

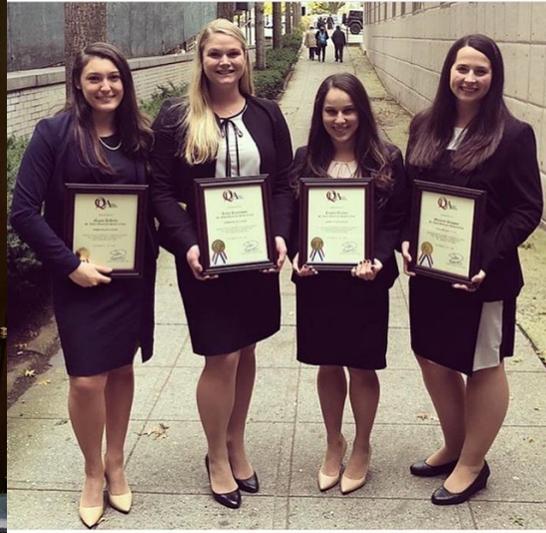


# The Advocate

## The Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute Bi-Annual Newsletter

Welcome to PTAI's Bi-Annual Alumni Newsletter. As we embark on this new 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. For our future newsletters 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 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 our second alumni event coming this spring which will bring together past and present members of PTAI for a night of reunion and networking.





## FALL 2018 EXTERNAL COMPETITIONS

This Fall our externals division was overflowing with talent and passion for the law. Our teams worked hard all semester and with the help of our dedicated coaches, including recent and past alumni, we were very successful. We competed at seven competitions and broke at three.

At the Buffalo-Niagra Mock Trial Competition our exceptional team (top left) of 3Ls Emily Santoro (Executive Director), Gabriella DeRosa (Externals Director), Kathleen Modica (Special Events Director), and Elizabeth Constantino were led all the way to the championship round by coaches Brian Hughs and Kirk Sendlein (not pictured). They finished as first runner ups. At the Queens District Attorney's Office Mock Trial Competition the team (top right) of 3Ls Megan DiBello (Internals Director), Kayla Kuzniewski (Alumni Chair), Shannon Dempsey (Associate Board), and Kristen Tierney finished in third place. They were coached by Joe Calabrese and Mike Vicario. Finally, at Quinnipiac's Criminal Justice Trial Advocacy Competition the team (bottom) of 3Ls, Sharlene Disla (Associate Board) and Jamie Caponera, and 2Ls, Victoria Benalczar and Lauren Bisogno, finished as finalists. Sharlene Disla was also awarded Best Cross Examination. As always, we are very proud of all our externals members and the effort they put into these competitions.

Looking forward to the Spring, we will be competing at six competitions: John L. Costello National Criminal Law Trial Advocacy Competition in Virginia, Texas Young Lawyers Association National Trial Competition in Buffalo with two teams, American Association for Justice Student Trial Advocacy Competition in Manhattan with two teams, South Texas Mock Trial Competition in Texas, and Estrella Trial Advocacy Competition in Puerto Rico. We expect to be just as, if not more, successful.



# 2018 Charles M. Sparacio Criminal Internal Trial Competition

The Fall 2018 Charles M. Sparacio Criminal Internal Trial Competition was a success! Internals Director Megan Dibello 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 alumni Joanna Matuza and Dino Litourgis. The team was made up of David Salamando, Sarah Krastins, Allyson Rivard, and John Cancellieri. The runners up (right) were Brian Smulcheski, Meghan McLoughlin, and Hunter Igoe. They were coached by Matt Powers and Shannon Riordan.

The winners of individual awards (bottom) were Hunter Igoe for Best Cross, John Cancellieri for Best Closing, Allyson Rivard for Best Advocate, David Salamando for Best Opening, and Jacob Heric for Best Direct. 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 spring.

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).



# Alumni Softball Game and Cocktail Reception

This year we expanded our alumni involvement with our first annual Alumni Softball Game and our first annual Alumni Cocktail Reception. Both of these events were enormous successes and just the beginning of the expansion of our alumni network.

From Associate Board Member, Thomas Mosczyński: Great weather. Great sport. And an even better organization. Last August, I had the privilege of organizing the first annual students vs. PTAI Alumni Softball Game. As usual with all PTAI alumni events, it became less about the event and more about catching up with great friends. Further, it provided the fresh faces of PTAI a chance to understand just how important being a member is to past, present, and future members. I'm confident that this event will grow larger and larger each year. I hope to see you all there this summer!

In November, students and alumni gathered following the Fall 2018 Charles M. Sparacio Criminal Internal Trial Competition. After the final round of the competition, a cocktail reception was held in the Mattone Family Atrium including appetizers and an open bar. There, the champions of the competition were announced and students and alumni enjoyed a night of celebrating the legacy of PTAI, its current success, and its future in the impressively talented group of internal competitors who are just beginning their mock trial experience.

This semester, we look forward to further expanding our alumni experience and would love to hear from you, our alumni, about how you would like to be involved. If you would like to contact our Alumni Chair, Kayla Kuzniewski, you can reach her at [stjptaialumni@gmail.com](mailto:stjptaialumni@gmail.com).

# Advocate in the Spotlight



This fall, PTAI welcomed Ashley Klopfer to speak to its members about how her trial advocacy education at St. John's Law has played a role in her career. The event was organized by Special Events Director, Kate Modica (pictured right).

Ashley is an alumni of St. John's Law. As a student, she was a member of the Moot Court Honor Society. She has spent her career dedicated to public interest. Currently, Ashley is working at Brooklyn Defenders Services.

Ashley shared with PTAI members how she has used the skills she learned in St. John's trial advocacy program as a public defender. She provided insight into the day to day work of a public defender and answered questions students had about her work.

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

Last year, the law school 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 again hosted schools from across the nation at our annual Peter James Johnson '49 Memorial National Civil Rights Competition. Our Special Events Director, Kate Modica, worked hard to organize this event which held rounds at both the Nassau County Supreme Court and the law school. The competition took place Thursday October 18th through Sunday October 21st. The team from NYU Law (pictured left) won first place and the team from the South Texas College of Law Houston (pictured right) were first runners up. We are so grateful to all those alumni who came back to help with this event and hope to have as much participation again next year. If you'd like to be involved in the competition as a volunteer or as a judge, please contact our Special Events Director at [STJPTAIEvents@gmail.com](mailto:STJPTAIEvents@gmail.com).



# 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.