

## **Pro Bono Legal Services Program for Small Businesses offered by the Duquesne University Palumbo-Donahue School of Business Small Business Development Center Achieves Resounding Success**

Pittsburgh, PA (April 2023) - Being able to afford legal services has been a challenge for small businesses, especially in the early stages of development. Rich Longo, Director of the Duquesne University Palumbo-Donahue School of Business Small Business Development Center (SBDC), indicated *“when legal advice is most often needed the cash flow position of the small business is insufficient to pay the retail rates associated with legal services in the open market”*. Realizing the need and accepting the challenge, Mr. Longo decided to reach out to law firms interested in supporting the small business community. In conjunction with the Duquesne University School of Law, a coordinated effort was executed to establish a pro bono program.

Fast forward now for about two years and the results *“have been fantastic”* said Grace Orsati, Director of Externships and Pro Bono Program, Assistant Professor of Clinical Legal Education, Director-Wills and Healthcare Decisions Clinic at Duquesne University. Efforts to date have culminated in having several of the most prestigious law firms participating in the program. *“Being able to give back and serve the small business community is very important to us”* said Josh Vaughn, Shareholder at Littler & Associates. Cody Madison, Associate at Dentons, said, *“helping the small business community, especially during early-stage development is vital to long-term success, and being part of that is important to us”*.

Since its inception, the program has served over twenty-five small businesses here in the Western, PA region. Second and third law students coordinate the program with the Duquesne University SBDC by acting as the liaisons between the business and the law firm. Payton McAninch, a law student said *“It has been an incredible learning experience by being able to not only work with the law firm but also being able to apply classroom to real-world experience”*.

*“Proof is in the pudding”*, said Longo who indicated the many testimonials thus far generated from the small businesses served. A recognition breakfast was held on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, to say thank you for the credible work being done for the small business community. One client whose testimonial summed it up simply, *“If it were not for this pro bono legal services program I would not be successfully getting my business off the ground”*.

Participants of the event and their firms include (left to right):

Payton Sinkbell (Doctorate Student - Thomas R. Kline School of Law)  
Grace Orsatti (Director of Externships & Pro Bono Program – Thomas R. Kline School of Law)  
Eric Davis (Attorney - Elliot & Davis, PC)  
Rich Longo (Director – Duquesne University Small Business Development Center)  
Calum Mackay (Associate Attorney - Atencio Hall)  
Paul Atencio (Managing Member - Atencio Hall)  
Karen Donovan (Sr. Associate Dean – Palumbo-Donahue School of Business)  
Joshua Vaughn (Shareholder - Littler & Associates)  
Gregory Weingart (Member - Eckert Seamans)  
Cody Madison (Associate - Dentons)



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(Not Pictured)

Larry Lebowitz (Shareholder - Dentons)

Robert Sovesky (Associate - K&L Gates)

*Our mission here at the Duquesne University SBDC is to offer no-cost, confidential consulting services and training workshops in southwestern Pennsylvania to empower entrepreneurs and small business owners with the knowledge they need to start, grow, and prosper. Our vision is to turn dreams into sustainable businesses. We believe in delivering proven services that contribute to long-term success. We foster an entrepreneurial culture, which will enhance our clients' reputation through community outreach; student and faculty engagement; experiential learning; and student recruitment. Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.*

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