Welcome to the class of 2015, and welcome back classes of 2013 and 2014

The faculty, administration and returning law students welcome the new J.D. class of 2015. The 2015 class consist of students ranging in age from their 20’s to their 50’s, from twenty-five states around the U.S., eleven countries, and more than eighty different colleges and universities. We would also like to welcome the new LL.M. students in Intercultural Human Rights and in Environmental Sustainability.

Health Insurance: You must make a decision by September 1

All full time law students are automatically enrolled in the University Health Insurance plan and have been charged $1,013 for this plan. It is administered by GM Southwest, the same company that provided the health plan last year. Changes have been made to the coverage provided by the GM Southwest plan. A number of students were dissatisfied with the coverage and/or customer service provided by GM Southwest last year. If you do not want the health insurance policy provided by the University, you must complete the online waiver form and submit it by September 1, 2012. If you do not complete the waiver process by September 1, 2012, you are automatically provided with coverage regardless of whether you have (or subsequently acquire) other health insurance and you cannot waive out again until next year. All students who want to waive out must do so every year. Those of you who think you may be under your parents’ policy need to check and, if so, complete the waiver process. All international students are required to acquire the GM Southwest policy and cannot waive out of the coverage.

Caveat Emptor

Rather than just default to the GM Southwest policy, all students are encouraged to shop for and compare available policies. Virtually all policies have exclusions and limitations that may make any particular plan less useful to you. Check with your classmates concerning customer service, responsiveness and ease of use.

There are policies available from private carriers, and all J.D. students can join the Law Student Division of the ABA (for $25/year) and acquire a group policy through the ABA. You can get more information about the ABA policies by visiting the ABA website. We have copies of the brochures for the high-option and low option ABA policies available in the Student Affairs Suite. Also, the Student Bar Association has been active in seeking out other potential insurance policies. Jackie Bowden, the S.B.A. President, will be sending out the additional information the S.B.A. has acquired as well as some sources from which you may seek private insurance.

To complete the waiver process, students must submit the waiver form by going to the Law School Website and selecting Current Students. Then, under the Student Affairs header click on the Health Insurance link. Once you are on the Health Insurance page, you will need to log in and follow the directions to waive the insurance.
On Thursday, August 9, 2012, the Admissions Office welcomed more than 100 new J.D. students onto campus to participate in the Training for Optimal Performance program (TOP). The five-day program was coordinated by Professor Todd Sullivan; it provided new students with the insight and skills to succeed in their legal education. It offered participants an overview of each of the core first-year courses, and included mock classes and mock exams. Students learned how to prepare for class, read and brief cases, outline class material, and build legal writing and analytical skills. All incoming first-year students were encouraged to attend, and participation was voluntary and ungraded.

_**PRO BONO HAS MOVED TO THE CAREER SERVICES OFFICE**_

Starting this school year, there will be monthly community and legal pro bono opportunities available for students to complete their pro bono requirement. 1Ls will be allowed to take advantage of community pro bono opportunities; however, only 2Ls and 3Ls will be allowed to participate in legal pro bono. So, pay attention to e-mails and flyers that will be posted around campus for upcoming opportunities. Also, as a reminder, if you complete 100 hours or more of pro bono, you will be recognized at the annual Public Service Reception, which is held in the spring, and this honor will be noted on your final transcript.

For more information on pro bono requirements and other pro bono opportunities, please visit the CSO or contact Jennifer Portwood Gordon, Director of Pro Bono & Public Interest Career Counselor (jportwood@stu.edu).

**ALUMNUS JOSE A. BAEZ, ESQ. ’97 TO DISCUSS NEW BOOK ON AUGUST 16**

Alumnus Jose A. Baez, Esq. ’97, the most high-profile lawyer in America during and after the Casey Anthony trial, will speak in St. Thomas Law’s Moot Courtroom on Thursday, August 16 at 6 p.m., to discuss his new book, Presumed Guilty | Casey Anthony: The Inside Story. After Mr. Baez offers his insights into the case and the successful not-guilty verdict on behalf of Ms. Anthony, he will sign copies of his new book. A reception will follow in the Breezeway.

Copies of Presumed Guilty | Casey Anthony: The Inside Story are currently available in the campus bookstore, and also will be for sale on a first-come, first-serve basis in the Moot Courtroom on the evening of August 16. After Mr. Baez’s remarks and prior to the book signing, the Office for Alumni Relations will randomly select seven (7) lucky winners, each of whom will receive a free copy of Mr. Baez’s new book.

**TRAINING FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE**

The instructions tell you what to use as your user name and ID. We would suggest that, once you submit the waiver form to GM Southwest, you simultaneously send an e-mail to the Head of Campus Health, Nellie Baez (nbaez@stu.edu), give her your name, and student ID number, notify her that you have submitted the waiver to GM Southwest, and ask her to e-mail you back to verify that the waiver has been processed. Keep a copy of the e-mail you send and any e-mails you receive from either GM Southwest or Ms. Baez. If you have any questions or need assistance, contact the Head of Campus Health, Nellie Baez, at nbaez@stu.edu. If you do not complete the waiver process prior to September 1, then you will be enrolled in the University’s policy, even if you have coverage.

After the waiver deadline has passed the business office will process refunds attributable to insurance that was waived. Those refunds should appear in your account no later than mid-October.