SLDN Lobby Days?

by Abbey Hudson ’09

You should have received two e-mails from Student Services inviting you to attend SLDN Lobby Days, but may not have understood what that was about. Hopefully I can provide a little explanation.

Each year, the SLDN (Servicemembers Legal Defense Network) lobbies against “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” in Washington, D.C. Last year, the law school funded a small group of students to participate in the effort. CLS is doing the same this year. Why is the law school involved you ask? That is a great question with a long answer. . . .

“In 1995, Congress passed the first Solomon Amendment, denying schools that barred military recruiters from campus any funds from the Department of Defense. Defense Department regulations proposed in 2000 and formally adopted in 2002 exponentially toughened the law by interpreting it to require revocation of federal grants to an entire university if only one of the university’s subdivisions (its law school, for example) runs afoul of the law. In 2005, Congress amended the law to explicitly state that military recruiters must be given equal access to that provided other recruiters.”*

The Solomon Amendment poses a problem for law schools like CLS because in order to comply with the regulation, the law school must violate its own non-discrimination policy, and allow the U.S. Military, an organization that participates in the effort. CLS is passionate about, whether you are interested in experiencing lobbying firsthand or you just believe that everyone who wants to should have the right to serve their country, head down to D.C. for a wonderful experience. Roundtrip transportation and two nights in a hotel will be provided, so you have no excuse not to go. Hope to see you there! **

“In response to the dishonorable but potent threat posed by the Solomon Amendment, AALS amended its nondiscrimination policy in 1997 to excuse noncompliance with AALS Bylaw 6-4 (the bylaw mandating non-discrimination based on sexual orientation) to the extent the law imposed severe punishment for barring military recruitment. This excusal was contingent upon a law school's satisfactory completion, each year, of a "duty to ameliorate" the effects of the military discrimination they now unwillingly hosted. Specifically, the AALS Executive Committee asked schools to publicly express their disapproval of the discrimination against gay men, lesbians and bisexuals, and to take affirmative measures to provide a safe and protective atmosphere for sexual minority students. (See 'Amelioration,' Memo from AALS Deputy Director Bari Burke to Deans of Member and Fee-Paid Law Schools, 14 May 1998).” *

The SLDN Lobby trip makes up a large part of CLS’s amelioration efforts. So whether gay rights is an issue you are passionate about, whether you are interested in experiencing lobbying firsthand or you just believe that everyone who wants to should have the right to serve their country, head down to D.C. for a wonderful experience. Roundtrip transportation and two nights in a hotel will be provided, so you have no excuse not to go. Hope to see you there!**

* http://www.law.georgetown.edu/solomon/solomon.html
** To participate, you need to apply to Student Services by 5 pm Thursday. Contact them at Student_Services@law.columbia.edu or stop in to see them on the 5th floor of Big Warren.
The full Student Senate typically meets every other Monday at 9:10 PM in JGH 105. Meetings are generally open to the entire student body. Our next meeting will take place Monday, February 25, 2008.

Our most recent meeting took place last Monday. Minutes from that meeting are pending approval, but will be posted at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/law/senate/meetings/021108/ soon. There were several major items of business, the biggest of which was consideration of the JG Receptionist Resolution, which passed by a vote of 36 ayes, 2 nays, and 3 abstentions. The resolution (full text below) and an accompanying Senate report was submitted to the administration over the weekend. Please do check the minutes for details on other important developments of which you should be aware.

Text of Final Resolution

Resolution to Express Support for the Employment of a Receptionist in the Lobby of Jerome Greene Hall

Sponsors: Dan Y. Shin ’09 and Kathrin Schwesinger ’09

WHEREAS Columbia Law School is a world-class institution that continuously attracts a large number of visitors, ranging from distinguished practitioners and academics to prospective students;

WHEREAS many commonly-sought destinations within the various buildings that comprise Columbia Law School, as well as many commonly-used facilities within Jerome Greene Hall itself, are relatively difficult to find without guidance;

WHEREAS Columbia Law School currently does not offer its visitors any greeting of welcome or offer of guidance upon their entry into Jerome Greene Hall;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

THAT it is the sense of the Columbia Law School Student Senate that the employment of a receptionist to be stationed in the lobby of Jerome Greene Hall, at least during peak visiting hours, would be a valuable and worthwhile addition to the law school environment and enhance its profile in the eyes of visitors; and

THAT the Columbia Law School Student Senate expresses its support of zealous administration efforts to create this position, should it not prove cost-prohibitive.
by Senator Jessica Isokawa ’10

When Student Services—that impressively monolithic entity that supports student organizations and journals, facilitates student housing issues, and lifts law student morale with cookies—needed someone to take the helm last semester, Carol Liebman was the perfect candidate. By accepting this challenge, Professor Liebman wound up with two full time jobs last semester: serving as acting dean of students and filling her usual role as a clinical professor of law.

Liebman’s wide diversity of legal experiences suggest that she’s the person for any job. Liebman joined the Columbia faculty as a clinical professor in 1991 but even before heading to law school, had ten years of diverse work experience. Originally from Kentucky, she graduated from Wellesley College and following graduation, after which she worked with Action for Children’s Television, a group that advocates for better quality children’s television with fewer commercials. She also spent time with the Lawyer’s Military Defense Committee, which financed civilian lawyers to go to Vietnam during the war in order to represent soldiers who were being court martialed. Liebman already had a Masters in political science under her belt, when she received her JD from Boston University in 1975.

A brief stint in private practice (11 months and 16 days to be exact) convinced Liebman that this was not the career path for her. She left this job to become an in-house lawyer for the Massachusetts Department of Corrections in Boston from 1976 to 1979, which she cites as one of her favorite jobs. After Dukakis lost the gubernatorial election in 1979, however, Liebman decided she no longer wished to be a lawyer for prisons, and became a clinical professor at Boston College.

Liebman was always attracted to clinical work and reminisces that as a law student, she loved being in a clinic and it was the one experience that convinced her that attending law school wasn’t a terrible mistake. Currently, 10 students can take Professor Liebman’s clinic every semester and she specializes in negotiation and mediation.

When Dean Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin went on maternity leave at the beginning of the 2007 academic year, Liebman aptly filled her shoes for a semester. Despite all her work experience, Liebman pointed out that being a cub scout den mother might have been the best preparation for overseeing the well-being, academic concerns, and administrative problems of 1000 students. Student Services supervises the 70 law school student organizations, in addition to managing large events like orientation. Some of last semester’s accomplishments included working closely with the Student Senate and BLSA to coordinate the Liq-or-Treat Halloween event and implementing the new ID system with the rest of the University.

Reflecting on the difference between the type of law school that she supervised last semester and her own law school experience, Liebman notes how law school today is a much more consumer-friendly experience and there are greater academic opportunities for students to study issues like international law. While she could see herself going to law school again, if given the choice, she feels that the choices law school graduates face now are much less attractive. She says: “I think our students forget there are other places aside from big law firms to be lawyers and maybe even government will soon be attractive again.” Her advice to law students is to pursue whatever they feel is fun, as long as it’s “remotely responsible.”

Liebman summarizes her experience with Student Services and the staff as an “absolute blast,” and more than ever, encourages students to take advantage of Student Services resources. She always admired Columbia Law School administrators, but her first-hand experience with them gives her a newfound appreciation for the extremely committed group who are truly dedicated to helping students in a variety of capacities. She also noted that Student Services is a much more complicated office than it was when her husband, William S. Beinecke Professor of Law Lance Liebman, was dean of the law school.

This semester, Professor Liebman is working on scholarship in the field of conflict resolution in medical disclosure of errors and bioethics mediation. From mid-March to April she’ll be on leave in Florence as a visiting scholar and in the meantime, she says she’s focusing on losing the last five pounds that she gained from having cookies constantly outside her door in the Student Services office. (Another major accomplishment last semester was Student Services doubling the number of cookies available to students.)

Her parting words of advice to current law students? Go to the Metropolitan Opera, go to a Major League Baseball game, and take advantage of the hugely committed Student Services team.
This Week at CLS
February 18 - 24, 2008

Monday
• Just another manic Monday.

Tuesday
• ACS: “Gitmo Tuesday: No Day is Super When You're Detained Indefinitely.” 12:20 - 1:10 PM; JG 107. Lunch served.
• Amnesty International: “Dinner and a Movie - Invisible Children.” 7:00 - 8:30 PM; JG 104.

Wednesday
• “Labor Law and the 2008 election.” 12:00 - 1:05 PM; JG 105.
• Career Services: “The Associate’s Life: Navigating the Formal and Informal Environment of a Law Firm.” Senior associates from Paul Weiss, Debevoise & Plimpton, Willkie, and Patterson Belknap will provide advice and insight on life as an Associate. 5:00 - 6:00 PM; JG Annex.

Thursday
• Social Justice Initiatives: “Community Lawyering in Puerto Rico: Promoting Empowerment and Self Help,” Myrta Morales-Cruz. 5:00 - 7:00 PM; JG Annex. Dinner served.

Friday, Saturday & Sunday
• All quiet on the weekend front.

Event information is taken from the Advisor, a Student Services e-publication. To have your event listed, follow the link below and submit the on-line form. These must be submitted by 10 am on Thursday, the week BEFORE your event.  http://www.law.columbia.edu/current_student/studentorgs_abc/studentorgevent/eventform.