Inquiries Investigated: Meet the Law March '18
BY AMBERLY LERNER AND CLAIRE HEALY

Last month, March 27th, students gathered in the CHC Events Hall to meet and discuss their questions with UMass alumni involved with the legal profession after graduation. “Meet the Law” is an event that takes place each semester that allows students to receive advice grounded in real experiences while getting a sense of which tangible path from UMass to follow.

Not all attorneys remain attorneys. Alumnus Robert McGovern (‘05) moved on to report, write, and edit for The Boston Herald. Because of his experience with and knowledge of the legal system, he writes articles on matters such as the notorious NFL controversy, Deflategate.

“The public sees deflated footballs... but in reality, the ramifications of that decision affect bread makers in New York and machinists in Albany, because it set precedent in the second circuit that can affect any union activity across the state.”

Through McGovern’s experience, he helped a “Meet the Law” participant parse out the difference between intellectual property and patent law — with the latter, you need to have an in-depth understanding of what you or your client is trying to patent, as well as the field it belongs in, in order to be most effective.

Another alumnus, John Geenty Jr. (‘84), helps clients with mental health issues to navigate the legal system while protecting them from neglect or abuse. Geenty has spent time working for private practices, handling divorce cases and many jury trials. He currently works for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Within this agency, Geenty handles legal matters for individuals who are intellectually disabled, including guardianship and protective actions.

Geenty explained to inquiring students that between ages 18 and 59, people who are disabled are legally protected from neglect or abuse. He also described to students the difficulties of trying to limit guardianship as much as possible, so that his clients can branch out while retaining their agency.

Along with inquiries about the alumni’s individual experiences, students also asked about law school and the law field in general. Questions included: Should I take time off between undergraduate and law school? What’s in the bar exam? What would be your top three tips to give to a new law student? There were many more, but with the wide collection of alumni to answer, it was a successful night indeed.

For those who weren’t able to ask their own questions, the Commonwealth Honors College and the Pre-Law Advising Office will bring another group of alumni for another “Meet the Law” event. Keep your calendars open!

Photography by Kimberly Mazejka.