



Cincinnati Partnership Creates Nation's First Law Student Diversity Case Competition

Written by Russell Hausfeld • Photography provided by KMK Law

Cincinnati-based law firm Keating Muething & Klekamp (KMK Law) and the University of Cincinnati College of Law's Center for Professional Development recently partnered to build the nation's first and only law student diversity case competition.

"A case competition is a challenge that lets aspiring attorneys work a fictitious case in a competitive environment that rewards the individual or team who delivers the strongest final argument," says Bethany Recht, a partner at KMK Law who helped organize the event.

The collaborators developed the competition as an opportunity for students to demonstrate real-world skills and network with established members of the legal community.

This project began in response to the elimination of the Tri-State Minority Job Fair in the Cincinnati area – an area lacking in ethnic diversity within its legal community, according to members of KMK Law.

"Ethnicity includes race, gender and sexual orientation," says Recht. "Currently there is a gap in the legal workforce in Cincinnati compared to the diversity seen throughout the community. The KMK diversity case competition was one step to help close that gap."

Students competing in the diversity case competition had a chance to win cash prizes for displaying analytical, problem-solving and communication skills. A venue to showcase these necessary skills is often lacking in a traditional job fair setting. Julie Mulhern, director of KMK Law's Legal Recruiting and Professional Development, says that most students' real-world experience comes from

summer internships with law firms – an opportunity rarely afforded to first-year students.

"The case competition, however, gave the participating students the opportunity to interact with very experienced attorneys from both public companies and KMK," Mulhern says.

When this collaboration began, it was unclear how many schools and students would be interested in this kind of program. The initial hope for the competition's first year was to get around five teams from five schools to participate. But the competition garnered enough interest to secure 14 teams from six different law schools before having to close registrations due to space concerns.

Throughout the event, the competitors were able to coordinate with practicing attorneys and Fortune 500 corporate counsel who served as coaches and judges, according to Mulhern.

"With this experience, student competitors gained exposure to working in a law firm environment which not only introduced them to some of the realities of practicing law, but also serves to reduce the anxiety of a formal job interview," Recht says. ❖

KMK Law is located at One East Fourth Street Suite 1400 Cincinnati OH 45202.
For more information, visit www.kmklaw.com.