting task this year. He, with the help of other RWU students, coordinated logistics, invited practitioners, and developed the curriculum. The retreat included small group discussions on topics in public interest law, each led by an experienced practitioner in the field, as well as panel discussions about public interest law fellowships and public interest activities at each participating law school.”

And finally, this from Jamie:
“It has been an honor and privilege to organize the 24th Annual Robert M. Cover Public Interest Law Retreat which was held from March 4-6. Working with law school staff at Yale and student volunteers at schools across the East Coast, we were able to bring together 120 students from 27 different law schools and 25 seasoned public interest attorneys and academics for a weekend of networking and ideological solidarity. This level of student engagement and passion has reinvigorated a desire to dedicate my legal career to public service. It was fantastic to see such institutional support from Roger Williams University, especially funding support from Dean Logan and the SBA which helped 10 RWU students to attend. The dedication of these students left all who attended the retreat impressed with the caliber of RWU students in both the organizing of the event, a staple in the public interest community, and the quality of discourse we brought to the small group and panel discussions. I look forward to helping next year's organizers continue to make this must-attend event for public interest law students throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic.”