Welcome to the Advocate 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 2023-2024 school year. It also highlights our external competitions, internal competitions, and major events that the organization put on throughout the 2022-2023 school year. Enjoy!
A LETTER FROM THE 2022-2023 EXECUTIVE BOARD

For over twenty years, the Frank Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute has instructed countless advocates on how to think, speak, and act like trial attorneys. The 2022-23 Executive Board has been proud to continue that legacy. Each graduating member is leaving the program as a better person than when they entered. We are more confident as individuals, and PTAI has prepared us to think, speak, and act like ethical, professional, and prepared trial attorneys.

We write in this issue to thank the various members of the St. John’s Law community who have paved the way for us to succeed. Within the issue, we announce the incoming Executive Board for the 2023-24 academic year, proudly describe the accomplishments of the past year, and highlight the many individuals who have volunteered time to assist us in creating a successful environment for each of us to thrive. In doing so, I would be remiss not to recognize the hard work of each member of the e-Board. At every step of the way, each member has gone above and beyond the description of their roles. We have crossed between job responsibilities, and have always lent each other a hand when needed. It is this teamwork, thoroughness, and support that we will remember most from our time serving in our respective positions.

Emerli Rodriguez, Managing Director, never overlooked a detail. Each PTAI event would not have been possible without her contributions. Ryan Fenn, Director of External Competitions, dedicated himself to the program in a way that few people can. The success of PTAI throughout the year was directly tied to his efforts. Nicholas Fajardo, Director of Internal Competitions, handled his position with a confidence incapable of emulation. He made a difficult job look easy. Christine Raso, Director of Special Events, was the best person for the job. The Peter James Johnson Competition is our marquee event and her organization, unquestioned communication skills, and dedication were the reason for its success. Kelly Madigan, Associate Director of Communications and Records, transformed our social media into our main avenue for communication along with a place where we could show appreciation for the tremendous efforts of each PTAI member. She assisted anyone who needed help, and made each member know their value. Victoria Rubino, Associate Director of Alumni Relations, was tremendously valuable in helping wherever she was needed. She prepared outstanding events on important topics and organized them with ease. Dan Smith, Associate Director of Recruitment and Outreach, brought the smile on his face to every single meeting; his energy was unmatched, and we are all proud to call him a friend. Ariston Papeo, Associate Director of Inter-Organizational Events brought his infectious energy into the role. His attitude and willingness to help made everyone’s job possible.

It has been a sincere pleasure to work with each of them, along with every member of the organization as a whole.

Patrick Clancey, Executive Director 2022-23
In Fall 2022, PTAI sent six extremely talented teams to external competitions across the Northeast. Our Buffalo Niagara and Kelly teams advanced to the quarterfinals. Our Quinnipiac and Hofstra teams ended as finalists!
In our Spring 2023 external competition season, PTAI sent eight extremely talented teams to external competitions across the Northeast. Our QDA and Capital City Teams were quarterfinalists. Our Trials and Tribulations team was a semi-finalist. One of our TYLA teams ended as finalists!
2022-2023 INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Best Advocate

John L. Costello
National Criminal Law Trial Advocacy Competition

Outstanding Advocate

All Star Bracket Challenge

Patrick Clancey

Best Opening Statement

Queens District Attorney's Office Mock Trial Competition

Krista Apostle

Best Advocate

John L. Costello National Criminal Law Trial Advocacy Competition

Michael Pecorella

Outstanding Advocate

South Texas Mock Trial Competition

Matthew Oster

Best Closing Statement

Quinnipiac ABA Criminal Justice Trial Advocacy Competition

Best Advocate

Trials and Tribulations

Ariston Papeo
This past Fall, PTAI hosted its annual Charles M. Sparacio Criminal Internal Competition! The competition, where nine talented teams went head-to-head, took place from October 28 through October 30.

The winning team was Jordan Kavanaugh (top right) and Natalie Mishkin (top right), coached by Carly Stapleton ’04! Mary Johnson (top left) and Joel Cardoz (top left), who were coached by Jared Brady ’22 and Chelsea McGee ’22, took home second place! All the students who competed worked tirelessly for weeks with their coaches to put on their best cases.

If you or anyone you know is interested in coaching, we would love to have you! Please reach out to our Internals Director, Natalie Mishkin at natalie.mishkin21@stjohns.edu.

INDIVIDUAL AWARD WINNERS

Joshua Halilej
*Best Opening Statement*

Rebecca Goldberg
*Best Cross Examination*

Robert Nikont
*Best Closing Statement*

John Di Leo
*Best Direct & Best Overall Advocate*
Starting on October 27th, St. John’s welcomed 14 mock trial teams from across the country for our annual Peter J. Johnson National Civil Rights Trial Competition.

The competition was named in the honor of Peter J. Johnson ’49, a St. John’s alum, WWII veteran, police officer, worker’s rights activist, and respected corporate attorney whose life and career is a lesson in using a legal education for the greater good.

Congratulations to NYU School of Law, the competition champions of the trial and South Texas College of Law, the finalists.
In the Spring, PTAI hosted another successful Brian Peterson Memorial First-Year Trial Competition! 16 1L teams competed on March 24 - March 26. Each team was coached by 2-3 2L and 3L members of PTAI. Each and every student spent hours writing statements, drafting examinations, and practicing their oral advocacy.

All the hard work paid off as each team brought their A game! All the 2L and 3L coaches were very proud of their teams and gained priceless coaching experience. The future of PTAI looks bright!
On November 9, 2022, Associate Director of Alumni Relations, Victoria Rubino, moderated PTAI's annual McKenna Forum. This year's topic was "Crisis in the Courtroom: The Opioid Epidemic." PTAI was joined by three guest speakers:

- Michael Maffei, Assistant US Attorney, US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of NY
- Pavithra Angara, Deputy Attorney General Professional Boards Prosecution Division of Law, NJ Attorney General's Office
- Brian DeVito, Deputy Attorney General Government and Healthcare Fraud Division of Law, NJ Attorney General's Office

On April 20, 2023, Ms. Rubino hosted our other annual alumni event, Advocates in the Spotlight. The event involved conversations with PTAI alumni discussing how their experience in PTAI affected their career and helped them become better trial attorneys. The three alumni featured at the event were:

- Judge Eugene M. Guarino, Criminal Court of the City of New York
- Jasmine M. Johnson, Fried Frank
- Caitlyn C. O'Neill, Kaufman Dolowich Voluck
Executive Director
Patrick Clancey

Managing Director
Emerli Rodriguez

Internals Director
Nicholas Fajardo

Associate Director of Alumni Relations
Victoria Rubino

Associate Director of Recruitment & Outreach
Daniel Smith

Externals Director
Ryan Fenn

Special Events Director
Christine Raso

Associate Director of Communications & Records
Kelly Madigan

Associate Director of Inter-Organizational Events
Ariston Papeo
THE ADVOCATE
2023-2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD

Executive Director
Krista Apostle

Managing Director
Robert Nikont

Internals Director
Natalie Mishkin

Associate Director of Alumni Relations
Cole Eiber

Associate Director of Recruitment & Outreach
Naya Brown-Yohay

Externals Director
Emily Trumble

Special Events Director
John Di Leo

Associate Director of Communications & Records
Nana Asante

Associate Director of Inter-Organizational Events
Joel Cardoz
The Executive Board is tremendously thankful to all of the people who have supported us throughout the year and who have made the 2022-23 school year one of our most successful.

Firstly, all of PTAI would like to acknowledge our Head Mock Trial Coach:

**Brian Hughes ‘07:**
The heart and soul of the PTAI program, Brian has been a teacher to each of us, a coach to many, a judge to some, and a friend to all of the board when we need one most. From tryouts to competition planning to coaching, Brian provides extremely valuable institutional knowledge to our student leaders. We are thankful for his guidance throughout the year.

None of the aforementioned events could have been possible without the assistance of the faculty and staff at St. John’s Law.

For their contributions to the success of the program, PTAI is thankful to;

- Maria Rivero
- Dean Michael Simons
- Dean Christine Lazaro
- Dean Nancy Brady
- Iris Diaz
- Theresa Duggan
- Claire Policino
- Anthony Zaccarelli
- Joanne Danielle
- Claire McKeever
- Julio Ortiz
The Executive Board is additionally thankful to our coaches, who have consistently dedicated long hours when we need it most, and who consistently teach us skills that extend far beyond the courtroom. Coaches are the individuals who are responsible for perpetuating the legacy of PTAI, and we want to ensure that each coach is appropriately recognized.

For their contribution as coaches, the Board is thankful to:

Melissa Beach '08
Jared Brady '22:
Patrick Brand '11
Judge Joseph Calabrese '71
Scott Davis
Maree Galvez '16:
Chelsea Gavin
Judge Gene Guarino '99
Mark Lucarelli '19
Gabe Mendoza
Mike Maffei '10
Joanna Matuza '17
Jana McNulty
Kaitlin McTauge '12
Erin Mullins '18
Matt Phillips '20
Dan Quinn '18
Burt Ryan
Emily Santoro '19
Carly Stapleton '04
Brenna Strype '14
Sam Tighe
Hillary Quinn '20
Allison Smalley '18
Chelsea McGee '22
Victoria Mosca '18
Paul Magel '14
Meghan McLoughlin '20
The incoming Executive Board is very excited for the upcoming year and would love for as many alumni as possible to participate. Some of our events where alumni participation is crucial to its success are listed below. Please reach out if you have an interest in coaching and/or evaluating!

**SPARACIO INTERNAL CRIMINAL MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION**
October 13-15

**PETER JAMES JOHNSON ’49 CIVIL RIGHTS MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION**
October 26-29

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**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**EMAIL** ptaiexternal@gmail.com

**FACEBOOK** Palestino Trial Advocacy Institute

**LINKEDIN** Palestino Trial Advocacy Institute

**INSTAGRAM** @sjlptai