



# The Advocate

## The Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute Bi-Annual Newsletter

Welcome to the Second Bi-Annual Alumni Newsletter. As we embark on this new school year we look back at the success of the last, and forward to the exciting things to come. This edition of the newsletter highlights our external competitions, internal competitions, and major events the organization put on throughout the semester. It also introduces you to the new Board of PTAI for the 2018-2019 school year. For our next newsletter we would like to add sections about you: our distinguished alumni. We want to keep all our alumni connected and updated as to any major career or life events you all may have throughout the year. And so, our new alumni chair will be reaching out to you to find out what is going on in your careers and lives. You will also be hearing from her about an alumni event coming this fall which will bring together past and present members of PTAI for a night of reunion and networking.





## **SPRING 2018 EXTERNAL COMPETITIONS**

This Spring our externals division did better than we could have ever expected. Our teams worked hard all semester and with the help of our dedicated coaches, including recent and past alumni, we were incredibly successful. We competed at six competitions and broke at four.

At the Florida State University Mock Trial Competition our exceptional team (top right) of 3Ls, Christina Mavrikis and Erin Mullins, and 2Ls, Kate Modica and Adam Myren, were led to a first place finish by coaches Joe Calabrese (not pictured) and Mike Vicario. Kate also took home the award for Best Advocate. In Brooklyn, our American Association for Justice Student Trial Advocacy Competition team (bottom right) of 3Ls, Anthony Masciana and Matt Trezza, and 2Ls, Shannon Dempsey and Sharlene Disla, finished as finalists. They were coached by Marlee Galvez and Mike Maffei. At the South Texas Mock Trial Challenge Championship our team (bottom left) of 3L Leighanne Daly, and 2Ls, Gabriella DeRosa, Max Bartell, and Elisabeth Constantino advanced to quarter finals. Gabriella also won Best Advocate. The team was coached by Brian Hughes and Christina Bezas (not pictured). Finally, at the Texas Young Lawyers Regional National Trial Competition our team (bottom left) of 3Ls, Jillian Shartrand and Mia Piccininni, and 2L Gabriella DeRosa, advanced to the semi-finals. Jillian Shartrand also won Best Closing at the competition. They were coached by Brian Hughs and Kirk Sendlein (not pictured). As always, we are very proud of all our externals members and the effort they put into these competitions.

Looking forwards to next year, with a talented incoming 3L class and the largest ever turnout for the 1L competition, we expect to be just as, if not more, successful.



## 2018 Edward Hart Internal Competition

The Spring 2018 Edward Hart Internal Competition was a success! Allison Smalley again organized a great event which brought together 2L and 3L advocates competing against one another under the guidance of alumni coaches. The winning team (left) was coached by two of our newest alumni, Joanna Matuza and Arielle Cummings, for the third consecutive internal competition. The team was made up of Jamie Caponera, Kayla Kuzniewski, Kaleigh Shea, and Kristen Tierney. The runners up were Kayla Laskin, Thomas Mosczyznski, Dean Tsanatelis, and Paul Tsenesidis. They were coached by Danny Quinn and Matt LaSorsa.

The winners of individual awards (right) were Kayla Kuzniewski for Best Opening, Brian Smulcheski for Best Direct, Kevin Smith for Best Cross, Michael Sedia for Best Closing, and Jamie Caponera for Best Advocate. All of the students prepared for weeks with their alumni coaches to put on great cases and performances. During the competition their preparation showed and they received excellent feedback and critiques from many of our alumni. We are excited to have some of these fine advocates join our externals division in the fall.

If you or anyone you know is interested in coaching we would love to have you! You can reach out to our internals director, Megan DiBello at [megan.dibello16@stjohns.edu](mailto:megan.dibello16@stjohns.edu).



# 2018 Brian Peterson Memorial First-Year Trial Competition

The Spring 2018 Brian Peterson Memorial First-Year Trial Competition had the largest turnout to date with 16 teams. We maxed out on advocates, resulting in a waitlist. Going forwards, we will be expanding the program so that all interested 1Ls will be able to participate. The winning team (left) was coached by Danny Quinn and Megan DiBello. The team was made up of Trevor Hanrahan, Meghan McLoughlin, Matthew Phillips, and Eric Prezioso. The runners up (right) were Robert Rowley, Danielle Stefanucci, Kayla Sullivan, and Megan Trager. They were coached by 3Ls Leighann Daley and Dana Kurtti.

The winners of individual awards were Stephen Blake for Best Opening, Robert Rowley for Best Direct, Rebecca Farrar for Best Cross, Matthew Phillips for Best Closing, and Sara Krastins for Best Advocate. All of the students worked very hard for weeks to put on great cases and performances. They were shown the ropes by current 2L and 3L externals members who gave up time in their competition and school schedules to coach. We owe a big thank you to all of the coaches and evaluators who came back to help our students learn the ins and outs of mock trial. For a lot of our competitors, this was their first try at a mock trial competition and we were all very impressed with the students' performances.

If you or anyone you know is interested in coaching we would love to have you! You can reach out to our internals director, Megan DiBello at [megan.dibello16@stjohns.edu](mailto:megan.dibello16@stjohns.edu).

# McKenna Forum



This spring, PTAI welcomed Erik Snipas, Brenna Strype, Marlee Galvez, and Joe Calabrese to speak to its members about how mock trial translates to real life advocacy. The event was moderated by Mary Kate Quinn. Each of the panelists were able to bring something different to the discussion and spoke specifically about each part of the trial from opening to closing statements. Students heard about criminal, civil, and family court cases from these attorneys who work and have worked in District Attorneys' offices, at the Administration for Children's Services, and at large corporations.

While each panelist had different experiences to talk about there was one common thread: the great advantage you have entering the legal field after being a part of PTAI. They spoke about how much they knew about the trial process from competing in mock trial competitions, both internally and externally, and how that knowledge gave them a leg up on their non-PTAI opposition in court. They also spoke about the differences between mock trial and real trial, informing our members about what they can expect when entering the real world. It was an excellent night of questions, answers, storytelling, and reminiscing on glory days for our alumni and members alike.

We are always looking for new and innovative speakers for multiple events throughout the year to help educate our members and the school on various aspects of trial advocacy. If you have a topic, idea, or would like to help us as a speaker, please let us know. Our Special Events Director, Kate Modica can be contacted at [STJPTAIEvents@gmail.com](mailto:STJPTAIEvents@gmail.com).



# CENTER FOR TRIAL AND APPELLATE ADVOCACY



**PTAI**  
Polestino Trial  
Advocacy Institute



**MCHS**  
Moot Court  
Honor Society

**This year, the law school has unveiled plans for the Center for Trial and Appellate Advocacy. St. John's Law has a proud tradition of graduates serving the public as both state and federal prosecutors. The formation of the Center for Trial and Appellate Advocacy will bring together students, faculty, alumni, and practitioners interested in the art and science of advocacy.**

## **Peter James Johnson '49 Memorial National Civil Rights Trial Competition**

**This fall, PTAI will again host schools from across the nation at our annual Peter James Johnson '49 Memorial National Civil Rights Competition. Our special events director, Kate Modica, is currently in the process of organizing this event which will hold rounds at both the Nassau County Supreme Court and the law school. The competition will take place Thursday October 18th through Sunday October 21st. The fact pattern is currently being written by alumni Alex Gilbert. We are so grateful to all those alumni who came back to help with last year's event and hope to have as much participation again this year. If you'd like to be involved in the competition as a volunteer or as a judge, please contact Kate Modica at [kate.modica16@stjohns.edu](mailto:kate.modica16@stjohns.edu).**

# MEET THE 2018-2019 BOARD



## Emily Santoro

**Position:** Executive Director  
**Hometown:** Richmond Hill  
**Favorite Part of Trial:**  
When you're conducting your closing argument and you get the jury nodding in agreement



## Megan DiBello

**Position:** Internals Director  
**Hometown:** Mahopac, NY  
**Favorite Part of Trial:**  
Burying them before we even get started



## Adam Myren

**Position:** Managing Director  
**Hometown:** Sacramento, CA  
**Favorite Part of Trial:** The part when they say I won. You can quote me on that.



## Kathleen Modica

**Position:** Special Events Director  
**Hometown:** Queens, NY  
**Favorite Part of Trial:**  
Objecting to opposing counsel



## Gabriella DeRosa

**Position:** Externals Director  
**Hometown:** Cold Spring Harbor, NY  
**Favorite Part of Trial:**  
Summation because it's the ultimate challenge



## Kayla Kuzniewski

**Position:** Alumni Chair  
**Hometown:** Malverne, NY  
**Favorite Part of Trial:**  
Telling the story in opening and humanizing both the victims and defendants

## The Associate Board



## Shannon Dempsey

Wantagh, NY

While my goal is to become a prosecutor, in mock trials I love doing defense closings — it's always fun to harp on how the pros didn't meet its burden.



## Sharlene Disla

Bronx, NY

I love when the witness gives me a reason to be sassy!



## Thomas Mosczyński

Philadelphia, PA

Closing. Especially Pros Rebuttal. Getting the final word and flipping the defense's theory.