

# 2007 Awards of Distinction Honor Innovation, Diversity, and Recruiting Practices

by Gail Peshel

After reviewing an array of excellent nominations, the Awards of Distinction Committee named three award recipients this year. These awards were presented during the opening plenary of the 2007 Annual Education Conference in Keystone, Colorado.

- **The Award of Distinction for Innovation** went to Ian Weinstein, Director of Clinical Education at Fordham Law School, for cutting-edge technology used to educate as well as market.
- **The Award of Distinction for Recruiting Practices** went to Stuart Smith, Director of Recruitment for the New York City Law Department, for expanding opportunities to students nationwide as well as streamlining the full-time hiring process for former interns.
- **The Award of Distinction for Diversity** went to The Colorado Pledge to Diversity: Summer Diversity Clerkship Program for increasing opportunities and decreasing reliance on GPAs.

## Recognizing Innovation

Innovation is a word that applies to Ian Weinstein's criminal defense clinic at Fordham Law School, where students document their semester's work on a vlog at [www.lawclinic.tv](http://www.lawclinic.tv). Using technology to support efforts to inform and educate, Fordham's vlog includes video clips and also provides a forum for written discussion. The video clips feature clinic students who discuss an aspect of representation. Written discussion may

include comments from other professors as well as other students.

As the nomination form stated, the Fordham vlog is an example of one NALP member organization's innovative technology — technology that is likely to become commonplace for all of us in the future. The vlog keeps pace with the technology of the YouTube generation. "No mistake about it," noted the nominator, "vlog is our present and our future, keeping education and communication alive and of interest to our audiences." To learn more, go to [www.lawclinic.tv](http://www.lawclinic.tv).

## Recognizing Recruiting Practices

Evidence of the award-winning recruiting practices of the New York Law Department can be found in the fact that the Summer Honors Program of the New York Law Department attracts applications from law schools nationwide and received 3,227 summer applications last year. The Law Department further supported its program by hiring interns at the end of the summer; interns did not need to reapply for full-time positions. In 2006, 26 schools were represented in the summer class, and 31 of 33 summer interns received an offer. Most accept.

Their summer experience is well rounded with significant work and activities aimed at acclimating them to the city. For example, field trips include a visit to Riker's Island, the city landfill, the Third Water tunnel (which is 40 stories under Van Cortland park in the Bronx), Shakespeare in the Park (because NYC owns the Park), a Mets game (because NYC owns the stadium), the police shooting range, and soup kitchens, where interns

help to feed the homeless. Interns are also exposed to an array of lawyers and city officials through the Law Department's speaker series. Interns are able to go to court, take depositions, and argue motions through a court-issued "practice order." The Law Department has most certainly increased its visibility among law schools.

## Recognizing a Commitment to Diversity

Because of their commitment to diversity, 23 firms launched The Colorado Pledge to Diversity and expanded opportunities and funding for diverse first-year law students from the University of Colorado Law School and the University of Denver Sturm College of Law. Through varied initiatives, The Colorado Pledge to Diversity encouraged the Colorado legal community to use criteria other than grades to determine success. Colorado's Pledge to Diversity included bar associations as well as law firms; the annual Diversity in the Workplace Reception was co-sponsored by the Young Lawyers Section of the Hispanic Bar Association.

Most of the 23 signatory firms participate in the 1L Clerkship Program, which provided summer employment and exposure to law firm and in-house corporate practice, plus possible long-term employment. Other programs and activities included in The Colorado Pledge to Diversity are a book scholarship, which awards four \$500 scholarships to law students; participation in the Rocky Mountain Minority Legal Career Fair; scholarships for first-year students; and the Arun Das Memorial Scholarship. As stated by the nominator, through the activities of The Colorado Pledge to Diversity, "both students and employers have learned that diversity enhances the working environment for all."

On behalf of the Awards of Distinction Committee, we invite you to join us in congratulating Ian Weinstein, Director of Clinical Education, Fordham Law School, for his Innovation; Stuart Smith, Director of Recruitment, New York City Law Department, for Recruiting Practices; and The Colorado Pledge to Diversity: Summer Diversity Clerkship Program for their work in promoting diversity in the legal field.

We hope that you believe, as we do, that these organizations made important strides in Diversity, Innovation, and Recruiting Practices. May they inspire all of us to build on their actions and help us to create ways and means to better serve our profession.

## 2007 Awards of Distinction Committee

The members of the 2007 Awards of Distinction Committee were Chair Sonia Menon (NALP Treasurer, Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP), Gayle Englert (NALP Vice-President, Cole, Scholtz, Meisel, Forman & Leonard, P.A), Jolie Blanchard (Jones Day), LuEllen Conti (Howard University School of Law), Linda Dews (California Western School of Law), Brian Lewis (formerly William and Mary School of Law, now at the University of North Carolina School of Law), Gail Peshel (University of Notre Dame Law School), and Dorris Smith (Vanderbilt University Law School).

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