

Friday, April 2, 2010

OU and Cooley bring pre-law programs to underserved students

Leaders from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School and Oakland University are partnering with the American Bar Association's (ABA) Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) to bring their nationally recognized pre-law program to underserved Michigan college students this summer.

The first-ever of its kind to be offered in Michigan, CLEO's Sophomore Summer Institute will provide intensive, academic coursework to 25 Michigan undergraduate students at Cooley's Auburn Hills campus this June. Applications are currently being accepted **online**, with a submission deadline of Thursday, April 15.

The program aims to help disadvantaged groups build the skills and confidence they need to succeed in law school. It will be offered at no cost to the students, as CLEO, Cooley and OU will provide the support needed for the program.

"The Sophomore Summer Institute reflects CLEO's mission of diversifying the legal profession by expanding legal education opportunities to minority, low-income and disadvantaged groups," said CLEO Executive Director Cassandra Ogden. "The program ensures that the legal profession is diversified with underserved populations who, despite scarce resources, have a burning desire to overcome any obstacles and attend law school. And, to ultimately become attorneys who ardently work for and impact the social justice system. We are excited about partnering with Thomas M. Cooley Law School and Oakland University."

The 22-day program for students completing their sophomore year of undergraduate studies is designed to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to succeed on the Law School Admission Test and in law school. Students will participate in classes on logic and critical reasoning through classical philosophy and attend classes taught by Cooley faculty members in the areas of contracts, civil procedure, professional responsibility, legal writing, and appellate advocacy.

The capstone event of the program will be an oral argument conducted by a panel of Michigan Court of Appeals judges, led by Judge Cynthia D. Stephens. The students will review the briefs in the case, write a bench memorandum and orally argue the case themselves before panels of student judges, and then be the special guests of honor at the Court of Appeals argument.

Students in the program will receive a \$750 stipend to cover travel expenses and lost income from potential summer employment. Some students may be eligible for two academic credits. Up to ten of the 25 seats in the program will be available to OU students. Students will have no obligation to apply to or attend Cooley Law School.

"I speak from personal experience when I say that Cooley is genuinely committed to expanding the educational pipeline to the legal profession for these students and others like them," said Marilyn Kelly, Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, who will be a keynote speaker at the Sophomore Summer Institute along with former ABA President and Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer.

Ten bar associations have formally committed to fund career exploration luncheons throughout the program, including panel presentations from their members. These bar associations include the Arab American Bar Association, Association of Black Judges of Michigan, Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association, Federal Bar Association, Hispanic Bar Association of Michigan, Macomb County Bar Association, Oakland County Bar Association, D. Augustus Straker Bar Association, the Wolverine Bar Association and the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan.

"At a time when nearly two-thirds of all African American and half of all Hispanic and Mexican American applicants to law school are being totally shut-out from every law school they apply to for admission, programs like this one provide reason for hope that one day the legal profession will reflect the diversity of the clients we serve," said Cooley Associate Dean John Nussbaumer.

Nussbaumer will be taking a sabbatical this summer to direct the program, with the assistance of E. Christopher Johnson, Jr., Cooley professor and director of Cooley's Corporate Law and Finance LL.M. program.

SUMMARY

Thomas M. Cooley Law School and OU are partnering with the American Bar Association to bring a pre-law program to underserved students this summer.

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