

AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research

The Association of American Law Schools
Advancing Excellence in Legal Education

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LWRR Micro-Essays

*from the
chair*

Lori Delaney Johnson,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas



Reconnection. For many of us, 2023 has been marked by the opportunity to reconnect: with our students, with our colleagues, and with our communities. As we move forward into the summer, we can also celebrate upcoming opportunities for reconnection within our discipline, including (finally!) the return of in person conferences.

Please be on the lookout for an opportunity to reconnect with our Section during the Poster Presentations at the upcoming 2022 LWI Biennial Conference. We look forward to sharing information about how and why to get more involved with our Section!

More importantly, however, this opportunity to reconnect allows us to deeply consider and reframe our approaches to engagement with others. These new beginnings permit (and perhaps even require) each of us to be intentional about how we structure interactions with others, particularly our students and colleagues. For example, our colleague Jamie Abrams' recent book review of *What Inclusive Instructors Do* in the *Journal of the Legal Writing Institute* has motivated me to explore how I can "create a culture" of inclusivity within my classroom, and more effectively contest "the hierarchies, biases, and entrenched power structures" inherent in all institutions.

Toward this end, our Section looks forward to reconnecting with each of you at several upcoming events, each designed to move our discipline forward and help us consider how we engage with both our students and our institutions. Specifically, calls for proposals for our three sessions at the upcoming 2023 AALS Annual Meeting are included in this Newsletter. Our Program Committee has done an

exceptional job of designing exciting opportunities for sharing our scholarly and pedagogical expertise.

Our Main Program will be co-sponsored with the Section on Disability Law and will focus on Disability: Engaging with an Often Overlooked Diversity Dimension in Our Classrooms, with the recognition that “inclusive classrooms should take into account all forms of diversity.” Our Secondary/Pedagogical Program will address Pedagogy Pivots: Leading Legal Education’s Transition to the NextGen Bar Exam. This session will consider how “skills faculty can harness our expertise and engage with the broader law school community to ensure we all play a role to prepare our students for the NextGen Bar Exam.” Finally,

we will, as always, host a Newer Scholars’ Workshop. This year, the Workshop will include breakout mentorship sessions for each of the selected authors. We encourage you to please apply to present at one of these important sessions.

Finally, if you or anyone you know is considering participating in the AALS Faculty Recruitment Conference this fall (either as an entry-level candidate, or as someone looking to move into a tenure-track position), please join us on August 11, 2022, at 2pm Eastern for a Q&A Webinar about the AALS FRC, hosted by several experienced leaders in our field. We look forward to reconnecting with you at one (or several) of these upcoming events. Have a wonderful summer!

Lori Johnson, Chair

LWI New Teacher Training **Bootcamp**

Register Online at lwionline.org

The LWI New Teacher Training Bootcamp is a new initiative that will offer training and advice for new teachers of 1L legal writing, as well as opportunities to connect with other new legal writing teachers and experienced faculty. The Bootcamp will cover a variety of topics and is exclusively focused on concepts related to classroom teaching, not scholarship. Among many other topics, expect to cover syllabus creation and design; LRW problem design and execution; grading and giving feedback; DEI in the LRW classroom; LRW classroom management; using technology for teaching and feedback; Universal Design in LRW; asking for help, advice, and mentorship; balancing teaching with other responsibilities; and situating LRW in the larger 1L curriculum.

Zoom | July 13 - 15, 2022

Meet Your 2022 Section Leadership

**Chair**

Lori Johnson
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
William S. Boyd School of Law
lori.johnson@unlv.edu

Chair-Elect

Kate Brem
University of Houston Law Center
kbrem@central.uh.edu

**Secretary**

Iva Ferrell
Widener University
Delaware Law School
ijferrell@widener.edu

Immediate Past Chair

Rosa Kim
Suffolk University Law School
rkim@suffolk.edu

**Executive Committee (At-Large)**

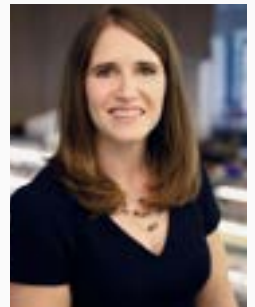
Elizabeth Berenguer
Stetson College of Law
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Abigail Patthoff
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Rachel Stabler
Arizona State University
Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law
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Ken Swift
University of Houston Law Center
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Section Committees

2022

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SERVICE

AWARDS

WHITNEY HEARD
CO-CHAIR, HOUSTON

MICHELLE ZAKARIN
CO-CHAIR, TOURO

Candace Centeno, Villanova
DeLeith Duke Gossett, Texas Tech
Wendy-Adele Humphrey, Texas Tech
N.E. Millar, Widener
Myra Orlen, Western New England
Sara Ricks, Rutgers
Sandra Simpson, Gonzaga
Kristen Tiscione, Georgetown
Maureen Van Neste, Boston College

DIVERSITY

CINDY ARCHER
CO-CHAIR, UC IRVINE

ADAM ECKART
CO-CHAIR, SUFFOLK

Heather Baxter, Nova
Brenda Gibson, Wake Forest
Joy Herr-Cardillo, Arizona
Marisa Meredith, Duquesne
Amy Soled, Rutgers
Jessica Sparks, Southern
DeShayla Strachan, Mitchell Hamline
Emily Wright, Oregon

NOMINATIONS

ALYSSA DRAGNICH
CO-CHAIR, ARIZONA STATE

EZRA ROSS
CO-CHAIR, UC IRVINE

Therese A. Clarke Arado, NIU
Michelle Cue, DePaul
Caroleen Dineen, Elon
Deborah Gordon, Drexel
Anne Mullins, Stetson
Hilary Reed, Houston
Suzanne Rowe, Oregon
Kathy Vinson, Suffolk

OUTREACH

JAKE CARPENTER
CO-CHAIR, MARQUETTE

TRACY NORTON
CO-CHAIR, TOURO

Heidi DeCosimo, Suffolk
Erin Donelon, Tulane
Tim Duff, Suffolk
Tessa Dysart, Arizona
Irina Gott, Roger Williams
Karen Grundy, Tulsa
Jessica Haught, West Virginia
Lynn Hogewood, Samford
Joshua Aaron Jones, Cal Western
Karin Mika, Cleveland Marshall

PROGRAM

MARIA TERMINI
CO-CHAIR, BROOKLYN

CARA CUNNINGHAM WARREN
CO-CHAIR, DETROIT MERCY

Jamie Abrams, Louisville
Shavonnie Carthens, Louisville
Jane Cross, Nova
Kirsten Davis, Stetson
Sabrina DeFabritiis, Suffolk
Samantha Moppett, Suffolk
Susie Salmon, Arizona
Danielle Tully, Brooklyn
Carolyn Williams, Arizona

How Law Schools Can Make a Difference



2023 Annual Meeting

January 4 - 7 | San Diego

Main Program

Disability: Engaging with an Often Overlooked Diversity Dimension in Our Classrooms

Co-sponsored by the Section on Disability Law

Secondary Program

Pedagogy Pivots: Leading Legal Education's Transition to the NextGen Bar Exam

Proposals Due 11:59 p.m. PST, June 30, 2022

Writer's Workshop

Newer Scholars' Works in Progress Session

Proposals Due 11:59 p.m. PST, August 22, 2022

Calls for Proposals ➔

Association of American Law Schools
Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

for the AALS Annual Meeting

How Law Schools Can Make a Difference

San Diego, California
January 4-7, 2023

The Section's Main Program¹

“Disability: Engaging with an Often Overlooked Diversity Dimension in Our Classrooms”

Co-sponsored by the Section on Disability Law

The [AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research](#) invites proposals from speakers to present during our featured program at AALS 2023 titled *“Disability: Engaging with an Often Overlooked Diversity Dimension in Our Classrooms.”*

Inclusive classrooms should take into account all forms of diversity. Yet one diversity dimension that is very likely present and regularly impacting students in your classroom may be the one dimension that is discussed the least: physical, learning, and psychological disabilities. Consider just one example of how being blind, having a learning disability like written expression disorder or dyslexia, or having debilitating anxiety or depression can cause different kinds of writer's block. Given the scope of these and other hurdles, we likely need to better equip ourselves to promote learning

and a sense of inclusion and belonging for this particular cohort of students.

To fill the existing void, the Committee seeks presenters who can speak on a wide range of topics that impact students with disabilities in our law school classrooms. Proposals could address questions such as:

- Does the ADA limit how law professors help students with disabilities? Are we empowered or should we be empowered to do more than just comply with an accommodation?
- Should we incorporate universal design concepts in education so students with disabilities feel included rather than “accommodated”?

¹ Special thanks to Professor Carolyn Williams (Arizona) for identifying this Main Program topic.

- How can law professors combat “special treatment” stigmas—the stigma resulting from a belief that students with disabilities are receiving special treatment in the form of accommodations?
- How does disability compound and intersect with other dimensions, such as race?
- What professional development is required to empower professors to better support students with disabilities?
- How does engaging with accommodated students, beyond the ADA’s requirements, develop all students’ professional identities and ethics?
- What role does or should technology play in this space? What should law professors learn that would be most beneficial to law students with

disabilities? What limitations or drawbacks does technology present for students with disabilities?

- How do we help students with disabilities navigate the potential disconnect between law school accommodations and the Bar examination?
- How do we help students with disabilities understand the connection between their disabilities and their careers as lawyers?

Submission Instructions

Please use [this link](#) to upload your presentation proposal, and see below for additional guidance regarding selection and submission that will apply to both this program and the secondary program.

Proposals must be uploaded by **11:59 p.m. PST on June 30, 2022.**

The Section’s Secondary Program²

“Pedagogy Pivots: Leading Legal Education’s Transition to the NextGen Bar Exam”

The [AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research](#) invites proposals from speakers to present during our featured program at AALS 2023 titled “***Pedagogy***

Pivots: Leading Legal Education’s Transition to the NextGen Bar Exam.”

The [NextGen Bar](#), which will impact Fall 2023 law school matriculants, represents a

² Special thanks to Professor Jamie Abrams (Louisville) for identifying this Secondary Program topic.

dramatic sea-change. Its focus on legal problem solving, research, writing, and client-management skills will require systemic change at the law school course, program, and institutional levels.

This Session will describe the NextGen Bar Exam and present concrete ways to leverage skills-education expertise to inspire and guide law schools through this transition. LRW and clinical faculty are experts in curriculum design and teaching the skills that are tested on the NextGen Bar; but we cannot carry the load alone. So, how should skills faculty harness our expertise and engage with the broader law school community to ensure we all play a role to prepare our students for the NextGen Bar?

Potential topics could include:

- What is the NextGen Bar Exam? Note that the Committee anticipates inviting a keynote speaker to provide background information about the NextGen Bar and to provide a framework for the panel discussions. If you or someone you know has expertise in this area, please contact us or put us in touch.
- Why is the National Conference of Bar Examiners making this change, and how will the change be implemented?
- How can skills faculty become engaged in the National Conference of Bar Examiners' design process? And should the LRW community be involved officially?

- What are best practices in collaboration and law school curricular reform?
- How can law schools promote a shared sense of responsibility to avoid a situation where implementation of curricular changes falls heavily on already over-worked and sometimes under-valued skills faculty?
- How can skills faculty leverage our expertise in these tested areas to improve our status within our respective institutions and the broader academy?
- What aspects of our teaching are most relevant to the NextGen Bar Exam, and how should we cultivate our instruction in these areas?
- How can skills training be integrated into other law school classes? Should institutions consider pairing doctrinal and skills faculty to team teach classes?

Submission Instructions

Please use [this link](#) to upload your presentation proposal, and see below for additional guidance regarding selection and submission that will apply to this program as well as the main program.

Proposals must be uploaded by **11:59 p.m. PST on June 30, 2022.**

Additional Guidance Regarding Selection

In addition to the proposed presentation's contribution to the subject matter of the session, please note other considerations that will inform the Committee's review and selection process.

The Committee is committed to programming that advances the AALS core value of diversity. We especially welcome submissions from junior faculty, women, people of color, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, immigrants, and others who are members of communities that are underrepresented in legal academia. We also recognize that diversity has many dimensions, including faculty status, years of teaching experience, geographic location, and viewpoint. The Committee evaluates proposals anonymously, so please include in your proposal any information you would like us to know about how your presentation would support the diversity of the program. (See Submission Instruction 4, above.)

The Committee encourages proposals from both individuals and groups. While group applications can include speakers from the same school, having speakers from different institutions is encouraged to expand representation. The Committee will consider all individual and group applications as it creates a panel for the session. Applicants—whether individual or group—should be prepared, if selected, to coordinate with

others who also have been invited to present. The Committee will appoint a moderator to work with the selected speakers to ensure cohesion among presenters.

The Committee recognizes that well-designed interactive or demonstrative components can enhance the value of presentations but also understands that such components are not always relevant.

When you submit your proposals, you will be asked to include the following information:

1. The name, contact, and biographical information for each proposed presenter, including designation of the primary contact person;
2. A proposed title for your presentation;
3. A detailed description of your presentation, including content and format;
4. A statement of how your presentation promotes diversity;
5. An indication of how many minutes you will need (e.g., 15 or 25 minutes of the entire one hour and forty-five minute session); and
6. A brief bibliography of materials relevant to your presentation.

The Section's Writer's Workshop

Newer Scholars Works-in-Progress

The Section seeks participants for a Works-in-Progress session during the 2023 AALS Annual Meeting. This session is designed to support newer scholars in the legal writing community, and the Program Committee will select three authors of works in progress through the application process described below.

This session will open with a celebration of scholarship published by Section members throughout the previous year. As for the workshop portion, the three selected authors will present their works in progress to attendees and then receive feedback on the piece and general advice about the publication process. In particular, each author will have approximately 10-12 minutes to present their work to all attendees. Attendees will then break into three smaller groups—one for each of the three authors—so other Section members can pose questions and share feedback specific to one of the works in progress. These small group sessions will last approximately 40 minutes. Finally, attendees will reconvene in the larger group to discuss general issues (e.g., drafting, research support, scholarship placement, post-publication publicity advice) and to answer any remaining questions.

Who Should Apply?

Anyone who teaches legal writing and would like input on their scholarship is strongly encouraged to apply, with top priority given to “newer” scholars who have been in the legal academy for seven years or fewer *or* anyone who within the last seven years has moved into a position or had their position converted to one that requires publication.

In addition, the Committee is committed to programming that advances the AALS core value of diversity. We especially welcome submissions from junior faculty, women, people of color, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, immigrants, and others who are members of communities that are underrepresented in legal academia. We also recognize that diversity has many dimensions, including faculty status, years of teaching experience, geographic location, and viewpoint. The Committee evaluates proposals anonymously, so please include in your proposal any information you would like us to know about how your presentation would support the diversity of the program. (See below Submission Instruction 4.)

What Types of Papers Are Accepted?

An author's work can focus on any topic, use any method, involve any level of controversy, and be suitable for publication in any scholarly form (e.g., book, book chapter, law review article). The work should be beyond the idea stage but otherwise, for purposes of the application, the Committee will consider works in a variety of stages of progress, from outline to full draft. If accepted for the session, the author will be assigned a mentor, if the author would like one, and should plan to have a substantial draft completed by no later than one week before the AALS session. The Committee will not consider works that will be published before the author can incorporate feedback from this session.

How Do I Submit an Application?

Please use [this link](#) to upload your presentation proposal by **11:59 p.m. PST on August 22, 2022**, and include the following information:

1. Your name, contact information, biographical sketch, and years teaching in the legal academy (and, if applicable, years in a position that requires publication);
2. A draft title and 1-2 paragraph description of the work in progress;
3. An outline or draft of the work;
4. A statement of how your participation in the session promotes diversity;
5. An indication of whether you have published before and your interest in being paired with a scholarship mentor;
6. Confirmation that you will submit an updated, substantial draft of your work one week before the Works-in-Progress session;
7. A statement of when you submitted, or plan to submit, your work for publication and, if it has already been accepted, when the final substantive edits will be due to the editors; and
8. Confirmation that the work will not be published before you can incorporate feedback from the session.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to receiving your proposals.

2022-23 LWRR Section's Program Committee

Cara Cunningham Warren (Co-Chair, Detroit Mercy)

Maria Termini (Co-Chair, Brooklyn)

Jamie Abrams (Louisville)

Shavonnie Carthens (Louisville)

Jane Cross (Nova)

Kirsten Davis (Stetson)

Sabrina DeFabritiis (Suffolk)

Samantha Moppett (Suffolk)

Susie Salmon (Arizona)

Danielle Tully (Brooklyn)

Carolyn Williams (Arizona)

2022

Freedom, Equity, and the Common Good

A Recap of 2022's Virtual AALS Meeting

The 2022 AALS annual meeting was held virtually January 5-9, 2022. The theme of the meeting was “Freedom, Equity, and the Common Good.” At that meeting, the Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research held two excellent programs.

The Section’s first program, which was co-sponsored by the AALS Section on Professional Responsibility (and drew a record 177 attendees!) was Infusing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into the Law School Curriculum. In this program, panelists Bridget J.

panel of specialists introduced various scholarly methods and discussed topic identification, writing, placement, and post-publication publicity. Many thanks to our experts: Elizabeth Berenguer (Stetson), Kirsten Davis (Stetson), Sherri Keene (Georgetown), and Brian Larson (Texas A & M). Cara Cunningham Warren (Detroit Mercy) was the moderator.

The second segment highlighted four newer scholars who presented their works in progress and received feedback in individual breakout rooms.

Crawford (Pace), Erin C. Lain (Drake), Melissa H. Weresh (Drake), Danielle M. Shelton (Drake), and Kathryn M. Stanchi (UNLV) addressed timely DEI topics, including fostering law students’ ability to critically analyze and communicate in times of social and political unrest, and using judicial opinions in foundational first year courses to teach critical theory and culturally competent lawyering. The program was moderated by Abby Patthoff (Chapman).

The Section’s second program, Contemporary Scholarly Methods & Works-in-Progress in Legal Communication, took place on January 6, 2022, and was co-sponsored by the AALS Section on Scholarship. This session had two segments. First, a

Congratulations to these authors and special thanks to their mentors and moderators: Michael Blasie (Penn State) Plain Language Laws as Public Policy with Mary Bowman (Arizona State) as moderator, Marissa Meredith (Duquesne) Tinder Love & Care: An Examination of Online Dating Apps Failure to Provide Effective Safety Precautions with Carolyn Williams (Arizona) as moderator, Sara Ochs (Louisville) Imposter Syndrome and the Law School Caste System with Abby Patthoff (Chapman) as moderator, and Conley Wouters (Suffolk) “The Best Arguments in the World Won’t Change a Person’s Mind”: Legal Storytelling and Narrative Fidelity in Richard Powers’ The Overstory with Emily Grant (Washburn) as moderator.

Congratulations to

KARIN MIKA

Cleveland-Marshall School of Law



Earlier this year, Karin Mika was awarded the 2022 Award of the Association of American Law Schools Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research. Thirty-five legal writing professionals signed her nomination in support for this award. Karin has dedicated her almost thirty-year career to the goal of effective legal communication. She is the backbone of the national legal-writing community. Over the course of her career at Cleveland-Marshall, Karin has never faltered as a passionate advocate for both quality legal-writing education and for equitable treatment of legal-writing professors. Karin is also the de facto historian of the Legal Writing profession.

Karin commits her professional time to professional service, via scholarship and program design. She has held tangible leadership positions in AALS (Chair of Section on Teaching Methods), LWI, and ALWD. In addition, Karin's conference talks and writings are instrumental in educating new writing faculty and boosting experienced faculty.

She is a fierce advocate for the status and security of Legal Writing professionals, and has participated in ABA Standards Committee meetings. As a result of Karin's devotion to equitable status for writing professionals, the members of the Legal Writing Institute have experienced professional advancement.

Karin's many years of service and leadership, her dedication to useful scholarship, and her unique focus on the history of the Legal Writing as a profession have advanced our field in ways too numerous to count. She is a great friend and colleague to all.

**2022 Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research
Section Award Winner**

Call for Nominations

2023 AALS Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research Section Award

The AALS Awards Committee is kicking off its search for nominations for our 2023 Section Award. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have made a significant lifetime contribution to the field of legal writing and research.

Nomination deadline is Monday, August 15, 2022.

We strongly encourage nominations that will enhance the richness and diversity of the legal writing community, including nominations of people of color, women, and members of other traditionally

underrepresented groups. We'd welcome a thorough and thoughtful nomination letter explaining the ways in which the nominee has contributed to the field of legal writing and research; a link to a bio or CV is helpful. Send nominations to committee co-chairs Michelle Zakarin, mzakarin@tourolaw.edu and Whitney Heard, wwheard@central.uh.edu.

The 2023 AALS Section Award will be presented at the Section program during the 2023 AALS Annual Meeting.



Past Winners

2022 – Karin Mika (Cleveland-Marshall)
2021 – Dean Cassandra Hill (N. Illinois)
2020 – Grace Tonner (UC-Irvine)
2019 – Charles Calleros (Arizona State)
2018 – Darby Dickerson (John Marshall–Chicago)
2017 – Linda Berger (UNLV)
2016 – Suzanne Rowe (Oregon)
2015 – Mark E. Wojcik (John Marshall–Chicago)
2014 – Jan Levine (Duquesne)
2013 – Terrill Pollman (UNLV) and
– Jill Ramsfield (Hawaii)
2012 – Susan Brody (John Marshall–Chicago) and
– Mary Barnard Ray (Wisconsin)

2011 – Elizabeth Fajans (Brooklyn)
2010 – Joe Kimble (Thomas Cooley)
2009 – Richard K. Neumann, Jr. (Hofstra)
2008 – Eric Easton (Baltimore)
2007 – Anne Enquist (Seattle)
2006 – Terri LeClercq (Texas)
2005 – Marilyn Walter (Brooklyn)
2003 – Laurel Currie Oates (Seattle)
2002 – Helene Shapo (Northwestern)
1997 – Ralph Brill (Chicago-Kent)
1996 – Mary Lawrence (Oregon)



Q&A Webinar about AALS Faculty Recruitment

August 11, 2022 | 2 p.m. Eastern



If you or anyone you know is considering participating in the upcoming Faculty Recruitment - either as an entry-level candidate or as someone looking to move into a tenure/tenure-track position - join us for an interesting discussion hosted by several experienced leaders in the field. Questions? Contact Lori Johnson at lori.johnson@unlv.edu.

USHER IN SUMMER WITH OUR

MICRO ESSAYS

Thank you to all those who submitted essays for publication.

Earlier this year we asked members of the AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research to submit essays recounting their thoughts on “How Law Schools Can Make a Difference.”

We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we have



Bringing Oral Argument Practice to Life

By Maryam Franzella

Students who enter law school today are motivated and empowered to use their skills as a vehicle for social change. First-year law students are currently living, as we all are, in a momentous time; a mosaic of social unrest, culture clashes, political upheaval, technological consumption, and economic turbulence. Social justice, bias, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of these issues, and frequently the source of stress, whether direct or indirect. It can be dispiriting for students to walk into the halls of law school thrilled by the opportunity to make a difference, only to find out that they must often wait until 2L and 3L years to be able to partake in a clinic or enroll in courses that incorporate such issues.

Especially in the first-year legal writing classroom, which is itself designed to allow students to put knowledge to practice for a purpose, avoiding authentic, existing issues is a missed opportunity to engage students.

As a professor of legal practice skills, I feel duty-bound to teach collaboration, the need to educate oneself on all aspects of an issue, especially when it is a hot-button one, and the ability to advocate for a position while showing respect for a rational opposing viewpoint (even when one is not personally persuaded by it). Accordingly, in my class, I have sought to explore divisive existing topics that are at the forefront of social, cultural, and political debates, while giving students the opportunity to learn about advocacy both for the position that they support, as well as any reasonably-supported alternative standpoint. I have found that the spring semester, where we delve into public policy in greater depth and prepare for oral arguments is the perfect opportunity to incorporate exercises of this nature.

One such exercise involves allowing students to orally argue an existing debate. Initially, students listen to oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court on current topics such as marriage equality and abortion to understand how skilled lawyers present the public policies behind such matters. Next, I provide students with talking points and arguments relating to a societal dispute, such as whether cancel culture is good for society, or whether college athletes should be paid. Such topics present issues of bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and inequality, thereby exposing the students to how these matters affect people and their communities. I task them, in small groups, with organizing persuasive oral arguments on the issue, relying both on precedential and policy support. Finally, representatives of each group argue opposing points before the class, taking questions from a “hot bench” consisting of members of the opposing team.

This simulation based on existing social justice issues motivates students to learn and work towards confidently presenting an argument on something that matters to real people, in stark contrast to an oral argument based on a hypothetical fact pattern. Students leave this class energized, having “thought like lawyers” and brought issues affecting their lives into the classroom, thereby bringing the classroom to life.

Making a Difference by Connecting Students to Professional Associations by Suzanne Rowe and Isaiah Hardy

“I want to go to a conference in Mexico!” A law school’s response to this student request can have profound impact on the student’s professional development and benefit the law school and faculty.

Faculty Perspective

For a moment, I was dubious. What law student wouldn’t want to go to a conference at a resort in Mexico? But this student was my research assistant, a Black man who aspired to a career in sports law. On his own initiative, he had learned about the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association (BELSA), its annual conference, and the possibility of being a student volunteer. Selected through a competitive process, he could attend with no registration fee. While escorting special guests, assisting with registration, and completing other tasks, he’d have access to invaluable networking opportunities with national leaders in sports law.

This student just needed funding for travel, hotel, and some meals. I was able to use a portion of my professional development funding to cover his airfare. Two student organizations paid for the hotel room. He returned from the conference elated, having made the most of this opportunity.

Student Perspective

The benefits of attending the 2021 BELSA conference were both educational and professional—making connections, being surrounded by powerful Black attorneys, and joining a family of professionals and students.

Education: The conference was filled with panels and guest speakers, and student volunteers attended at least our top two choices. At “Being Like Mike: Celebrity Branding and Endorsement Deals,” I learned the intricacies behind athletes creating a signature shoe; athletes partnering with brands like Nike; and the legal side of college athletes now earning money from their name, image, and likeness. I learned first-hand what sports and entertainment attorneys do in practice.

Atmosphere: Throughout the conference, I was surrounded by powerful, Black attorneys. I had never been to a professional event as large or prestigious as the BELSA conference. I had also never been around that many “successful” Black people in my life. It was inspiring and refreshing.

Family: BESLA is one large family, from young law students like me to attorneys with 30 years of experience. Participants included an attorney who represented LeBron James, Netflix attorneys, CEOs of major companies, Walt Disney attorneys, attorneys for major players associations, and a plethora of other attorneys—and all acted like family. I connected with professionals willing to advocate for me and put me in places that would have been a lot tougher and taken a lot longer. I am no longer worried about finding a job, either immediately after school or in the future.

Fellow Students: The fifteen volunteers from around the country now have a lasting bond. We talk in our group message at least twice a month and communicate on social media. Many of the attorneys at the conference were once BESLA volunteers and said those connections led to where they are today.

Talking Points: Attending the BELSA conference has come up many times in

professional settings since then, for example, during coffee with a federal judge. He was impressed with my initiative leading up to the conference and my experience there.

Law School Perspective

Students come to law schools to become professionals, and law schools can encourage this development by connecting students with professional associations. These connections are particularly important for first generation students and for students from underrepresented groups. While law schools should be particularly supportive when the student proactively seeks the opportunity and secures most of the funding, schools should ensure that all students know such events take place and that finances should not keep them from applying for opportunities. Funding such opportunities might draw in new donors, who see an immediate impact from their gifts. And what the students learn can assist faculty who publish in related areas. Everyone wins.

THANK YOU!

News?

Please keep a record of photos, articles, or news about any new announcements or accomplishments. The Secretary will seek submissions regarding the same in early September.

Disclaimer

This Newsletter and related website are forums for the exchange of points of view. Opinions expressed here or on the website are not necessarily those the Section and do not necessarily represent the position of the Association of American Law Schools.

HAVE A
GREAT
SUMMER!