

LAW WEEK COLORADO

Changes Imminent For Legal Education

By **Meg Satrom, Esq.**
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NEARLY 3,000 educators from law schools throughout the country earlier this month attended the annual meeting of the Association of American Law Schools in Washington, D.C. The attendees included **Bill Sullivan** and **Marnee Baker**, the director and manager, respectively, of Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers, and DU Sturm College of Law Dean **Martin Katz**.

In light of recent surveys showing graduates are unhappy with their educations and are finding fewer legal jobs upon graduating, the group of legal educators, academics, attorneys and law school administrators focused much of their discussions on changing the legal profession. Multiple sessions were specifically tailored to the legal education system, a topic that mirrors the mission of Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers, or ETL, a project of the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, which is housed at DU.

"Part of the reason that we have the problem we have is that law firms no longer have the economic capacity to take on the training of young associates as they once did," said **Rebecca Love Kourlis**, the Institute's executive director.

"From my perspective, what Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers is about is at least a partial answer to many of the concerns that were raised at [the conference]," Kourlis said. "Specifically, the notion is that all three of these apprenticeships, knowledge, practical skills and professional identity, should be included and can be included in every course."

Kourlis said the team representing DU came away hopeful for a shift in legal education.



Rebecca Love Kourlis, the executive director of IAALS | LAW WEEK FILE PHOTO

"Their takeaway from the event was that the mood was ripe for new ideas," Kourlis said. "There was a level of recognition that things have to change that has not been present in the past. I think [attendees of the event] are all looking for directions and ideas."

Kourlis, Sullivan and Baker have already provided an abundance of ideas on their website, which currently

provides six course examples where professors make sure students engage in real-life circumstances or simulated circumstances that would represent what they'd encounter in practice. The goal is to integrate practical skills into every course, so that students graduate law school with the hands-on as well as theoretical knowledge that practicing law requires.

"I'd like to think that if ETL and other similar efforts are successful, that students will be happier about their law school experience; that they will feel more student centered; more directed towards what they need to know when they get out. I'd like for the effort to contribute to a happier profession, and a more balanced set of law school graduates." •

— Meg Satrom, Esq., Meg@CircuitMedia.com