Awards Ceremony Held for St. Thomas Law’s ‘Role Models’

By: Kyle B. Teal

The St. Thomas University School of Law honored its adjunct professors with an appreciation dinner hosted January 21, 2011, in the campus’s Convocation Hall. As faculty and administrators dined, Dean Douglas E. Ray and St. Thomas President Monsignor Franklyn Casale spoke of the law school’s commitment to making exceptional lawyers and the role played by adjunct faculty.

“St. Thomas is not just another law school,” Dean Ray said, highlighting the school’s recent successes and its service to the underprivileged. He thanked the adjunct faculty – many of whom work full-time in the public or private sectors – for providing students with uniquely practical and real world-oriented lessons.

Third District Court of Appeals Judge David M. Gersten and Adjunct Professor Howard Blumberg, who serves as Assistant Public Defender in Miami’s Appellate Division, both received awards for outstanding teaching and commitment to students. Judge Gersten coaches the mock trial program, and Professor Blumberg coaches the appellate advocacy moot court program. Both programs field teams in statewide and national competitions.

The law school’s mock trial team, coached by Judge Gersten, recently won first place in the Florida Bar Association’s annual Chester Bedell Memorial Mock Trial Competition, a competition involving teams from all ten of Florida’s law schools. The law school’s appellate advocacy moot court program, coached by Mr. Blumberg, is currently ranked third in the nation by the University of Houston, which maintains a national ranking list.

Dean Ray credited the adjunct faculty for having a role in creating a student-centered environment that caused the law school to be ranked number three in the nation for “Best Atmosphere for Minority Students” and fourth in the nation for student “Quality of Life” in the Princeton Review’s 2011 edition of The Best 172 Law Schools. He also mentioned the Intercultural Human Rights Law Review’s symposium on post-earthquake Haiti and the Law Review’s symposium on the effects of Bush v. Gore a decade later.

Cecile Dykas, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, thanked the adjunct faculty for being “such special role models for our students.” Because she works closely with adjunct and fulltime faculty, Dean Dykas said she gets “to see the range and commitment of everybody.” That commitment and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from students prompted the awards ceremony.

After receiving their awards, Judge Gersten and Professor Blumberg addressed the crowd. “We drill into our students: ‘You’re out here for St. Thomas; we are the best law school in Florida,’” said Judge Gersten, who has been teaching at the law school since 1994.

Professor Blumberg joined the adjunct faculty in 2005. He praised the law students at St. Thomas and thanked Associate Dean Dykas for having faith in his abilities, and Professors John Kang and Gary Kravitz, and Assistant Dean Peter Kelly for their continued assistance. “There is so much talent in this room; the students are really the beneficiaries,” Professor Blumberg said.

Dean Ray gave each dinner table an assignment: to designate one speaker to share what they appreciate about the law school. Law School Chair of Board of Advisors Herman J. Russomanno, Esq., was among the speakers. Professor Russomanno has been working at St. Thomas since its birth in 1984 and is the father of two St. Thomas alumni.

“The students here are really amazing,” Russomanno said.

Adjunct Professor Murray Greenberg agreed. “I think the only way to describe this place is it’s like a family,” he said. “I’m glad to be part of the family.”

Dean Ray, who joined the St. Thomas family in October 2010, concluded the evening by thanking the adjunct faculty for all they contribute. “You are all wonderful role models,” he said.
**Announcements**

At the faculty meeting held on January 25, 2011, Professor Al Garcia was presented with a plaque recognizing his outstanding service and leadership to the St. Thomas School of Law as Associate Dean from 1993-1994 and 2003-2007, and as Dean of the law school from 2003-2010.

**Career Services Office Presents**

**Dean Ray’s Job Search Strategies**

Dean Ray will discuss what employers are looking for, how to build a record and skill set that will make you marketable, and how to present yourself. This event will take place Monday, January 31, 2011, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Please R.S.V.P. to Mercedes Pino at (mmpino@stu.edu). Dinner will be provided.

**Joint Degree Programs**

The faculties of the law school and the university graduate schools work in close collaboration to offer five joint-degree programs: the J.D./M.S. in Sports Administration, the J.D./M.B.A. in Sports Administration, the J.D./M.S. in Marriage and Family Counseling, the J.D./M.B.A. in International Business, and the J.D./M.B.A. in Accounting.

These programs offer St. Thomas students the opportunity to complete both the Juris Doctor and the Master’s degrees in the three years it typically takes to complete the Juris Doctor degree alone. The respective graduate school and the law school have agreed to accept credits from courses taken at the other school, thereby reducing the total number of credits needed for both degrees.

A law student is required to take the entire first year law school curriculum before he or she can begin the joint degree program. Law students will not be given credits for any master level course taken before matriculating into the law school nor will they be given any credit toward the J.D. for courses taken other than at St. Thomas University.

Any law student who is in good standing at the completion of his or her first year of law school is eligible for admission into any of the joint degree programs. Students must meet all admission requirements for St. Thomas University graduate programs. A law student wishing to matriculate into one of the joint degree programs must file an application for admission before March 1st of Spring Term of their first year.

After filing the application, the student must meet with the degree program director from the graduate school to which they seek admission. The degree program director of the graduate school will ensure the degree program will meet the educational objectives of the student, and ensure the degree program student has the requisite background and skills in the areas of study of the graduate degree program to successfully compete in the graduate degree program. Upon approval by the degree program director of the respective graduate school program and completion of the first year of law school, the student will be admitted into the joint degree program.

Any law student who desires additional information regarding the joint degree programs should meet with Assistant Dean John Hernandez.

**Black History Exhibit**

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida invites you to “Milestones: A Legal Odyssey,” a Black history exhibit. The event will take place Thursday, February 3, 2011, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., United States Courthouse, Courtroom 13-3. Please RSVP to mc@kttlaw.com if you are interested in attending.

**Barristers’ Ball**

This year’s Barristers’ Ball will be held at the beautiful Hyatt Regency Pier 66 in Fort Lauderdale on March 26, 2011. Ticket entry includes a one hour cocktail reception, an elegant three-course sit down dinner, with dancing and entertainment all evening long. The Hyatt Regency Pier 66 is a venue of culinary expertise that not only won first place in this year’s Las Olas Wine and Food Festival but also won fifth place for best food in all of the Hyatts all over the world. The food will surely not disappoint, from appetizers to dessert.

The Annual Barrister’s Ball is a night when we all come together to recognize the achievements of the current year and when we look forward to the promising accomplishments of another great year at St. Thomas University School of Law. We hope that all students, faculty, and administrators will attend. We promise it will be an evening worth attending and the greatest event of the year.