

For Immediate Release
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Loyola Law School's Young Lawyers Program Receives ABA Diversity Award

Los Angeles --- Loyola Law School's Judge Stephen O'Neil Trial Advocacy Mentoring Program was awarded the 2009 American Bar Association Dean Henry J. Ramsey Jr. Diversity Award at the ABA's annual meeting last week in Chicago. The award is named in honor of the former dean of Howard University Law School known for his commitment to inclusiveness.

The Diversity Award recognizes excellence in activities that have contributed toward the achievement and advancement of women, minorities, persons with disabilities and persons of differing sexual orientation and gender identities, according to the ABA.

The honor is the second straight major ABA award for the student group. In 2008, the ABA presented the O'Neil program with the Judy M. Weightman Award for its outstanding contributions to underrepresented groups or public interest causes outside the law school.

Known as The Young Lawyers Program, the mentoring initiative was established in 2000 by Loyola's La Raza student group and Black Law Students Association. Advised by Professors Gary Williams and Brietta Clark, law students plan the program, recruit the high school students, teach the lessons, select the trial problem and coach the trial teams. The goal is to expose at-risk youth of color to the benefits of obtaining an advanced degree.

"Loyola is dedicated to providing opportunities for legal education to the poor, the underprivileged, women and minorities," said Williams. "The Young Lawyers Program, founded by Loyola's African American and Latino student organizations and staffed by students of all races, fulfills that mission by bringing inner-city high school students to Loyola's campus to teach them about the law, legal advocacy and the importance of a college education."

Each Thursday of the spring semester, Loyola Law students teach their protégés an array of lawyer skills: how to prepare witnesses, conduct direct and cross examination, handle evidence issues and present opening statements and closing arguments. The program culminates in a mock trial before LA Superior Court judges. This year, that group included the Hon. John Meigs '78, Hon. Terry Smerling and Hon. Alan B. Honeycutt.

The program is named in honor of the late Judge Stephen O'Neil of the LA County Superior Court. During the first two years of Young Lawyers, Judge O'Neil graciously donated his time and expertise by serving as judge for the mock trial.

About Loyola Law School Los Angeles

Located in downtown Los Angeles—a legal, financial and media capital—Loyola Law School is Home to prominent faculty, dedicated students and cutting-edge programs. Committed to legal ethics and the public interest, it has produced top attorneys for nearly a century. Please visit www.lls.edu for more information or contact Brian Costello, deputy director of communications, at 213.736.1444 or brian.costello@lls.edu.

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