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ACC and UCI Law students present 'Street Law'

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On Sep. 1, members of the Southern California chapter of Association of Corporate Counsel teamed up with students at the UC Irvine School of Law for an informational and organizational meeting regarding Street Law, a non-profit organization dedicated to "providing practical, participatory education about law, democracy, and human rights."

Leading the Street Law session was Zachary Zaharek, vice president and senior corporate counsel of First American. Zaharek discussed plans for ACC attorneys to work hand-in-hand with UCI Law students to bring basic legal concepts and an appetite for the legal profession to students of Middle College High School in Santa Ana. He described this program as "an opportunity to find a mentor" for the budding law professionals.

Also present at the meeting was Erwin Chemerinsky, founding dean and distinguished professor of law at the UC Irvine School of Law. "It's so wonderful to see so many student's getting involved in this," he said addressing the roughly 70 students in attendance, "The best way to understand something is to have to teach it."

In addition to Zaharek, 11 other corporate counsels volunteered their time, including representatives from the U.S. Postal Service, Automobile Club of Southern California, Cisco Consumer Products LLC, Sempra Energy Corp., Pacific Life Insurance Co. and five attorneys from Verizon Wireless. "All of us want to give back to the community," said Edward R. McGah Jr., assistant general counsel for Verizon Wireless, "And we are lucky to work for a company that allows us to do that."

After learning the details surrounding how the program works, each attorney was paired with a group of students and given a topic to teach to their assigned high school students; lecture topics included sports law contracts, entertainment law contracts, social host liability torts, first amendment law, advertising law and copyright law.

Law students participating in the Street Law teaching program are also awarded up to 10 hours of pro bono service. "I came from a very small high school, and we didn't have opportunities like this, said Jesse Keyser, first year law student at UCI Law, "I wish we would have."

The attorneys and their law student group members were assigned dates and times to coordinate with and instruct students at Middle College High School. The principal of the high school was in attendance. "It's a very small school," said Claudia Flint, "But the legal subject matter will be interesting to the students."

According to Flint, Middle College High School, which is located on the campus of Santa Ana College and allows students to simultaneously enroll in high school and college courses, is an ideal candidate for the Street Law program's aims.

— David McAfee

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