



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: James Alfini

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we interview leaders in a number of professions about questions that affect us all.

James Alfini is the President of the South Texas College of Law in Houston, Texas. His areas of expertise include alternative dispute resolution, constitutional law, mediation, and judicial ethics.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: The adoption of a Strategic Plan. We have learned to think strategically about the future.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: The financial downturn has had a significant impact on our endowment, affecting our operating revenues. It has also had an impact on fundraising.

Q: How will globalization (e.g. the emergence of new global powers, such as China and India) affect your professional area in the near term?

A: We have made a concerted effort to provide our students with study abroad opportunities to introduce them to the global business and legal environment.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: Technological changes have made litigation very challenging (eg., e-discovery). Technology has also had a big impact on transactional work.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: The biggest challenge is that of being able to maintain a sense of professionalism with the increasing emphasis on the "bottom line." The professions have become nothing more than businesses.

In the legal and medical professions, for example, there is much less concern with the needs of the client or the patient. Therefore, our biggest challenge in legal education is to bring our profession back to an environment where the individual lawyer sees himself or herself as a professional first and foremost.