



## PLUS Program: An opportunity to find diverse voices

**M**aine Law's PreLaw Undergraduate Scholars (PLUS) Program, initiated by a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the Law School Admission Council, welcomed a diverse cohort of 25 college undergraduates for a four-week, summer immersion program in Portland this summer. Scholars came together from as far away as California and Michigan and as near as Portland to share their worldviews and their desires to be leaders in their communities. Students originally from Iraq, Jamaica, and Lebanon joined those from rural Maine to explore their voices, their futures as leaders, and their shared interest in the study of law.

The third annual PLUS Program launched on Memorial Day and ran through June 21, 2018. The program is designed primarily for college students of color, immigrants, students challenged by poverty, first-generation students, and students from rural areas, reflecting the ultimate goal of bringing more diversity to the legal profession in Maine and around the country. Maine Law also hopes to inspire young people from rural communities to consider law as a career.

Taught by Maine Law professors and staff, PLUS scholars enter a rigorous curriculum of foundational lawyering and professionalism skills, criminal law, administrative law, constitutional law, and immigration law. Scholars are introduced to simulations on negotiating through plea-bargaining, advocating orally before an appellate court and an administrative agency, and debating pressing issues in immigration law.

Beyond the classroom, scholars are encouraged to explore and develop their professional personas through resume writing, networking, and interviewing, as well as visits to courthouses, law firms, the State House, and other institutions.

### **Among this summer's highlights:**

- > Scholars engaged in mock interviews with lawyers from the community.
- > Judge Peter Cary hosted scholars for a morning at the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Maine, during which scholars observed hearings and then met with the judge for a tour of his chambers and participated in a Q & A session with him.

- > Judge Keith Powers '73 and Justice Roland Cole '68 hosted the scholars in criminal court. Scholars observed in-custody initial appearances, during which Justice Cole, the prosecutor, and the lawyer of the day met with the scholars to explain the proceedings and answer their questions.
- > Judges Rick Lawrence and Keith Powers '73 hosted the scholars in Lewiston District Court to observe protection from abuse hearings. Judge Powers met with the scholars in chambers to answer their questions about the proceedings. Scholars were also able to observe a trial during this visit.
- > Scholars participated in a field trip to Augusta and toured the State House. The tour was led by Maine's Secretary of State, Matthew Dunlap, and included a meeting with Marion Hylan Barr, a policy analyst for the Legislature.
- > Chief Justice Leigh Saufley '80 hosted the scholars at the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, where they observed an appellate oral argument. At the conclusion of the oral argument, the two attorneys spent time answering the scholars' questions.
- > Scholars attended a networking reception hosted by Pine Tree Legal Assistance, which provides legal services to individuals in Maine who are eligible to receive legal aid.
- > Scholars participated in an informal discussion with Greta Lozada 3L, who worked with refugees for several weeks at the Laredo Detention Center in Texas.
- > Scholars were introduced to Chris Poulos '16, who delivered a keynote speech about his experience as a homeless teenager and an incarcerated person serving a three-year sentence in federal prison for a drug-related conviction. Poulos explained his journey from incarceration to licensure as an attorney and his work on encouraging successful transitions from incarceration to the workplace.

We are grateful to the Maine legal community for its enthusiastic support of this program. Having concluded the funded grant period, Maine Law PLUS relies on your contributions to sustain this vital pipeline effort, the purpose of which is to promote diversity and inclusion of Maine's bench and bar.