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Roger Williams University School of Law

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Dean Logan's Blog

Promoting Diversity in the RI Legal Profession

Posted by David Logan on 07/11/2011 at 02:02 PM

Our 8th Annual Diversity Symposium Dinner was more proof of the role Roger Williams School of Law plays in enhancing the “pipeline” for minority students into the legal profession. Approximately 70 judges, lawyers, high school, college and law students plus law school and college professors and administrators gathered at the Providence Marriott for an evening of discussion about immigration in the United States. The conversation in the room was energetic and rich, and the level of engagement - most notably from some of the high school students in attendance - was exceptional. Here are some recollections from our terrific new Director of Diversity, Deborah Johnson:

“Special thanks goes to our dear friend, Beverly Ledbetter (Vice President and General Counsel at Brown University) for moderating the program for the second year in a row. Beverly began the evening by welcoming me and other program planners: Dean of Students Lorraine Lalli, former Director of Diversity Lydia Hanhardt, and Thurgood Marshall Law Society President Kas DeCarvalho. After Beverly welcomed all the guests, I had an opportunity to discuss the strong work we have done, and continue to do, to increase diversity
at our fine law school and in the Rhode Island legal profession. We also heard remarks from Kas, who gave a touching tribute to former Diversity Symposium Dinner moderator and RWU SOL friend, the late Joe Fernandez. The moment was particularly special as we were honored to have Joe’s widow, Emily Maranjian, join us for the evening.

“As the program continued, attendees engaged in discussion at their tables about the raging immigration debate in our country. Beverly then masterfully facilitated the dialogue in the larger group and created an environment that allowed for differing points of view to be expressed. Those viewpoints included thoughts about whether immigration to the United States should be considered a right or a privilege; what the pros and cons of immigration are (both from the perspective of the U.S. Government and from that of a person seeking to immigrate to the U.S.); whether there should be limits on immigration; and whether immigration issues affect communities of color in unique ways.

“In addition to hearing the reflections from the table discussions, we heard from a distinguished panel that included prominent Rhode Island immigration lawyer Roberto Gonzalez, Special Assistant Attorney General Bill Trezvant, 3L and former Immigration Clinic student Jennifer Coliflores, and 2L (and incoming Student Bar Association president) Tolulope Kevin Olasanoye. Each panelist provided rich food for thought and left us with some key points to consider as we continue to participate in a debate that is not likely to end anytime soon.

“This event is a joint effort of Roger Williams University School of Law, the Thurgood Marshall Law Society, the RI Bar Association Committee for Minority Involvement and the RWU Law Multicultural Law Students Association. The Dinner also receives generous support from a national group, the Law School Admission Council.”
Below are some pictures from the evening.

RWUSOL Director of Diversity and Outreach, Deborah L. Johnson and RWUSOL student, Juliana McKittrick

Mike Fontaine, Brandon Bell (both of Fontaine, DeCarvalho & Bell), Emily Marrankian, RI Department of the Attorney General
Dean Logan chatting with RWUSOL alumni, Hinna Upal and Marcus Jackson Jones

Lauren Naylor, John Riccitelli (Rhode Island College Student),
Veronica Paricio (RWUSOL Director of Career Services),
Antoinette Gomes (Director, Rhode Island College Unity Center)
Championing our Students ("COS") students and staff with
RWSOL student Erik Johnson

Kas DeCarvalho (Fontaine, DeCarvalho, & Bell);
Roberto Gonzalez (Gonzalez Law Offices); and
Bill Trezvant, RI Department of the Attorney General
RWUSOL Students Amelia Kohli, Sara Oster, Diony Garcia, Jennifer Coliflores, Rosemary Gushiken, Luis Mancheno