

# The Pre-Law e-Newsletter from Pre-Professional Programs & Advising

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Monday, April 7, 2008 – Sunday, April 13, 2008

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## 1. MESSAGE FROM ANA L. DROSCOSKI, ESQ.

Many of you who will be entering law school in Fall 2008 have made inquiries regarding multiple seat deposits, as your final decision has yet to be made. Read below for more information regarding this issue. I hope that it helps you better negotiate this situation, should you face it. If you still have outstanding questions, be sure to make an appointment with me to discuss further.

To those who will be applying this upcoming Fall, please be sure to make an appointment with me to ensure that you are taking the appropriate steps and that your file is complete for a smooth application cycle.

To everyone, on April 10th, JHU alumni will speak about their current law school experiences. Try to attend, and get the inside scoop from your peers. Also, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Scalia will be speaking at the Lyric Opera House on April 24th. This is a very unique and great opportunity; try to take advantage of it. Read below for more information on both of these programs.

Finally, even if you do not think you have interest in criminal law, be sure to read the practitioner interview in this edition. The cases that Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi, Esq. tries are literally the type that shows like Law & Order base their storylines.

## 2. MULTIPLE SEAT DEPOSITS: SHOULD YOU HOLD MORE THAN ONE SPOT?

It is not unusual for applicants who can afford it to pay several seat deposits. This commonly occurs when an applicant is waitlisted at one preferred law school or has yet to hear from one preferred law school. Faced with a deadline, the applicant places a deposit at a law school they have been accepted to, but may not prefer, in order to secure a spot somewhere.

Generally, this is a reversible step. An applicant may not be bound to matriculate, but will likely forfeit their deposit(s) once placed. A "binding" seat deposit usually requires the applicant to sign a separate, specific agreement in addition to the regular seat deposit materials, as is the case with NYU School of Law.

Effective June 15, 2008, law schools will be privy to the names (and probably LSAC ID numbers) of those holding seats at more than one law school. Previously, law schools could determine that there were applicants with deposits at more than one school, but could not identify them individually.

Assuming placing multiple seat deposits is a reversible action, is it advisable?

There is no ethical reason preventing you from placing multiple deposits. Generally, however, there is the expectation by a law school that a deposit holder will eventually matriculate. Additionally, your contingently secured spot prevents a waitlisted - and potentially keenly interested - applicant from obtaining one at that time.

As a result, it is inadvisable to hold multiple seat deposits and delay your final decision absent good reason. To hold seats to allow more time to reach a decision when no additional, decisive criteria will be added for consideration is inadvisable. Eventually you will need to make up your mind. Some viable reasons for holding multiple seat deposits include:

You intend to visit the law schools in the very near future to aid in your decision making;

You are awaiting finance related outcomes, whether scholarship, work opportunities for a spouse, or housing and transportation costs; or

You otherwise have outstanding serious, conclusory issues to investigate.

If you are on the waitlist of or are waiting to hear from a preferred law school, contact both schools to thoroughly and honestly explain your situation. If you have not already, you may also consider submitting a letter of continued interest to the law school you have not heard from or have been waitlisted.

### **3. PRACTICE AREA FOCUS: CRIMINAL LAW**

Criminal law\* involves prosecution by the government of a person for an act that has been classified as a crime or public offense. Civil cases, on the other hand, involve individuals and organizations seeking to resolve legal disputes for private offenses. In a criminal case, the state, through a prosecutor, initiates the suit, while in a civil case the victim brings the suit. Persons convicted of a crime may be incarcerated, fined, or both. However, persons found liable in a civil case may only have to give up property or pay money, but are not incarcerated.

A "crime" is any act or omission (of an act) in violation of a public law prohibiting or commanding it. Though there are some common law crimes, most crimes in the United States are established by local, state, and federal governments. Criminal laws vary significantly from state to state. There is, however, a Model Penal Code (MPC) which serves as a good starting place to gain an understanding of the basic structure of criminal liability.

Crimes include both felonies (more serious offenses -- like murder or rape) and misdemeanors (less serious offenses -- like petty theft or jaywalking). Felonies are usually crimes punishable by imprisonment of a year or more, while misdemeanors are crimes punishable by less than a year. However, no act is a crime if it has not been previously established as such either by statute or common law. Recently, the list of Federal crimes dealing with activities extending beyond state boundaries or having special impact on federal operations, has grown. See Title 18.

All statutes describing criminal behavior can be broken down into their various elements. Most crimes (with the exception of strict-liability crimes) consist of two elements: an act, or "actus reus," and a mental state, or "mens rea". Prosecutors have to prove each and every element of the crime to yield a conviction. Furthermore, the prosecutor must persuade the jury or judge "beyond a reasonable doubt" of every fact necessary to constitute the crime charged. In civil cases, the plaintiff needs to show a defendant is liable only by a "preponderance of the evidence," or more than 50%.

\*[http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/index.php/Criminal\\_law](http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/index.php/Criminal_law).

### **4. PRACTITIONER INTERVIEW: ANNA-SIGGA NICOLAZZI, ESQ., PROSECUTOR**

Background & Bio

Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi, Esq., is a Bureau Chief in the Kings County (Brooklyn, N.Y.) District Attorney's Homicide Bureau.

The Homicide Bureau is responsible for prosecuting the majority of all homicides that occur in Brooklyn, N.Y. Ms. Nicolazzi's function is currently both that of a trial attorney and a supervisor. She specializes in multiple defendant (including multiple jury trials) and complex cases. As a supervisor, Ms. Nicolazzi helps to supervise the everyday functions of the Homicide Bureau, including office administration and other attorneys assigned to the bureau. She is often on call 24 hours a day to work with the police in the various aspects of homicide investigation.

Some of the cases\* Ms. Nicolazzi has tried include:

The Mark Fisher Case - Defendants Guica and Russo were convicted of killing Mark Fisher, a Connecticut college football player.

The Michael Sandy Case - Defendants Fortunato, Fox and Shurov were convicted of luring Mr. Sandy from an online gay chatroom to a secluded beach. While there, they attempted to rob him and chased him onto the Belt Parkway where he was hit by a car and killed. The case is most well known for being tried as a hate crimes (bias motivated crimes) case. All defendants were convicted of hate crimes – i.e., they targeted Mr. Sandy because he was gay.

The Ramona Moore Case – Defendants Hendrix and Pearson were convicted of sexually assaulting and torturing Hunter College student Ramona Moore and sexually assaulting another young woman who escaped and survived.

Ms. Nicolazzi's next scheduled trial is that of defendants Bostic, Ellis and Woods. They are charged with the murder of Police Officer Russell Timoshenko, killed last summer, and attempted murder for shooting his partner Police Officer Herman Yan. The defendants shot at the officers during a routine traffic stop. One was apprehended locally, and the other two fled to Pennsylvania where they were captured.

Ms. Nicolazzi has been in the Homicide Bureau for 6 years. She has not lost a homicide trial yet.

\*Articles available online on all of these cases

## Questions

Describe a day in the life of a Prosecutor:

I am typically in the office between 8 and 8:30am. The office is usually quiet until about 9am, so it is a great time of day to play catch-up and get some uninterrupted work done. I also try to read the various newspapers to see what is being reported about our cases. Between 9am and 10am attorneys on trial are usually scrambling with witness preparation and last minute details prior to being in court at 10am. If I am on trial, I am doing just that. If not, I am often helping other attorneys in the bureau with their cases or discussing various legal matters they will be confronted with that day. If I am not on trial, the balance of my day is a combination of phone calls and meetings with detectives concerning their work on homicides, office-type work on my own cases and helping colleagues that are on trial, including legal research, witness prep, obtaining missing documents, etc. The day usually ends between 6 to 8pm on average. If I am on trial, it is another story entirely. Once out of court, usually by 5pm, the office "work-day" begins. I prepare for the next day's testimony and address any outstanding legal issues well into the night. I usually try to leave the office by 10pm to 11pm and then may continue to work at home.

A plus of being a prosecutor is that the schedule varies. I think it is a good balance between work and being able to still "have a life." When I am not on trial, my hours are very reasonable. Also, there is a lot of vacation time given to you. I think I currently get between 6 to 7 weeks annually. Of course, the many public holidays add up too. The trials are what make the job exciting, so I don't mind the long hours during them. I am tired at the end of each one, but I usually have a break in between to relax and rejuvenate.

What initially attracted you to this field? What are some of the rewards of this area of law?

By the end of my first years of law school I knew I wanted to be a prosecutor. I loved the criminal law classes and thought it would be both exciting and rewarding. I was right. I did an internship with the Legal Aid Society to see what being a defense attorney would be like (mostly because I couldn't imagine doing such a thing). It was an invaluable experience for me. I grew to appreciate the importance of defense counsel, and it also reinforced for me that being a prosecutor was what I really wanted to do. Though defending is still not for me, I learned a lot about "the other side" and learned to value the important role they play in the criminal justice system.

There is a lot of personal satisfaction in winning a trial. But, I have to say, that is not the most rewarding part. It is the family and friends who have lost their loved ones that always have the greatest impact on me. They always keep me in check about what this type of work is really all about. Being a homicide prosecutor, you look at the cases clinically and matter-of-factly. That is important and necessary to continue to be effective and not burn out. But I think it is imperative to not lose the human aspect of what we do. The family and friends of victims that I interact with is what always reinforces that for me. At the end of the day, a human life was senselessly lost. It is important that the person/people responsible are held accountable. Bringing a defendant to justice does not bring back the victims, but it helps give most families a sense of closure. And, hopefully, a small amount of satisfaction that justice was served.

What are some of the downsides of this area of law?

Easily answered: money. You will not make the type of money as a prosecutor that you would in the private sector. I will say that after a few years the salaries go up. You can still be quite comfortable. Most people that I know who have left, leave because they need more money for their families, etc. They usually say that although they had to leave, being an Assistant District Attorney (ADA) is the best job they ever had. As for the salary, I will say this: I have always placed a premium on the fact that I get up every day knowing that I love my career. Although there are frustrating days, like with anything, I find most days rewarding. I think the combination of doing work that I think is important, the excitement of the trials, and the camaraderie shared amongst the attorneys together make up for the additional money I could make doing something else.

Do you have any advice for an undergraduate interested in pursuing this body of law?

Do as many internships as possible. Trying new fields, even ones you think you have no interest in, is the best way to get a real feel for the various types of legal work out there and helping yourself make an informed career choice.

#### Contact Information

If you would like to learn more about criminal law, or have additional questions for Ms. Nicolazzi, you may contact her directly via email at [nicolaza@brooklynda.org](mailto:nicolaza@brooklynda.org).

## 5. UPCOMING PRE-LAW MEETINGS AND PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

JHU Alumni Panel: Insider's Guide to Law School

Location: Maryland 110

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2008

Time: 5:15pm to 6:15pm

Description: Hopkins Alum Justin Chan '04, a 3L at Georgetown University Law Center, Peter Hwang '04, a 3L at American University, Washington College of Law, and Adriana M. Verleysen '04, a 2L University of Maryland School of Law, will discuss their experiences in preparing for and while attending law school.

Special Presentation by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia

Sponsored by the University of Baltimore

Location: Lyric Opera House, 140 W. Mt. Royal Ave.\*

Date: Thursday, April 24, 2008  
Time: 3:00pm

Description: Join others in Baltimore's legal community for the unique opportunity to hear U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia speak. Chief Judge Robert M. Bell of the Maryland Court of Appeals will introduce Justice Scalia.

For more information or to R.S.V.P, e-mail Mark Bell at [mkbell@ubalt.edu](mailto:mkbell@ubalt.edu) or call 410-837-4464.

\*Parking for attendees will be available in UB's Bolton Yard Lot and Maryland Avenue Garage

LSAT Administration for 2008  
Location: On campus, Hodson 110 - check with LSDAS for additional testing locations  
Date: Monday, June 16, 2008  
Time: Registration begins at 12:30pm - consult with LSDAS for all controlling details

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**STAFF IN THE OFFICE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS AND ADVISING**

**Ana L. Droscoski, J.D., Assistant Director, who advises Pre-Law students:**

Walk-ins: Monday 10:00am to 11:30am  
Appointments: Monday/Thursday 2:00pm to 4:00pm  
Wednesday 10:00am to 11:30am & 2:00pm to 3:00pm

**David Verrier, Ph.D., Director, who advises Pre-Health students:**

Walk-ins: Friday 10:00am to 12:00pm  
Appointments: Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday 1:00pm to 4:30pm

**Kirsten Kirby, M.S.Ed., Assistant Director, who advises Pre-Health students:**

Walk-ins: Tuesday/Thursday 10:00am to 12:00pm  
Appointments: Monday/Wednesday: 1:00pm to 4:00pm

**The Administrative Coordinators are available to answer questions and schedule appointments:**

**Lena Harding, Administrative Secretary, [lhardin7@jhu.edu](mailto:lhardin7@jhu.edu) 410-516-6743**

For students whose last name begins with A-G, contact Ms. Harding.

**Carolyn Mae Krause, Administrative Coordinator, [ckrause@jhu.edu](mailto:ckrause@jhu.edu) 410-516-6744**

For students whose your last name begins with H-O, contact Mrs. Krause.

**LaTonia Sanders, Administrative Coordinator, [ladytee@jhu.edu](mailto:ladytee@jhu.edu) 410-516-4140**

For students whose last name begins with P-Z, contact Mrs. Sanders.

**Angie Decker, Office Manager and Staff Supervisor, [decker@jhu.edu](mailto:decker@jhu.edu)**

Please feel free to use the resource library between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. everyday or visit our website <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/> for additional information.