

2014 Highlights

Moot Court Team awarded third place in brief writing

In an impressive display of written and oral skills, the student team from Empire College School of Law was awarded Third Place in Brief Writing at the annual Roger J. Traynor Appellate Moot Court competition held in Los Angeles. Twelve California law schools competed on April 12 and 13, 2014, including Golden Gate University, UC Hastings, McGeorge, UC Berkeley, USF, UCLA, and UC Davis.



Team members Kristina Gardenal, Kenneth Mansfield, and Daryl Reese demonstrated a remarkable balance of knowledge about the case.

The Empire Team – fourth-year law students Kristina Gardenal, Kenneth Mansfield, and Daryl Reese – demonstrated a remarkable balance of knowledge about the case, briefing and arguing against Hastings’ team in the first round of the competition and against Loyola’s in the second round.

Selected for 2014 by the California Academy of Appellate Attorneys, the case was based upon a real, unpublished case from the California Court of Appeal. The briefs were scored anonymously, and results were announced at the competition.

“I cannot say enough about the hard work of these students and their coach,” stated William Robertson, Dean of Empire College School of Law. “The cornerstone of good lawyering is excellent writing skills, and I am proud of our teams’ consistent recognition for brief writing over the years.”

“I am especially proud of the fact that our team argued so well in the two rounds of appellate argument on Saturday,” stated the team’s coach, Professor Constance Burtnett.

While preparing their legal briefs and attending oral argument practices, the team members were also required to keep up with their law school studies and attend to their jobs and families. Dean Robertson added, “This team met weekdays and weekends to practice oral advocacy. They demonstrated all of the qualities of professionalism that we expect of elite practicing attorneys, and that is high praise indeed.”

Visit empcol.edu/school-of-law/moot-court to see Empire’s record of success.

Class of 2014 – first dual-degreed graduates

June 1 marked the culmination of years of hard work for the Class of 2014 and a beautiful graduation held at the Mary Agatha Furth Center. This was Empire’s 38th graduating class of Juris Doctor degrees and the first graduating class earning the Master of Legal Studies degree. The graduates were recognized and applauded by family, friends, and faculty.



See page 2 to find out how they did on the Bar Exam.



Professor Belle honored with Excellence in Education recognition

Empire Law School nominated Professor Louise J. Belle for the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce 2014 Excellence in Education Award as a truly outstanding educator in the four-year college category.

A member of the Empire College School of Law faculty since 1997, she is an Ursuline graduate and has a B.S. from CSU Sacramento, an M.B.A from CSU Sacramento, and her J.D. from UC Hastings School of Law. Professor Belle has authored numerous articles and books in law-related fields and found time to teach as an Adjunct Professor at both Santa Rosa Junior College and CSU East Bay. She has taught core curriculum and several elective classes.

Because law students need an immediate grounding in the fundamentals of the law, she has been asked to teach the important first-year law class Introduction to Law. Professor Belle also created and teaches a course available to all students to augment and improve their writing skills. The Effective Legal Writing Skills Workshop is the single most important addition to the Law School's curriculum in the past four years, allowing our students to enhance their communication skills with clients, other attorneys, and the Courts.



Empire grads prove their mettle on July California Bar Exam

Congratulations to Empire's first-time applicants for achieving a 60% pass rate on the July 2014 California Bar Exam. For a bit of perspective on how Empire ranked favorably among other law schools ... USF Law 61%, McGeorge Law 61%, Santa Clara Law 60%, UC Hastings Law 68%, San Francisco Law School 60%, all first-time applicants 61%.



Legal Aid executive director, Ronit Rubinoff, reviews client files with law students Amy Woodruff and Zack Agil.

Sixth clinic added in partnership with Legal Aid of Sonoma County

Empire College School of Law has now opened a new clinic at the Legal Aid of Sonoma County offices in downtown Santa Rosa. The Legal Aid Clinic will help at-risk children and families obtain safety and shelter, and will cover issues such as domestic and family violence, elder abuse, child guardianship and an array of housing issues. Empire College law students currently work in the offices as volunteers, interns and staff, but this clinic will give them a chance to earn law school credits while they are helping the community.

Heading up the clinic is Empire College professor and Legal Aid Executive Director, Ronit Rubinoff. "This program isn't just an adjunct to our regular operations, it's really at the core of how our organization works," she said. "These students are integral to our success."

"For us, it's a complete education...coming full circle from beginning to the end of a case," said Zack Agil, a third-year law student. It's also a service model that has been the basis of operations at Legal Aid since its beginnings: that of one-on-one advocacy and partnership, with a profound respect for each client who walks in the door.

It's a win/win situation for all concerned. "For the students, it tests the paradigms of who you are, and what you really want to do with your life," according to Dean Robertson. While doing so, the community receives free or affordable support from professional legal counsel, as well as from students who are passionate about supporting their clients. "We're here for our clients, on a personal level. If our services can't help them, we'll find a resource that can," said Amy Woodruff, another third-year law student who interns at Legal Aid.

And so the legacy of community involvement continues into the next generation of those who will be working in the legal profession.

Empire College wins third White House award

For the third straight year, Empire College was named to President Obama's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction in 2014. The honor roll program annually highlights the role colleges and universities play in solving community problems and placing students on a lifelong path of civic engagement by recognizing institutions that achieve meaningful, measurable outcomes in the communities they serve.

Empire first applied for the annual recognition in 2012 and was among 18 California colleges, including Stanford University, recognized "with distinction." In 2013, 810 colleges applied and 690 were named to various categories of the honor roll. That year, Empire College was among 19 finalists for the top award.

"We are pleased to be recognized among 16 California colleges in the 'with distinction' category again this year," stated Roy Hurd, president of Empire College. "It is a tribute to our faculty and staff's commitment to fostering service-learning and volunteerism among our students who provide a variety of free services each year to local residents and nonprofit agencies."

In addition to free assistance ranging from health screenings to income tax preparation to legal advice, Empire's community outreach program involves raising thousands of dollars and donating facility space each year to local nonprofits.

"While Empire College's size is modest, the level of participation among students, faculty, and staff is tremendous," says Hurd. "For example, 94 percent of our Juris Doctor law students participate in one or more of the law clinics."

Examples of Empire Law School's accomplishments during 2014 include:

- \$191,250 equivalent value of Empire third- and fourth-year Juris Doctor law student and paralegal intern staffing hours donated pro bono to the legal research and writing divisions of both the Sonoma County District Attorney and Public Defender's offices, freeing over-scheduled deputies for court duty in lieu of research and motion writing.
- \$20,000 equivalent value of donated staff attorney services to Sonoma County Legal Aid.
- 1,750 people served by Empire law students through pro bono staffing and management of the Sonoma County Small Claims Advisory (located on campus since December 2005).



Pro Bono Honorees

Six Empire students/graduates were honored at the annual Sonoma County Bar Association's 2014 Pro Bono Awards Luncheon.

- Raquel Bailey was recognized for taking on difficult challenges for the Disability Law Clinic and winning her case before a Social Security Judge.
- While volunteering at the Marin County Public Guardian Conservatorship program, Susan Cerovski also participated in the Elder Law Clinic.
- Through Legal Aid of Sonoma County, Amy Woodruff got a disabled tenant reasonable accommodation and prevented him from losing his housing.
- Since 2013, Darren Dalby has volunteered over 100 hours in the Small Claims Clinic, which has served over 19,000 community members since 2005.
- Zachary Carroll, Esq. has volunteered his time and expertise at the Elder Law Clinic every Thursday since graduating from Empire Law School in 2008.
- Ede Figueroa volunteered as a translator in the Small Claims Clinic over the course of almost two years while she pursued her paralegal degree.



New Year's Resolution: Research Law School

Informational Law Seminar

Monday, January 26, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

**Keynote Speaker: Allison Tussey, Esq. (Class of 2006)
Associate, Smith Dollar, PC**

Allison Tussey is a litigation attorney with a unique and broad range of experience and skills, which include mortgage financial services litigation, real property, loss mitigation, judgment collection, contract disputes, workers' compensation and personal injury.

Ms. Tussey provides counseling to individuals and organizations concerning mortgage fraud, loss mitigation/recovery, insurance disputes and general civil litigation. She is the staff editor of Mortgage Fraud Blog and has served as the education committee chair for the Sonoma County Bar Association Real Property section for two years. During her career, she established Tussey Investments, LLC, a property acquisition and management company, as well as First Choice Paralegal, a paralegal services company.

In addition to working full time as an associate with Smith Dollar, PC, Ms. Tussey is an avid equestrian, competing successfully with her horse in numerous local and state jumping competitions.



**Contact the Law Admissions Office today at 707.546.4000
or LawAdmissions@empirecollege.com to reserve your seat!**



3035 Cleveland Ave.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

MORE INFO @
empcol.edu/law-seminar

FREE INFORMATIONAL LAW SEMINAR
Monday, January 26, 2015
6:30-8:00 p.m.

**2015... the year you turn your
Law School dream into reality!**

Tell a Friend!



707.546.4000
www.empcol.edu