CT Appellate Court hears two cases at School of Law

By AVA HIGHLAND
News Editor

The Connecticut Appellate Court heard two cases at the Quinnipiac School of Law on Oct. 10 as part of their "On Circuit" program. The program allows students to hear real court cases and interact with the arguing lawyers.

The program began in 1996 and has since heard cases at over 20 high schools and colleges across the state.

"Each year, the court selects a school at which to hear arguments, with the goal of educating students about the role and responsibilities of the appellate system through this interactive and engaging real-life experience," according to the Connecticut Appellate Court website.

In its first year, the program visited Quinnipiac, back when it was still a college. Last week was the fourth time the court visited the university.

The presiding judges, Melanie Cradle, Dawne Westbrook and Robin L. Wilson, heard one criminal and one civil case.

Cradle noted that the "On Circuit" program is "a unique educational opportunity for the students."

In each hearing, there was 40 minutes of oral argument — 20 minutes for each side — followed by a 20-minute question and answer segment between the lawyers and students present in the courtroom. Each attorney representing the appellant also gave a brief response. The final verdict on the cases is not shared during these hearings.

The criminal case State v. Stanley Velazquez out of the Bridgeport Judicial District was heard first.

"At issue is whether information contained within the four corners of an affidavit established probable cause for issuance of a search warrant," a press release for the hearings stated. "Another issue is whether the trial court improperly relied on evidence outside the four corners of an affidavit and made clearly erroneous factual findings."

John Gulash, the attorney representing the appellant, Stanley Velazquez, gave his oral argument first, followed by Timothy Surgue, the assistant state's attorney representing the appellee, State of Connecticut.

For a large part of their arguments, they looked at the language used in the warrant and determined what it meant to be "physically observed."

"It's not a matter of tricking an officer into using precise language," Gulash argued.

Surgue's argument had a strong focus on the second issue of the case and the reliability of the evidence used.

"We have an extremely compelling showing of reliability," Surgue said.

The second was a civil case, Annette Afonso v. Isaiah Torres, out of the Waterbury Judicial District regarding a dog bite.

"At issue is whether the trial court properly found there was no genuine issue of material fact that the defendant is not the 'keeper' of the dog," the press release explained. "Another issue is whether the defendant, as property owner, owed a duty of care to the plaintiff pedestrian."

The attorney representing the appellant, Annette Afonso, was Brenden Nelligan who argued Ashely Noel, the attorney representing the appellee, Isaiah Torres.

The arguments for the case focused heavily on language, looking to determine the definitions and differences of owner and keeper in regards to the dog as well as the property the incident occurred on.

The "landowner is responsible for conditions on property," Nelligan argued.

Noel opposed his claims.

"The plaintiff's interpretation of the term 'possession' or 'control' is simply too narrow," Noel said.

After their arguments, the presiding judges went into recess and the court adjourned.

During the Q&A portion of each hearing the arguing attorneys provided law students with advice for their intended career — all four noted the importance of exposing themselves to different areas of law.

"Have an open mind, expose yourself to different environments," Surgue said.

The attorneys also shared guidance in how to approach challenging questions from judges while presenting an argument.

"You always want to take a moment to think," Noel said. "Be frank if you don't know the answer."

Through both the arguments and Q&A, students studying and working to have a career in law gained insight into appellate courts as well as lessons to carry with them.

'What's Your Story?' hosts ESPN's Jay Harris

By NATHAN ROJAS
Staff Writer

Nick Pietruszkiewicz, professor of journalism and director of the sports communication program, featured ESPN Sportscaster Jay Harris in his talk show "What's Your Story?," Thursday, Oct. 9.

"What's Your Story?" gathers journalists from around the country to discuss topics ranging from the art of storytelling to the state of journalism. Pietruszkiewicz hosts the series to give "the opportunity for students to interact with the people who do the jobs that they hope to do," he said. This is the series' second year.

Harris shared he became interested in journalism in the 11th grade.

"I took a career aptitude test and scored well in the area of interpersonal skills and looked at the jobs, journalist may have been the third one listed. I said, 'That's what I want to do,'" Harris said.

He started his career in radio, working for a small radio station in Norfolk, Virginia. During his time there Harris filed several stories for the Sheridan Broadcasting Network — now American Urban Radio Networks — before working there as the local news anchor.

Eventually Harris found himself at ESPN in 2003. Harris declined its first two offers, not wanting to relocate his family, but also because of his lack of experience reporting for sports.

"It took me a year to realize that I didn't have to be a sports encyclopedia… to realize that you're doing the exact same thing you did when you were in Pittsburgh. Instead of talking about the school board, now you can talk about the Steelers and Pirates," Harris said.

Harris does not believe that his career began with one particular moment.

"I don't even think it's a moment. I think it's several moments, if you want to be honest. Because if it weren't for different things happening…I don't get to be here," Harris said.

Harris did not start out as an expert. When he first started, Harris believed "it was just bad," referring to his early work.

Over time, Harris came to realize that he was actually better than most other people around him.

"Even while I thought I was terrible, I was better than most of the other people in my class," Harris said.

Throughout his career, Harris has learned many valuable lessons.

"One of the most important things, being a good teammate. I always tell young folks at the end of the day, don't be a d-ck," Harris said. "This business is small and reputations, people remember reputations."

Another lesson Harris learned is "time management, because you can't miss your slide."

Additionally, Harris advised students to "just use bullet points and not try to memorize your entire stand up when going to a package," he said.

Several students in attendance were curious about times in Harris' career when he had failed.

"I could either spend time worrying about failing, or I could spend my time preparing and doing the best that I can," Harris said.

Harris found that among journalists today, they've developed misconceptions about the field.

"You gotta learn how to write. I don't care what kind of social media, digital age we're in, you got to know the fundamentals of journalism to be a better journalist," he said.

Harris has also found that modern journalists focus on the wrong things, caring more about their brand.

"Those are the mistakes that I see young folks making, caring about the wrong things," he said.

For aspiring journalists, Harris advises "the more authentic you are, the more believable you are, the more trustworthy you become, the more comfortable you are, the better you are."

Residents able to earn micro-credentials from The Grove

By MADELYN DURKEE
Staff Writer

In its second year of operation, The Grove residence hall is launching a micro credential integrated with the year-long project to award students and mentors completing the program.

Micro credentials are "something that proves that (students) learned a specific skill, a specific competency," Tan Gurpinar, assistant professor of business analytics & information systems and advisor of the living learning experiences Leadership Council, said.

On Tuesday, Oct. 21, is the official launch for the Foundations in Project Based Collaborative Research and Consulting micro credential offered to students and mentors.

"I realized the students are gaining some really valuable skills, and we are asking them to do something above and beyond what is typical for a residential experience at Quinnipiac," Christine Voth, coordinator of academic integrity and accountability, said.

Faculty and students both expressed interest in adding to the program and recognizing students for their work in The Grove.

"We did a survey at the end of last year to see how we can improve the Grove experience for the next year, and when I talked to the students about the survey they mentioned that they would like to have a microcredential," Gulpinar said.

The new micro credential is a recognition of the students' skills and effort.

The micro-credential will recognize the work students are already doing to complete the Grove's year-long project. The official launch will discuss the additional steps students need to take and how the micro-credential ties into experiential learning.

Aadil Latif, a sophomore health science major, is looking forward to the launch and "to see what it can offer me, not only for my resume, but for me in general," he said.

Students who complete the program will receive an online certificate which will appear on their transcript. Micro-credentials are great resume builders and may attract employers on online platforms, like LinkedIn.

"(Last year) I developed a micro credential for the Office of Academic Integrity and Accountability and seeing the process I thought; we can absolutely do something like this for The Grove," Voth said.

The micro-credential is designed to give students a competitive edge as they continue their education and enter the field in their chosen career.

Gurpinar meets with some of the largest employers in Connecticut every few months as part of his work with the School of Business.

"From them we know that they really look into micro credentials or other certificates that prove competency rather than just participation," he said.

For their required year-long project, students in The Grove choose a theme and are divided into groups. It consists of research coupled with experiential learning to create a final product at the end of the year.

"(Students) work to develop topics that they'll be researching and experiencing throughout the whole year," Voth said. "We wrote it so that the mentors had the opportunity as well, because their work is very important and unique in its own way to what the students are doing."

While the new micro-credential is designed for students and mentors in The Grove, other interested students have the ability to participate.

The existing Applied Research micro credential is an option for students in The Grove who go above and beyond, as well as other interested students.

"There is also room for others to join, especially for the research micro-credential, we are always open to have students join in," Gurpinar said.

The new micro-credential will give students a unique opportunity to apply the skills they learn while completing their chosen project.

As a student last year, Latif reflected on the skills he gained from The Grove project.

"I learned how to work in a group, I learned how to put together a poster and learned how to collect survey data," he said. This year, he has returned to The Grove as a mentor.

Last year was the first-year students lived in The Grove. According to Latif, implementation of the program was disorganized and led to miscommunication between mentors. Additionally, many incoming students did not understand the scope of the work required.

This year, faculty and mentors knew what to expect. Students are already feeling more prepared and are on track to create well rounded final projects. Voth feels that the timing is perfect for students to take the next step and introduce the new micro-credential.

"We have lots of great students that do outstanding things, and I think it will be a great way to give something back," Gurpinar said.

He says it is possible for the program to expand in the future.

"I hope that we will have a nice blueprint with The Grove experience, and then we can see if there is demand, and if we can roll it out to other LLC's as well," Gurpinar said.