

The OCBA Charitable Fund Nearly Doubles Student Outreach Initiative

by John Hueston

"The Prelaw Outreach Program is an integral part of UCI Law School and provides college students from disadvantaged backgrounds an introduction to law and law schools, including information about applying and receiving financial aid. The generous support of the Orange County Bar Association has been integral in facilitating all aspects of the program."

Dean Erwin Chemerinsky,
UC Irvine School of Law

In the past year, the OCBA and its Charitable Fund have prioritized the funding of new, innovative programs with the potential for substantial individual or institutional impact. The new Prelaw Outreach Program ("POP") created and hosted by the U.C. Irvine School of Law (UCI) made this year's decision an easy one. POP serves to encourage students to enter the practice of law and to assist



John Hueston
OCBA PRESIDENT

students in the admissions process and in applications for financial aid. This year the Charitable Fund worked in partnership with UCI Law School to underwrite and expand POP after a successful first effort last summer. As a result,

the Charitable Fund enabled POP to nearly double the number of participants and expand the breadth of the programming and financial support.

POP recruits some of the most talented, underprivileged college students in the state for participation in the program. The 40 participants from 17 different California colleges come from families with income levels no more than 200% above the federal poverty level. Approximately half of the participants were raised in single family households. For all but four of the participants, neither parent had attended college. Ninety percent of the participants are students of color, and eighty



percent hail from households in which English is rarely spoken. Although Dean Chemerinsky and the UCI School of Law created the program and serve as its hosts, POP is designed to encourage interest in the legal profession generally and is not a recruitment program for UCI.

To accommodate the work schedules of the participants, the program charts an ambitious agenda in six Saturday sessions. Program coordinator Anna Davis describes three objectives: "1) inspire students to enter the practice of law; 2) provide the tools necessary to be admitted into and to flourish in law school; and 3) provide practical experiences in legal advocacy." The program curriculum includes panels of practitioners from a diversity of legal practices. Visiting panels of law students describe strategies for success in law school. Law professors donate time to conduct a mock contracts class and a day-long seminar on negotiation complete with breakout groups. Each Saturday includes an advocacy session designed to expose participants to all aspects of trial practice. Students participate in resume workshops, hear from insiders about the law school admissions process and, upon completion of the program, receive a free LSAT review course donated by Kaplan. Each student is then assigned a UCI law student as a mentor for continued assistance in the law school admissions process.

At a cost of approximately \$14,000, the OCBA provided the POP program with full financial support this year. Our funding permitted a more comprehensive program for a group almost double the size of the inaugural class. This year, POP program coordinators possessed the resources to conduct statewide outreach for the most deserving, underprivileged candidates. With OCBA funding, POP purchased law school guides

and funded transportation for participants so that they could continue to sustain employment during the summer session.

POP program participants have been effusive in their praise for the program:

- "The overview of the law school admission process was dealt with in a very insightful manner. I feel ready to apply to law school; all I need is my LSAT score."
- "I always felt that I had to do everything on my own and it was so difficult and challenging that I didn't even want to bother with it. I am so glad that there is something like this here for people like me."
- "Thank you for the opportunity to network with law professors, lawyers in different fields, and the opportunity to learn about the admissions and financial aid process. . . . After participating in this program I am now excited for what the future might bring."

The Prelaw Outreach Program is an example of how the OCBA Charitable Fund can continue to provide critical annual support to larger programs such as the Public Law Center and the Constitutional Rights Foundation, but also encourage and provide growth opportunities for innovative new programs in Orange County. I encourage our members to contact the Charitable Fund with referrals of creative legal charities and new ideas for funding.

John Hueston is 2011 President of the Orange County Bar Association and a partner with Irell & Manella LLP specializing in white collar criminal defense and business trials. He can be reached at jhueston@irell.com