



Boyd Briefs: March 4, 2016

From Dean Dan

Tonight we look forward to the [17th Annual Public Interest Law Association \(PILA\) Auction](#), a great community event that promotes our law school's efforts to support students pursuing careers in public interest law. Each year, PILA has honored a member of the legal community for their commitment to public interest. For the first time, PILA will be handing out two awards this evening: The Silver Staircase Award to [Justice Kristina Pickering](#) and the inaugural Silver Embrace Award to [The Embracing Project](#). Past Silver Staircase Award honorees were Judge Elizabeth Gonzalez (2015), Bill Curran (2014), Justice Michael Douglas (2013), Barbara Buckley (2012), and Franny Forsman (2011). I want to recognize and thank the exceptional hard work of all our PILA student members for organizing this event.

17th Annual Public Interest Law Association Auction

Friday, March 4, 5:30 p.m.

The Smith Center for the Performing Arts - Reynolds Hall Lobby

PILA is a non-profit, student-run organization created to raise awareness about public interest work and the opportunities available to law students. Each year, the auction helps to raise funds to finance summer internship grants for Boyd students working in the public sector. The auction is a wonderful cause – not only are you supporting Boyd students who dedicate their time to practicing public interest law, but also the many people in our community who would not receive legal assistance if not for their commitment.

This weekend we are delighted to host the [18th Annual Trina Grillo Public Interest and Social Justice Law Retreat](#), co-sponsored by the Society of American Law Teachers with a consortium of law schools. The retreat, established to honor the memory of former Professor Trina Grillo who was a dedicated social activist and justice advocate, provides participants a unique opportunity to forge alliances, exchange viewpoints, explore career opportunities, and formulate strategies for social justice.

Dan

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Sara Gordon

Professor [Sara Gordon](#)'s research interests range from mental health law to how cognitive psychology provides insights into decision-making processes. In 2015, working with Boyd students Gil Kahn and Dawn Nielsen and Dr. Melissa Piasecki, a forensic psychiatrist at the University of Nevada School of Medicine (UNSOM), Professor Gordon completed a



comprehensive study of Alaska statutes relating to mental health and competency.

How has your research and writing enriched your teaching? I've spent the last several years reading and writing about mental health, mental illness, and how individuals with mental illness experience the legal system and how they are treated by that system. Last summer, I was able to bring all of these things together in a course I taught at Boyd, Mental Health Law. The course covered both civil and criminal aspects of mental health and the legal system. It's an important and valuable addition to our already strong offerings in Boyd's new Health Law Program.

What are you working on right now? My recent work focuses on addiction and how the legal system treats people with addiction. Specifically, I've been studying drug courts, which were originally intended as a way to divert people with criminal charges out of the criminal justice system and allow them to instead receive treatment for the addiction that led to their arrest. The most important part about this research, and the most frustrating, is that we know a lot about how to treat addiction, but most of that knowledge hasn't made its way into the medical community, and it certainly hasn't reached most drug courts or drug court judges. I wrote this piece as a way to draw attention to that gap between what we know about addiction treatment and the treatment we require people to receive when they enter drug court.

Which of your recent articles should I read? One that I recommend is *Crossing the Line: Daubert, Dual Roles, and the Admissibility of Forensic Mental Health Testimony*, forthcoming in the *Cardozo Law Review*. This article addresses the issue of mental health professionals who testify in legal proceedings. Most mental health professionals agree that a clinician who is treating a patient should not also provide forensic testimony about that patient in court. But this sort of testimony occurs all of the time in civil commitment and competency proceedings, where the individual's mental health status is at issue. When a treating mental health professional provides this testimony, it can cause a variety of conflicts for the patient and for the legal system. Courts, lawyers, and judges don't often see it as a problem and sometimes think it is the easiest and most efficient way to obtain testimony about a person's mental state. I argue in the article that testimony by treating professionals is both a violation of the ethical obligations of psychologists and psychiatrists, and that it also produces unreliable testimony that courts should not admit under the Federal Rules of Evidence.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Kevin Schweitzer

You're a Chicago guy. Cubs or White Sox? Cubs all the way! And yes, you do have to pick one or the other. I've been suffering with this team since before Wrigley had lights, so I'm savoring the current resurgence. It's also nice to have a Las Vegas native son, Kris Bryant, helping lead the charge.

Working as a journalist, you lived through a transformation in the industry from print to electronic. Are you more wistful or hopeful? Overall I'm hopeful, although it's a long-term view. The switch to digital, which meant a serious drop in revenue and more competition for the public's attention, all too often results in journalists abdicating their watchdog role. It's painful to watch at times. But I still see a need



for some important things newspapers can do, such as providing credible information and imposing accountability on large institutions. Newspapers as we know them aren't coming back, but I'm convinced that one day people will start infusing those old roles into the new forms of communication.

What's been your experience since leaving the Midwest for Las Vegas and Boyd? I used to come out here about once a year on vacation, so I had an idea of what I was getting myself into. Now that I live here I've found a few Chicago bars and restaurants around town, just enough to still feel connected. I've even introduced a few Boyd friends to stuffed pizza! So I feel like I never fully leave either place.

What's the plan following graduation in May? I'm moving back to Chicago to be closer to my family. I'd like to find a way to keep a foothold out here, though. I could be happy living in Las Vegas if the fates take me back here one day.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Kandis McClure '14

Kandis McClure '14 works as a policy advisor at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP.

When did you know being an attorney or working in the legal field was for you? Although I knew from the start of my college career that I wanted to work in the public sector, I did not always plan to achieve that goal by going to law school. I started as an undergraduate studying biology and interning with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services State Epidemiologist. Through experiences at the DHHS and my time interning in a public hospital, I found that public health and policy were both interesting and expanding; so I started looking for ways to pursue a career in those fields. Following my undergraduate degree, I was accepted into the University of Southern California's Master of Public Health program, focusing on Global Health Leadership. This program allowed me to delve deeper into domestic and international health policy. I completed my master's practicum at the American University of Beirut, where I worked on a tobacco control policy project.

As I was completing my master's program, I decided that going to law school and learning the process of making and interpreting laws would be critical to creating change in the policy world. Through my health field experiences, I frequently saw that laws often had unintended consequences that needed to be remedied either through policy changes or through changes in the laws themselves. To select a law school, I focused on schools that had a clear focus on promoting public interest law and that were highly involved in their local communities. This is where Boyd first stood out to me.

Tell me about your decision to attend the Boyd School of Law. I never planned to move to Las Vegas prior to visiting Boyd, but I was so impressed with the faculty and the public interest and government-related opportunities that were available, that it quickly made its way to the top of my list of potential schools. When I was chosen as a Public Interest Fellow, I knew that I could not pass up the opportunity.

Do you have certain memories about law school that seemed to be

pivotal moments? During my time at Boyd, I had three very important internships that helped create the skills I would need for my role as a policy advisor. I spent my 1L summer working for the New York City Council in New York City. Interning with the Council, I had my first experience watching how a major budget is built and how that impacts public policy initiatives. I also learned how instrumental local government involvement is and how much participation matters. My 2L summer I worked with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri as part of the Public Benefits team that handled cases dealing specifically with Medicare and Medicaid issues. This provided a chance to work directly with clients in the community and to navigate a system that requires compliance with federal and state legal systems. In my 3L year, I spent a semester in Washington, D.C., serving as a congressional legal intern for Senator Harry Reid, who was the U.S. Senate Majority Leader at the time. This provided me with a deeper understanding of how the federal system works and differs from state and local government.

What do you find interesting about your coworkers at a large firm? Brownstein attorneys practice in fields that cover the entire legal spectrum, so I enjoy learning about why certain individuals chose their area of focus in the law. Each person has such unique experiences that they bring to the table!

What drew you to Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck and what do you like most about your work there? Brownstein provides a unique environment for government relations professionals. When interviewing, I heard about Brownstein's pride at being at the intersection where business, law, and politics come together; and I found that to be true. I enjoy the cross-collaboration between legal practice, government affairs, and regulatory work.

Where do you like to go for business lunches? Bocho Sushi on 6th Street.



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