Dean Logan's Blog: Three to Get Ready

Roger Williams University School of Law

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On June 10, legal writing professors, mostly from New England, but also from law schools in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, joined us for a thought-provoking conference of the New England Consortium of Legal Writing Teachers.

Three to Get Ready: Three Different Perspectives on Getting Students “Practice Ready,” featured some of our recent alumni and also faculty, including Judge William E. Smith of the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island, who is a judge by day and a popular member of our Adjunct Faculty by night.

Associate Dean Andy Horwitz kicked off the conference by welcoming our guests and underscoring the importance of good legal writing skills.

One for the Money (video)
The first panel, “One for the Money,” was moderated by RWU Legal Methods faculty Ellen Saideman and Cecily Banks, and featured Kim Ahern ’09, Special Assistant Attorney General, Rhode Island Department of the Attorney General, and a former law clerk for the Rhode Island Supreme Court; Kara Humm ’08, Massachusetts Committee for Public Counsel Services; Alexandra Pezzello ’09, Associate, Partridge Snow & Hahn, Providence, RI and a former law clerk for the Rhode Island Supreme Court; and Hinna Upal ’07, Associate, Pierce Atwood, Providence, RI and a former law clerk for the Rhode Island Supreme Court and the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island. They discussed what it means to be “practice ready” from their perspectives and how RWU Law prepared them to get off the ground running when they graduated.

Two for the Show (video)
The second panel, “Two for the Show,” was moderated by faculty members Liz Colt and Olivia Milonas, and featured Peter Carvelli ’08, Carvelli Law; Katherine Godin ’08, Law Offices of Katherine Godin, Inc.; and Matthew Mannix ’06, James V. Aukerman & Associates and a former law clerk in the Rhode Island Supreme Court Law Clerk Department. They decided to hang up their own shingle or work in a small law firm and discussed what practice skills were essential for them and what additional skills could be taught to law students today in light of the changing economy.
Three to Get Ready (video)

The third panel, “Three to get Ready,” focused on what some schools are doing to make students more “practice ready” and was moderated by two more Legal Methods faculty, Kathy Thompson and Colleen Brown. That panel featured Judge William E. Smith, as well as Jane Rindsberg, the Coordinator of our Legal Methods Department, who discussed the innovative Federal Practice course that Judge Smith designed and in which he participates. This unique offering gives students a full range of practical experience, from interviewing and landing a client, to filing a complaint, to a full-blown all-day trial. Students in Federal Practice “appeared” before Judge Smith and two Magistrate Judges for a variety of matters. The Federal Practice class is featured in an earlier blog.

The third panel featured Kathy Elliott Vinson, the Director of the Legal Practice Skills Program at Suffolk University Law School, who discussed a new Practitioners in Residence Program in which all of Suffolk’s first-year students will participate, so they can learn firsthand from practicing attorneys and judges.

Last, but certainly not least, the third panel featured one of our own, Amanda Foster ’04, an Assistant Professor of Law at Nova Southeastern University Law Center in Fort Lauderdale. Amanda discussed what she had added to her curriculum for first-year law students to give them more of the skills they need to succeed. Amanda was the subject of an earlier blog. More recently, Nova Southeastern posted a news item about Amanda’s participation in our conference.

Here are some pics from the event:

![Judge Will Smith](image)
Professor Laura Reilly from University at Buffalo
School of Law with Professor Kim Baker