



Boyd Briefs: March 13, 2014

From Dean Dan

We all know that every year U.S. News ranks law schools. What is less noticed and probably more important are the specialty rankings, reflecting surveys of professors and practitioners. In this way programs are ranked by actual experts. I am delighted that Boyd's [Lawyering Process Program](#) ranked third for its legal writing program this year, making this the eighth consecutive year that our program has ranked third or fourth in the nation. Our curriculum, which emphasizes professionalism and prepares students to begin their legal careers with the skills they need for practice, includes instruction in legal analysis, research, writing, professionalism, and lawyering skills by one of the best legal writing faculty in the nation.

Similarly, Boyd ranked ninth in dispute resolution for its [Saltman Center for Conflict Resolution](#) and has been ranked in the top 12 for the past eight years. The Saltman Center is led by Director Jean Sternlight and Associate Director Lydia Nussbaum who recently put together a major research conference on Lawyering and Psychology. Special thanks to our founders Michael and Sonja Saltman for their continued support. The Center will celebrate its 10th anniversary this fall.

More good news is that Boyd ranked 20 out of 83 accredited law schools with part-time programs, reflecting our top evening program. Finally, I am particularly proud that Boyd also ranked 48 out of 191 for law school diversity. We are the law school for the whole state and are committed to remaining accessible to all Nevadans.

Dan

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Sylvia Lazos

The faculty at the William S. Boyd School of Law is an important resource of the State of Nevada. The work of Professor [Sylvia Lazos](#), in particular, epitomizes the ideals of community engagement, thoughtful policy development, and impactful scholarship. Locally and throughout the state, Professor Lazos is a frequent commenter and collaborator on a wide range of subjects, including higher education, immigration, race relations, and election law. Meanwhile, throughout the country, her more traditional scholarship—which appears in a number of highly respected law reviews—is among the most frequently cited of our faculty members.

Recently, Professor Lazos hosted a forum at the law school that attracted more than 100 educators, lawyers and policymakers to discuss the funding formula for the state's school districts. Lazos moderated a panel that featured the Majority Leader of the Nevada Senate, the Legal Director of the ACLU, the President of the Nevada State Educators Association, and the Director of the Education Law Center. In light of the fact that Senate Majority Leader Mo Denis is chairing an interim task force charged with drafting recommendations for a new formula, the forum was timely and constructive. Lazos is an academic whose brilliance as a scholar can be translated into a format that directly

improves communities, advances policies, and betters society.

Much of Professor Lazos' scholarship offers cross-disciplinary perspective on contemporary questions of constitutional law. The breadth and depth of that perspective is the product of both formal training as well as experience: she is a critical race scholar with an economics background; a Michigan Law graduate who was a partner in a law firm; and a bilingual law professor who has been on the law faculties at Florida State University, the University of Missouri, and now Boyd.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Laura Guidry

One of Boyd's premier annual events is the [Public Interest Law Association \(PILA\) Auction](#). It is an evening of food and spirits capped off by a raucous live auction of really cool stuff procured by industrious PILA members. This year's PILA Auction took place Feb. 16 and was chaired fabulously by Laura Guidry '15.

It would be correct to say that Laura really jazzed up last month's PILA Auction. She did so by landing the Cabaret Jazz club at the Smith Center for the Performing Arts as the venue. Carrying on with the puns, the Cabaret Jazz setting was a big hit with auction attendees. The event raised thousands of dollars for PILA to distribute in the form of grants to Boyd students undertaking unpaid summer positions with a range of organizations. Last year saw grant recipients working for the Clark County Special Public Defender's Office, the ACLU, and the Moapa Valley Indian tribe, among others.

After recovering from the exhaustion that resulted from pulling together the logistics of a big-time event, Laura has been able to return her attention more fully to her studies and other Boyd community endeavors. Along with her efforts for PILA, Laura is Secretary of the Federalist Society, participates in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program administered by Boyd's Financial Law Society, and is a member of the Nevada Law Journal. Soon she will be participating in the law school's "Alternative Spring Break: Service Learning in Rural Nevada."

Campus involvement is nothing new for Laura. As an undergraduate at UNLV, where she earned her B.A. in Political Science, she served as Director of Nevada Student Affairs for the Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (CSUN) student government and Director of Internal Relations for the UNLV College Republicans.

Great job, great auction, Laura!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Michael Higdon '01

[Michael Higdon '01](#) is an Associate Professor and Director of Legal Writing at the University Of Tennessee College Of Law. Michael was a member of the William S. Boyd School of Law charter class, graduating summa cum laude and valedictorian. He also was the first Editor-in-Chief of the *Nevada Law Journal*.

Upon graduation, Higdon was selected to be a judicial law clerk for Judge Procter Hug, Jr. of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit before practicing commercial litigation and employment law for two years with the Las Vegas firm of Schreck Brignone (now part of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck). In 2004, he joined the faculty of the Boyd School of Law, where he taught Lawyering Process as well as Wills, Trusts and Estates. In 2006, he was named Professor of the Year by the Boyd student body; and in 2009, he was named Boyd Alumnus of the Year.

In 2009, Michael accepted his current job at the University of Tennessee,

where he teaches Constitutional Law; Family Law; Legal Process; and Sexuality, Gender & the Law. Michael is a prolific scholar, having published a number of articles in journals such as the Indiana Law Journal, the Georgia Law Review, and the UC Davis Law Review--just to name a few. Michael also serves as the advisor to the Tennessee Law Review. In 2012, Michael was granted tenure.

In his free time, Michael enjoys the robust community theater scene in east Tennessee, serving on various theater boards and appearing regularly on the stage throughout the region. Most recently, he was thrilled to land a dream role, that of Elyot in Noel Coward's *Private Lives* (pictured left).

Michael resides in downtown Knoxville with his two Italian Greyhounds, Patch and Piglet.