

# Charleen Roloff

## 2019 commencement speaker on behalf of LLM graduates at UConn Law

Thank you, Professor Chill.

Dear professors, classmates, students, alumni, families and friends of graduating class 2019. It's a great honor to deliver this year's graduation speech on behalf of the LLM students. But first things first, congratulations Class of 2019!

When I look out into the audience, I see proud faces. Not only proud family members and friends, but especially proud graduates, and rightly so, for we have much reason to be proud. Studying law -- one hell of a ride. As one of the LLM students, I can confirm that ride is tough no matter where in the world you study.

I remember very well my first week here in Hartford. It was just orientation week and I was finding my feet, but there was one remarkable thing: almost everybody advised us do your readings right away. I thought it won't be that bad.

Surprise! It was that bad. But after a few weeks you get used to the average 250 pages of cases you have to go through every single week. But I promise there will always be this one class where you did not manage to read the very last case and the professor will pick on you. Not that I would speak from experience.

The good news is someone will always help you out of your dilemma. Either the professor, or one of your fellow students, and this is especially what made studying here at UConn Law so special. As foreign students, we learned not only a completely new legal system and a new approach to the law, we also learned how to see law from another angle. And this is what distinguishes an average lawyer from an outstanding lawyer, to be able to examine a legal problem from every possible perspective.

It has been challenging, but as we can see now we managed it successfully. It turns out after all these challenges of writing exams, papers, doing the clinic work and negotiations, the last and almost biggest challenge we had to face was how to bubble sheets work. I admit I had my problems with that.

But obviously there are moments when no one can help you, and in which one skill becomes crucial and that is mental strength. Mental strength is something that especially law students are almost required to learn. We learn exactly how to pull through, or how to keep our heads up high after a devastating exam and how to make sacrifices from time to time in order to reach our final goal: becoming a lawyer one day.

The Roman philosopher Seneca knew: "*per aspera ad astra.*" Through hardship, to the stars. Therefore, it's not very surprising that law students are always a little bit separate from all the other students. We even have our own little campus and we tend to live to live in our own small universe but we mustn't forget we are part of a bigger picture.

As lawyers, we have a duty to share our knowledge with society and to help people and support people whenever they seek our help. In times like these, where everything goes faster than ever before, population, environmental damage, and poverty but also inventions, technology and wealth, it is our job to keep track on the developments of the law too.

Law, by definition, acts most of the time from the retrospective, it can only find a solution after the legal problem already arose. It is, therefore, more important than ever that we start thinking outside the box and this is now our opportunity to make a difference.

Speaking of thinking outside the box, I could not imagine a better ending to sum up than with a quote from Connecticut's own Mark Twain, who once said, "a person with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds."

Thank you all for the wonderful time here at UConn Law. Thank you professors, classmates and students, and congratulations Class of 2019 -- it's been a blast.