


9-30-2015

Trending @ RWULaw: Judge William E. Smith's Post: RWU Law & the Federal Courts: A Unique Partnership

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Recommended Citation

Smith, William E., "Trending @ RWULaw: Judge William E. Smith's Post: RWU Law & the Federal Courts: A Unique Partnership" (2015). *Law School Blogs*. 419.

https://docs.rwu.edu/law_pubs_blogs/419

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Judge William E. Smith's Post

RWU Law & the Federal Courts: A Unique Partnership

Posted by William Smith on 09/30/2015 at 10:22 AM



As a result of its status as Rhode Island's only law school, Roger Williams University School of Law has developed a close relationship with the bench and bar of the State. Similarly significant, however, is the law school's productive relationship with the federal courts.

This relationship affords RWU Law students numerous opportunities throughout the academic year to observe the work of and mingle with federal judges and attorneys who litigate frequently in the federal courts.

Here are just a few examples of what a law student can expect to see or do during his or her time at RWU Law:

- Observe a U.S. District Court judge conduct a summary judgment hearing on site at the law school (most recently, this September);
- Observe a sitting of the First Circuit Court of Appeals at the law school (coming up October 6);
- Extern with a federal judge as part of RWU Law's Judicial Externship Program;
- Attend symposia with speakers from the federal court;
- Participate in the litigation capstone course, "Federal Practice Commercial Litigation," in which students work on a mock federal case from start to finish (culminating in a trial before a federal judge); and
- Litigating before federal magistrate judges as part of the school's criminal law clinic.



In addition, the law school has become an important partner with the federal court's new Litigation Academy, which gives hands-on instruction in litigation skills to young attorneys -- many of them RWU Law graduates (the program is co-chaired by Professor Niki Kuckes.) And RWU Law faculty members are frequent presenters or panelists in federal court educational programming.

So why is this so relationship important? The reason is simple: both the law school and the court share an obligation to the future of the profession; to ensure that new attorneys entering the bar are not only able to pass the bar exam, but are ready and able to practice with skill and honor. This ongoing exposure to the attorneys, judges and overall workings of the federal court places our students in a strong position to better understand what it takes to succeed in these goals. And after they graduate, they will be much better prepared to practice in the courts with confidence.

The court benefits too, by having the talent of the law school faculty available for educational programming - and by having the energy and enthusiasm of RWU Law students in our chambers and courtrooms.

No other school in the United States has the kind of extraordinary relationship shared by RWU law and the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island -- and both institutions are exceedingly proud of this unique and important partnership.