

THE ADVOCATE

The Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute Bi-Annual Newsletter



2018-2019 PTAI Members

Welcome to the Fourth Bi-Annual Alumni Newsletter! Heading into this new school year, we wanted to give you all the opportunity to join our current members as we look back at the past year's successes and prepare for all of the exciting events to come. This edition of the newsletter introduces you to the new Executive Board of PTAI for the 2019-2020 school year. It also highlights our external competitions, internal competitions, and major events that the organization put on throughout the Spring 2019 semester. Enjoy!

A LETTER FROM THE ALUMNI CHAIR

Hi all! My name is Ashley Rocque, and I have the privilege of serving as the Alumni Chair for the Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute for the 2019-2020 school year. I am thrilled to be serving in this role because I firmly believe that PTAI and its advocates would be lost without all of you. As you all know, we start out each school year with a new group of advocates who are eager to learn and grow. That growth and education exists because of you. It exists because after working a full week yourselves, you take the time to come back to St. John's University at night and over the weekend. Whether you serve as an internal or external coach, a judge or evaluator for one of our various internal competitions, a speaker at one of our events, a player at our alumni softball games, or just follow along with PTAI from afar, you make a difference. While we may not say it often enough, your dedication and passion to PTAI are the reason that we have such an accomplished mock trial program here at St. John's, and we cannot thank you enough for all that you do.

That being said, I, as well as the rest of the new Executive Board, am eager to get to know you a little bit better, work with you, and continue learning from you over the course of this upcoming year. Additionally, I'll be reaching out to you soon about an alumni event coming up this fall which will bring together and highlight the impressive past and present members of PTAI for a night of reunion and networking. I sincerely hope that I will have the opportunity to meet or reconnect with you then!



Ashley Rocque

Position: Alumni Chair

Hometown: Boca Raton, Florida

Favorite Part of a Trial: I love making evidentiary arguments, especially when I get to do so in the form of objections.

SPRING 2019 EXTERNALS COMPETITONS



This Spring our externals division gave it their all as they traveled to five separate competitions to take on teams as close as Brooklyn and as far as Texas. With the help of our dedicated coaches and alumni, our hardworking teams were able to break in three of those five competitions.

At the American Association for Justice Regional Student Trial Advocacy Competition, our exceptional team (top) of 3L, Shannon Dempsey, and 2Ls, Ashley Rocque, Jillian Gardner and Victoria Benalcazar, finished as finalists. They were coached by the talented Marlee Galvez and Mike Maffei. In Buffalo, New York, our exceptional Texas Young Lawyers Regional Trial Competition team (middle) of 3Ls, Gabby DeRosa, Elisabeth Constantino, and Emily Santoro were led to a Semi-Finals finish by coaches Brian Hughes and Kirk Sendlein (not pictured). Finally, at the South Texas Mock Trial Challenge in Houston, Texas, our hardworking team of 3L, Jamie Caponera, and 2Ls, William Healy, Lauren Bisogno, and Meghan McLoughlin litigated both sides of the damages portion of a civil suit. They finished as octofinalists and were coached by Erik Snipas and Brenna Strype. As always we are incredibly proud of all of our externals advocates and the amazing effort that they put into everything they do throughout the competition season.

We are looking forward to an amazing Fall 2019 competition season with a remarkable group of incoming 2L and returning 3L advocates! Feel free to check out our Instagram and Twitter pages at @sjlptai for updates throughout the semester.

THE 2019 RED-RAM CHALLENGE MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION

This Spring, our wonderful Internals Director, Megan Dibello, organized and executed a brand new internals competition called the Red-Ram Challenge where St. John's internals members had the opportunity to compete against internal competitors from Fordham Law School! In this dynamic new competition that took place from Saturday, April 7th through Monday, April 9th, twelve internals advocates from St. John's were broken into six teams of two to litigate a civil case dealing with alleged employment discrimination against a transgender fighter. This competition was especially challenging because in addition to having advocates double swing, they also used unprepared witnesses. Moreover, competitors not only competed within St. John's against Fordham, but also were able to travel to Fordham Law School and the Southern District of New York Federal Courthouse for rounds. At the end of two preliminary rounds, the top team from each school advanced to the championship round.

We are proud to announce that St. John's took home first place in this competition! The winning team was coached by two of our exceptional young alumni, Joanna Matuza and Konstantinos "Dino" Litourgis. The team was made up of David Saldamando and Shannon Stephens (top right). The St. John's winners of the individual awards were Rebecca Farrar for Best Overall Advocate (bottom left), Shannon Stephens for Best Opening, Andre Oge for Best Direct (bottom middle), and Adam Myren for Best Closing. All of the students who competed worked tirelessly for weeks with their alumni coaches to put on their best



cases! During the competition, their handwork and dedication to PTAI showed as they received excellent feedback and critiques from both St. John's and Fordham 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! Please reach out to our Internals Director, Meghan McLoughlin at meghan.mcloughlin17@my.stjohns.edu.

THE 2019 BRIAN PETERSON MEMORIAL FIRST-YEAR TRIAL COMPETITION



The Spring 2019 Brian Peterson Memorial First-Year Trial Competition once again proved to be a success as we maxed out on advocates with 16 teams competing for the second year in a row! All of our hardworking first year students put their hearts and souls into preparing their cases and their efforts really showed. Of course, they could not have done it without the help of the 2L and 3L internals and externals members who gave up time in their busy school and work schedules to show them the ropes.

The winning team was coached by 2Ls Victoria Benalcazar and David Saldamando. The team was made up of advocates Ryan Hallock, Michael Dauber, Eric Dang, and Cassandra Alexandre. The runners up were advocates Zach Manasia, Dallas Neely, Jenna Valente, and Brittany Bachus. They were coached by 3Ls Adam Myren and Varinder Singh. The winners of the individual awards were Ross Guthrie for Best Opening, Sierra Fischer for Best Direct, Emma Bausert for Best Cross, Nick Kania, for Best Closing, and Shannon O'Brien for Best Advocate.

We owe a huge thank you to all of the coaches and alumni who came back to St. John's to serve as evaluators and help our students learn the ins and outs of mock trial. For most of these students, this was their first attempt at trial advocacy, so we appreciate all of the critiques and feedback that you were able to provide to help them succeed within our program in the future. If you or anyone you know is interested in coaching or evaluating, we would love to have you! You can reach out to our Internals Director, Meghan McLoughlin at meghan.mcloughlin17@my.stjohns.edu.

MCKENNA FORUM

This spring, PTAI members were welcomed by Queens Assistant District Attorneys at the Queens District Attorney's Office for our annual McKenna Forum. ADAs Kirk Sendlein, Kaitlyn McTague and Allison Warga graciously agreed to speak to our members about the state prosecution of gang violence. The event was moderated by Brian Hughes. This year, both the panelists and students all sat together around a table which allowed for a more open and candid conversation about the danger that gangs pose to New York communities. While each panelist brought something different to the discussion, they all had the chance to speak specifically about the methods they utilize to gather information about gangs, the primary gangs that are present within Queens County, the reasons for having a separate gang unit, and strategies for building rapport with cooperating gang members. It was a

fantastic night and we were thrilled to see such a large student turnout!

We are always looking for new and innovative speakers for our multiple alumni events throughout the school year so that we can educate our members and the student body overall on various aspects of trial advocacy. If you would like to get involved with any of our alumni events in any capacity, please reach out! We would love to expose our members to as many perspectives and viewpoints as possible throughout their time here at St. John's, so any and all advice and involvement is welcome! If you are interested, please contact me at arocque10@gmail.com.



THE 2019 ALUMNI SOFTBALL GAME



This August, our current members and alumni got together at Cunningham Park for our second annual Alumni Softball Game! Our Alumni and Intra Organizational Relations Coordinator, William Healy, planned a fantastic day of food, softball, and bonding for everyone as we head into a new year of competitions and events. In addition to getting to know current PTAI members, alumni also received personalized softball jerseys. We hope to continue to see you all throughout the rest of this year! If you'd like to find out about other alumni events that we will be hosting, please feel free to contact me at Arocque10@gmail.com.

THE PETER JAMES JOHNSON '50 MEMORIAL NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS TRIAL COMPETITION

This Fall, PTAI will once again host schools from around the nation at our annual Peter James Johnson '50 Memorial National Civil Rights Trial Competition! Our Special Events Director, Jillian Gardner, is currently working hard organizing this amazing event which will hold rounds at both the Nassau County Supreme Court and the law school. The competition will take place Saturday, October 26th through Monday, October 28th. We are so grateful to all those alumni who came back to help with last year's event and are currently seeking volunteers to pitch in for this year as well. Whether you are available for the entire weekend, or just one competition round, we welcome all forms of participation! In return, volunteers are eligible to receive CLE credits, provided they are "experienced attorneys" under the CLE rules. If you would like to get involved in this year's competition as either a judge or volunteer, please contact Jillian Gardner at jillian.gardner17@my.stjohns.edu or Eric Prezioso at eric.prezioso17@my.stjohns.edu.

Meet the 2019-2020 Executive Board



Matt Phillips

Position: Executive Director
Hometown: Moreno Valley, CA
Favorite Part of Trial: That it requires us to think on our feet and incorporate legal and rhetorical skills in the moment.



Victoria Benalcazar

Position: Externals Director
Hometown: Astoria, NY
Favorite Part of Trial: Advocating for the prosecution because I am the last person the jury hears from and I can destroy opposing counsel's arguments in rebuttal.



Lauren Bisogno

Position: Managing Director
Hometown: Staten Island, NY
Favorite Part of Trial: Working with coaches to learn new trial techniques and getting hands on with new fact patterns!



Meghan McLoughlin

Position: Internals Director
Hometown: Poughkeepsie, NY
Favorite Part of Trial: How rewarding it is to work as a team to build and put on our best case.



Hunter Igoe

Position: Communications Coordinator
Hometown: Saugerties, NY
Favorite Part of Trial: Crossing witnesses.



Jillian Gardner

Position: Special Events Director
Hometown: Scotch Plains, NJ
Favorite Part of Trial: Correcting the record for appellate purposes.



William Healy

Position: Alumni / Intra Organizational Relations
Hometown: Centerport, NY
Favorite Part of Trial: Reading through a new fact pattern and coming up with convincing case theories.



Eric Prezioso

Position: PJJ Coordinator
Hometown: Glen Ridge, NJ
Favorite Part of Trial: The competition.