



Seton Hall University School of Law, Newark, New Jersey

[By Akbar Ali]

Seton Hall University School of Law is New Jersey's premier law school. Located in downtown Newark, about 20 minutes from Manhattan, it is the only private law school in the state. From the time it admitted its first entering class of 72 students in 1951, Seton Hall's law school has been building on its reputation for unique and ethics-based law programs.

The school was founded in 1951 by Miriam T. Rooney, who holds the notable distinction of being the first woman law school dean in American history. Its current dean, Patrick E. Hobbs, strives to maintain a curriculum and an environment that emphasize the core values of "creativity, justice, and compassion." Because the undergraduate school was founded by a bishop and named after his aunt, Sister Elizabeth Ann Seton (the first American-born saint), Seton centers its ideals around what it refers to as "values that emanate from the Catholic tradition." These core values have, in turn, given rise to a pronounced emphasis on ethics, religious law, and the delicate relationship between religion and the law itself.

The law university, however, has broadened its area of specialization in recent times to nationally recognized programs in health and pharmaceutical law, intellectual property law and related legal entitlements, public interest and policy, social justice, and

international and corporate law. In addition to the basic curriculum, Seton provides the opportunity for law students to participate in real-world legal issues through its Center for Social Justice, which allows students to provide pro bono legal services to more than 1,000 Newark residents annually. Among the many clinics available are those specializing in human rights and immigration, housing, juvenile justice, and consumer law.

U.S. News & World Report ranked Seton among the top 100 law schools in the nation in both 2007 and 2008, and Seton's health law program was ranked fourth overall. The average LSAT score for its full-time entering class of 2006 was 160. The average GPA was 3.40. Among candidates taking the bar exam for the first time in 2006, Seton students achieved an average passage rate of nearly 90%, significantly exceeding the New York state average of 79%. The university also boasts of an extraordinary 97% of graduates finding employment within nine months of graduation.

Students and faculty at the law school recently made headlines for their publication of "the Guantanamo reports," which revealed that a majority of the detainees being held as "enemy combatants" in Guantanamo Bay had committed no acts of hostility against the United States and posed little, if any, threat to others. Supervisor of the school's Civil Litigation Clinic Professor Baher Azmy had also won the release of one of the detainees, Murat Kurnaz, who had been imprisoned at Guantanamo for nearly five years and whom he had been representing since 2004.

Many of Seton's alumni have gone on to become U.S. attorneys and head law firms all over the country. Former faculty members of the university include former chairman of the House Judiciary Committee during the Nixon impeachment hearings Peter W. Rodino and current Supreme Court justice Samuel Alito.