

Business & Transactional Law Center



Professor Steve Ramirez



The 2003-2004 academic year proved to be successful for the growing Washburn Business & Transactional Law Center. Among its many activities this year, the Center sponsored programs addressing international trade law and professional responsibility for business and transactional lawyers. As part of the law school's celebration of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Center sponsored a two-day seminar focusing on diversity in corporate America. The overriding goal of the Center has always been to energize alums and faculty for the purpose of providing interested students the ability to pursue the most sophisticated legal education focused upon business and transactional law.

One way of achieving that goal is exposing students to the experiences of alums who practice in the areas of business and transactional law. The practitioner perspective is a view not typically available in most law school curricula, and tends to focus on cutting edge issues that have yet to work their way fully into law school texts. This year for example, Frank Ross '78, Chair of the Polsinelli Shalton Welte Suelthaus PC business law department articulated the best practice for practitioners representing multiple parties in business formations. Former U.S. Representative Jim Slattery '75 of Wiley, Rein & Fielding schooled students in the current panoply of international trade remedies available to stem trade practices harmful to businesses in the United States, including possible harm to agricultural interests in Kansas. Ambassador Delano Lewis '63 participated in a series of panel discussions focusing on the development of diversity initiatives in corporate America since the beginning of the civil rights movement. Ambassador Lewis provided a particularly rich perspective on this issue given his service on

the board of directors of a number of high profile Fortune 500 companies, as well as his chief executive experience in the Bell Atlantic companies. Both Michael Miller '91, Executive Vice President and General Counsel of AmerUs Annuities, and Paul Hoferer '75, Vice President and General Counsel of BNSF, Inc., contributed to panels exploring best practices for companies seeking to exploit diversity under Title VII. Naturally, the Center will continue to look for opportunities to bring practitioner perspectives into our law school and to expose our students to the most current and sophisticated approach to complex business and transactional law issues.

The contributions of the Washburn Law faculty to the success of the Center cannot be overstated. Professors Sheila Reynolds, Ali Khan and Ron Griffin each participated in panel programs and added a depth of insight that often only active scholars can provide, in the areas of Professional Responsibility, International Trade Law and equality in corporate America, respectively. Professor David Pierce has been of invaluable assistance in attracting high profile speakers and hosting Center related events. Other faculty spoke on the impact of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act on the duties of corporate counsel and of recent scholarship addressing diversity in corporate America. Dean Dennis Honabach has always supported the Center's activities and continues to be a source of contacts and ideas for the Center.

The Center will benefit from a number of excellent new faculty with interests in business and transactional law issues. Professor Janet Jackson adds depth in the area of community development and gives the Center the ability to explore the creation of a clinical component. Professor Brad Borden is already a nationally recognized scholar in the area of tax law and will be a great assistance in assuring that the Center can support solid tax law programs for our students. Professor Robert Rhee brings to the Center his experience in law and corporate finance and will add considerable depth to our program, particularly in law and finance.



ties law and entertainment law. The Center continues to work closely with the Washburn Business Law Society to coordinate events for students seeking more exposure to business and transactional law issues.

Still on the horizon, the Center is pushing for a Business & Transactional Law Certificate for students successfully completing a rigorous course of study in business and transactional law. The Center is in the

final stages of instituting a web-based working papers series for students wishing to pursue a given topic in a scholarly level of depth, with a view towards publication in a business and transactional law journal. Next academic year, the Center is preparing a number of programs addressing cutting edge issues such as white collar crime. The Center is sponsoring its first scholarly symposium related to White Collar Crime, in which nationally known scholars will not only present papers or topics at our law school, but will also publish their papers in our law journal.

In addition to energizing faculty and alums, the Center successfully leveraged resources to bring in a variety of high profile speakers: Jim Haines, CEO of Westar Industries, spoke on the issue of diversity in corporate America. John Dzienkowski, a nationally known expert in professional responsibility, spoke on the duties of counsel representing parties to business formations. Cheryl Wade, a nationally known scholar on race in corporate America, spoke on issues facing companies that fail to properly manage diversity. Michael Middleton, Deputy Chancellor of the University of Missouri and Professor of Law, spoke about the broad challenges facing businesses as a result of the civil rights movements. Ben Swinnen of Ralston, Pope & Diehl L.L.C. who practices in business transactions and litigation spoke regarding recent developments in international trade law. Shelly Freeman, President of HROI, LLC, a subsidiary of the law firm Lathrop & Gage, L.C., spoke as a human resources professional regarding best practices for Title VII compliance. Finally, the Center continues to sponsor other activities designed to meet the interests of students wishing to pursue careers in business and transactional law. The Center sponsors a series of luncheon speakers to address recent developments in business and transactional law. This year, speakers addressed bankruptcy, business planning and business litigation topics among others. The Center sponsors travel for interested students to in depth seminars sponsored by nationwide authorities such as the Practicing Law Institute on topics including securi-



Cheryl Wade, Shelly Freeman, Michael Miller '91 and Paul Hoferer '75

The Center continues to welcome and encourage feedback from interested alums. A number of alums have recently volunteered to help with Center activities and will certainly be slated to participate in activities this upcoming year. It is vitally important to the Center's mission that it benefit from a continuing flow of ideas and insights from practitioners on the most challenging issues facing business and transactional law issues.

If you feel you can be of help in this endeavour please contact Director, Professor Steven Ramirez, at steven.ramirez@washburn.edu.