



Dana M. Hrelc is the Chair of the Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section for the 2016-2017 bar year. She is also the chair-elect of the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division for the 2016-2017 bar year. She is a partner at Horton Shields & Knox PC in Hartford, where she focuses her practice on Connecticut state and federal appeals. She graduated with distinction from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and Political Science and from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 2008 with a Juris Doctor degree.

On Wednesday, March 24, with over 100 students in attendance from four different high schools, the Young Lawyers Section successfully hosted its second Pre-Law Symposium at Quinnipiac University School of Law in Hamden. This program was first held by the Young Lawyers Section in 2015 under the leadership and guidance of past Chair Emily Graner Sexton, and I am proud to note that it has become a flagship community outreach event for our section.

The goal of the symposium is to educate and inform local high school students about law school and the legal profession, and to encourage them to consider pursuing a career in the law one day. The students, who were predominantly in their high schools' mock trial programs and AP government classes, began their day

2017 CBA Young Lawyers Section Pre-Law Symposium

By Dana M. Hrelc

with a "Law School Panel," which focused on the law school admissions process and the law school student experience. Kathy Kuhar, associate dean of students at Quinnipiac University School of Law, and Karen DeMeola, CBA president-elect and UConn School of Law assistant dean for enrollment and students, were joined on the panel by two current Quinnipiac University School of Law students—2L Jonathan Aubin and 3L Kelvin Owusu. Most students in the room furiously took notes while Dean Kuhar and Dean DeMeola gave advice for potential law school applicants, what to write their essays about, and what to emphasize in their applications. Students also listened closely while Mr. Aubin and Mr. Owusu discussed what college courses prepared them for law school, what classes they are taking now, and what advice they had for students considering attending law school.

The students then heard from two sitting Connecticut judges, Appellate Court Judge Raheem Mullins and Superior Court Judge Antonio Robaina. Both judges spoke about what inspired them to join the legal profession. Judge Robaina explained that he always knew he wanted to be an attorney, and he felt blessed to have practiced law with his father for so long before joining the bench. Judge Mullins, on the other hand, admitted he didn't always want to be an attorney but spoke of experiences he had growing up that inspired him to want to make a difference by ad-

vocating on behalf of others. He proudly and relatedly explained how he decided to go to law school and the process he undertook to become a judge. It was clear that many students identified with both judges. They not only took notes during the presentation, but also asked many thoughtful questions of the judges, who candidly spoke of recent difficult cases, offered advice for litigants, and discussed the importance of upholding the law, even when it requires putting aside your moral opinions.

During the symposium's third set of panel discussions, the students had an opportunity to meet and hear from several young lawyers who practice law in varied contexts and settings. For example, they heard from Allison Cantor, an associate principal counsel of ESPN, as well as Sara Greene, a prosecutor with the State's Attorney's Office, and Garlinck Dumont, a principal of her own firm, Dumont Law LLC. The students' questions ranged from the types of classes that the attorneys found helpful in law school, to the number of hours spent at work every day, and to the kinds of mentors that have helped them achieve their current positions. Their questions were insightful and relevant. This opportunity was also special for the young lawyers involved, because it allowed them to teach others about their job and to offer advice on how to achieve success in the future. It also allowed them to talk a little about how much they love

their jobs, which the students were very happy to hear. The students ultimately learned that a legal career is not limited to practicing law in a courtroom or prosecuting criminals (which many students acknowledged is what they have learned about the law from television), and that a JD can prepare you for success in many different types of jobs in the future. It was an incredibly rewarding experience to be a part of this session, for both the students and the young lawyer panelists involved.

The final panel of the day allowed the students to hear from CBA President Monte E. Frank and the Executive Director of the ACLU-CT, David McGuire, on relevant and timely issues concerning the law in today's news. They addressed topics like President Trump's travel ban, laws surrounding the police's use of dashboard and body cameras, and the fight against gun violence in their communities. Both panelists discussed the importance of getting involved and exercising your voice in your community, and urged students to think not only about how they can give back by going to law school, but also about how they can give back now. It was an inspirational experience to watch dozens of high school students ask questions

about what the law means, how it affects them and their local communities, and what they can do to change things. The symposium ended with the uplifting message that as members of our communities, whether we are lawyers or students thinking about becoming lawyers, we can make a difference—and we should try.

As chair, I am proud to report that this year's Pre-Law Symposium was successful in achieving its primary goal of educating high schoolers about pursuing a legal degree and choosing a career in the law. The Young Lawyers Section is proud to house this important program and looks forward to continuing it in years to come! **CL**

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