



Boyd Briefs: October 15, 2015

From Dean Dan

The Nevada Bar Exam is one of the most difficult in the country. Boyd works hard, with our outstanding Academic Success Program and our excellent faculty, to make sure our students are prepared to do well on the exam and to enter the legal profession. The July 2015 bar exam results were announced recently, and the school once again did very well. The passage rate for Boyd graduates taking the bar exam for the first time was 75 percent. This year's overall state pass rate (which includes those taking the test for the first time and all others) was 60 percent. These numbers are strong and reflect hard work by our students, faculty and staff. I want to very much thank Academic Success Program Director Jennifer Carr. Congratulations to every new Boyd lawyer.

Congratulations are also in order to Boyd students Mary Tran and Todd Weiss, who were recently named recipients of the 2015 Shannon Bybee Scholarship Award, and to Kevin Schweitzer, who received an Honorable Mention. The annual scholarship program, administered by the International Association of Gaming Advisors, recognizes the best scholarly research papers written on relevant gaming topics by law students.

Lastly, we are excited to see many of our accomplished alumni during Boyd's 2015 Alumni Weekend, Oct. 16 and 17. The fun-filled weekend kicks off tomorrow with a golf tournament, followed by a pancake breakfast Saturday morning, and a dinner and awards program at ARIA Resort & Casino in the evening. Festivities will also include a reception for the classes of 2005 and 2010, and the recognition of several distinguished alumni.

Dan

Dean & Richard J. Morgan Professor of Law
daniel.hamilton@unlv.edu
[facebook.com/DeanDanHamilton](https://www.facebook.com/DeanDanHamilton)



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Rebecca Nathanson

Rebecca Nathanson is Boyd's James E. Rogers Professor of Education and Law. She is Interim Associate Dean for Experiential Legal Education and directs both the Kids' Court School and the education advocacy clinic in the Thomas & Mack Legal Clinic.

1. What are you working on? The most important thing that I am working on now is the expansion of the Kids' Court School, a program I established at Boyd 12 years ago that educates child witnesses about the judicial process. More than 1,000 children have participated in this program in Clark County. We will establish the Kids' Court School in Reno in January, thus enabling children in Northern Nevada to be served as well. We are also expanding our research efforts. Thus far, our research has focused on the effects of the Kids' Court School on

children's court-related anxiety, as well as on the effects of the program on parents' and attorneys' concern regarding their children or their clients having to testify. The next study will examine the effects of Kids' Court on perceived child witness credibility.

2. Which of your recent publications should I read? Increasingly, public policies provide children the right to be heard in an expanding array of legal contexts, and children themselves express the desire to be heard in proceedings that affect their welfare. As one 6-year-old in our study stated, "I want to talk to the judge in court. This is about my life and my life is important." That's why *Preparing children for court: Effects of a model court education program on children's anticipatory anxiety* in *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 27, 97-117, is a must read! Children are often poorly equipped for the challenges they will face in the courtroom. The findings of this study support preparation as a viable method of minimizing stress placed on children in legal proceedings, while simultaneously protecting the integrity of the legal process. This study can serve as a springboard to guide the development of future research, effective practice, and cost-effective policy.

3. Does your research and writing cross over to your teaching and service? My research and writing have absolutely affected my teaching, professional, AND community service! When I began working as a research fellow at UCLA Medical School 25 years ago, conducting research on children's testimony, I had no idea the effect that this research would have on my professional life. In short, since that time, my research, writing, and community service have all focused on children in the legal system, and specifically on giving children a voice in legal contexts. Ironically, as director of the Education Clinic in the Thomas & Mack Legal Clinic, I teach students to advocate for the educational rights of their clients and to enable their clients to have a voice in their education.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Mackenzie Warren

"In the television industry, there is perhaps nothing more off-putting than a know-it-all news anchor. I'm guessing the same goes for attorneys. As a journalist, I quickly discovered admitting what I didn't know, but committing to find the answers our viewers deserved, helped build my credibility. When I said those three little words on-air, 'I don't know,' people at home knew I was telling the truth."

So speaks Mackenzie Warren, who, at age 25, became the youngest main news anchor in Las Vegas local television history. Her road to that distinction started not in her hometown, but ran east to Southern Methodist University. There, Mackenzie studied journalism and eventually she landed back in her home state as a morning reporter in Reno. Mackenzie then headed south, to Las Vegas, and joined the team she grew up watching -- News 3. A Capitol correspondent gig in Carson City was the precursor to her Las Vegas anchor assignment. While thrilled by this pretty cool turn of events, Mackenzie heard the call to a different journey.

"Like journalists, lawyers try to prove a point. A solid attorney presents what she knows to be true to effect change. Discovery is a major component of the law, and as a journalist, I had the chance to be curious for a living. As an attorney, I look forward to channeling my passion for storytelling, advocacy, and many more chances to say, 'I don't know.'"

Now in her second year at Boyd, Mackenzie belongs to Society of Advocates, Boyd's moot court team, and the *Nevada Law Journal*. Earlier this year, she was named a recipient of the Las Vegas Business Academy scholarship. She spent last summer as a judicial extern with Clark

County District Court Judge Elissa Cadish and as a clerk with Kemp, Jones & Coulthard, LLP. Next summer, Mackenzie will join Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP as a law clerk.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Christopher Hicks '01

Christopher Hicks '01, member of the Charter Class, was elected Washoe County District Attorney in 2014. As the district attorney, he serves as the chief law enforcement officer for the county and the attorney for all of the county's departments and commissioners. He oversees a staff of nearly 180 employees, including 61 attorneys.

During his 13 years as a prosecutor, Chris successfully handled thousands of cases including such notable ones as *State of Nevada v. Chaz Higgs*, the murderer of Nevada's elected State Controller Kathy Augustine, and *State of Nevada v. James Michael Biela*, who abducted and murdered Brianna Denison and sexually assaulted two other University of Nevada students.

While at Boyd, Chris externed in the Clark County District Attorney's Office for a summer which proved to be an invaluable experience and firmly rooted his hopes of becoming a prosecutor. He believes there is no better legal job than working as a DA where every day presents exciting courtroom opportunities and the ability to help your community and its citizens.

Chris is eternally grateful for his experiences at Boyd. As a fifth generation Nevadan, he is supremely proud to be a member of the inaugural graduating class of Nevada's first accredited law school.

"As the first class, we were the test product for the new school. Placed in the old elementary school across the street from Thomas & Mack, where the bathroom doors still read 'girls' and 'boys,' we were well supported by Dean Dick Morgan and the entire staff who prepared us for success with a challenging curriculum taught by talented and dedicated professors."

Chris is the loving father of a son and three daughters, and a devoted husband to his wife Nicole, a prosecutor who is the director of Washoe County's Child Advocacy Center.
