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Department of Fair Employment and Housing Wins State Bar Education Pipeline Award

Elk Grove – The State Bar of California has conferred its 2013 Education Pipeline Award to the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) Educational Partnerships that train a new generation of civil rights attorneys and investigators at California educational institutions.

The partnerships offer clinics and internship programs that provide supervised lawyering, mediation and investigative experience to a diverse group of students interested in or preparing to enter the legal field. The educational partners include: UC Irvine School of Law; UC Davis School of Law; California State University Bakersfield School of Business and Public Administration; College of the Canyons; and Rio Hondo College.

The DFEH also produced a series of civil rights videos, organized a speakers' bureau with the California Employment Lawyers Association, created educational programs on social media, and disseminated DVDs, lesson plans, quizzes, and other educational material to every California public high school. In addition to working on actual cases, such as individual and class actions, the programs also create a pipeline to State jobs.

Since the award, Pepperdine University School of Law | Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution and UC San Diego Extension have also joined the DFEH Educational Partnerships.

The Education Pipeline Award was established in 2008 by the State Bar of California Board of Governors to recognize outstanding efforts of law-related educational programs that train and support students to become interested in the judicial system and pursue careers in law.

“As the first State agency to receive this prestigious award, I am delighted that the Bar has recognized the good work of the Department, our educational partners, fellows and interns,” said DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng.

“I am very proud that the Department is being honored by the State Bar for its innovative partnerships that help prepare future civil rights lawyers and investigators for California,” said Anna Caballero, Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency.

Erwin Chemerinsky, Dean and Distinguished Law Professor at UC Irvine, stated, "I am thrilled that DFEH was recognized with this award. It is so well deserved. For example, its program with UCI Law School has provided invaluable experience to our students and recent graduates."

Kevin Johnson, Dean of the UC Davis Law School, added that "legal education needs more practical programs like the DFEH Educational Partnerships." The UC Irvine and Davis partnerships were the catalysts for the successful DFEH Civil Rights Fellowship Program, in which selected law graduates work for the Department after graduation as paid legal fellows, and some are ultimately hired as permanent staff counsel.

Horace Mitchell, President of California State University at Bakersfield, observed that the program has been a "success from the outset" because it is "designed to introduce students in the Masters in Public Administration program to public sector employment and issues in employment discrimination."

Dianne Van Hook, Chancellor of College of the Canyons, a community college, praised its DFEH partnership for establishing "a mutually beneficial relationship that provides unique opportunities for our students to learn by doing." One of its clinic alumni was later hired as an investigator for the Department.

Teresa Dreyfuss, President of Rio Hondo College, another community college, applauded the program's "openness to students from varied backgrounds, hands-on training, and dedication to paving legal and paralegal career paths."

Toni Jaramilla, a Century City attorney who chairs the California Employment Lawyers Association, commended the Department for making training videos and organizing "a speakers' bureau with volunteer attorneys from CELA, who visited public high schools throughout the State of California."

The award will be formally presented to the DFEH and all its educational partners at the State Bar Annual Meeting Diversity Awards Reception on Saturday, Oct. 12, 2013, at the Marriott Hotel in San Jose. Featured remarks will be presented by California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye and Dr. Clarence Jones, who served as counsel and speech writer for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence. For more information, visit the Department's Web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.