



New Loan Forgiveness Program

By *Emily Zaborniak*

There are few ways around it; law school *is* expensive. For many graduates, future, expendable salaries will help cover the student loan debt that amounts during their years of study; however, some law professionals who decide on public interest positions forfeit the lucrative wages of a private sector career. As a result, they have difficulty managing the costly, monthly payments that are expected when the bills arrive.

Thanks to progressive measures by the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, financial security may be achieved for all of its students entering the legal field. In a recent UC Berkeley Press Release by Janet Gilmore, officials at the School of Law (Boalt Hall) announced the implementation of a loan forgiveness program, in which the university will repay student loan debt, up to \$100,000, for those who qualify.

In order to receive repayment assistance, graduates must make substantial use of their law degrees in a government or public interest job that pays \$58,000 or less. Alumni can also benefit from this program by having a portion of their loans repaid if they meet similar standards of eligibility.

Boalt Hall Dean, Christopher Edley, and others are responsible for the successful lobbying efforts.

“California’s top public law school and its graduates should be vitally engaged in the critical issues facing the state and the nation,” said Edley. “Our students should have the freedom to follow their dreams after graduation, whether those involve litigating intellectual property rights at a leading law firm or corporation or providing legal services to underserved communities at a nonprofit organization.”

The new overhaul of the Loan Repayment Assistance Program, or LRAP, at Boalt Hall is considered one of the most giving in the country. Such generosity is made possible by a combination of professional degree fees paid by Boalt Hall students, as well as sizeable alumni donations generated via the School of Law’s ongoing capital campaign.

For students, the relief is greatly appreciated, as the necessity for financial support increases every year. In Gilmore’s press release, she outlines the current expenses for Boalt Hall students. Per academic year, California residents pay \$25, 476.60 in fees and spend of an average of \$20, 851 for books, supplies, and living expenses. Nonresident students can expect to pay an additional \$12, 245 in tuition fees.

Second-year law student, Heather McGhee, speaks to the issue, “The lawyers who became the great public servants and advocates of previous generations were able to do so in part because they had little or no debts. They could take risks with outside-the-system advocacy; they could take middle



class public sector or public interest jobs. I think that the Financial Aid Committee and Dean Edley looked into the future and saw that unless Boalt and other leading schools change the system, the public will suffer tremendously.”

Many consider the investment of a top legal education priceless, and Boalt Hall graduates can anticipate great success. Over half of them will go into private practice jobs where salaries start in the six digit figures; but now, with the new loan forgiveness program, opportunities and choices will flourish with the option to make a massive impact for a modest salary.