

Nonprofit Program Seeks to Mentor Next Generation of Women Lawyers

Women leaders in technology law are trying to tackle a pipeline problem by hosting a two-day program to introduce 30 high school students and graduates to legal career opportunities in the Bay Area.

By Xiumei Dong

What does it take to become a successful female lawyer?

ChIPs Network Inc., a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization focused on advancing and connecting women in technology, law and policy, **recently hosted a two-day program** to introduce 30 high school stu-

dents and graduates to women lawyers and judges in the Bay Area.

During the two-day affair, teenagers had a chance to go inside the courtroom, visit leading technology companies and spend time at a global law firm to interact with women who offered insights into the inner workings of the legal profession.

“Over the years, I had a quite a few high school girls referred to me, whether through a parent or a teacher, wanting to learn more about careers in law,” said ChIPs co-founder and CEO Mallun Yen, herself a co-founder and COO of business-to-business software community SaaStr.



At Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe 30 high schoolers from around the Bay Area attended the ChIPs ALI (Advocacy, Leadership, Innovation) program.



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Orrick partner Annette Hurst talks about her early legal career taking on a case centered around video game cheat device called the Game Genie.



ChIPs ALI program for high school girls interested in the law.



Jennifer Reyes is one of 30 high schoolers from around the Bay Area who attended the ChIPs ALI program.



Stella Robinson is one of 30 high schoolers from around the Bay Area who attended the ChIPs ALI program.



Left to right: Orrick partners Amanda Galton, Melinda Haag and Annette Hurst.



Orrick partner Amanda Galton tells students about her days in the Peace Corps.



Soon-to-be sophomore Georgia Wluka takes notes during a Q&A ChIPs panel at Orrick.

Recent high school graduate Lauren Tankeh asks a question at a panel discussion at Orrick.



ChIPs, shorthand for Chiefs in Intellectual Property, was originally founded in 2005 by seven female IP leaders from major technology companies in Silicon Valley as a forum where women IP lawyers could meet with one another. It now has more than 3,000 members and nine regional chapters in the U.S. and abroad.

As a former chief in-house IP counsel at Cisco Systems Inc., Yen said she was once the only lawyer that most young women would know. As a result, she and other ChIPs members launched the Advocacy, Leadership and Innovation program, or ALI, to provide the opportunities that allow young women to have a real-world look at what lawyers actually do on a daily basis.

“The purpose is not only to give them a first-hand look at cutting-edge cases like *Waymo v. Uber* or visits to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to learn about patents,” she said. “But [it’s] equally important to expose them to the many brilliant women leaders in our profession.”

At a panel hosted earlier this week by **Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe** in San Francisco, eight female lawyers with diverse backgrounds and practices shared their personal stories about their career paths, as well as the challenges and opportunities they encountered along the way.

Former U.S. Attorney Melinda Haag, who has been a trial lawyer for over three decades and once **served as head of litigation** at Orrick, told the participants that the legal industry’s attitude toward female lawyers has improved over the years, as more women have been elevated to leadership positions.

“I did see a huge shift in the years that I was a lawyer from 1987 to 2010, when I took this role [as U.S. attorney], I think that we came a long way,” Haag said.

“They treated me with respect and I treated them with respect back, and it worked, but it didn’t come without a lot of years of evolution.”

Amanda Galton, co-leader of Orrick’s global technology companies group, shared her experience working with high-tech companies and entrepreneurs that are reinventing the way many people live. Galton said she serves as both a “psychologist and lawyer” for such clients, helping to smooth the way for them to build and grow faster.

When asked by some participants whether a technical degree is needed for an IP practice, Annette Hurst, a high-profile IP litigator and member of Orrick’s board of directors, said, “If I had to do it all over again, I would get a technical degree. At the end of the day, it would help me go farther.”

Amy Van Zant, another IP litigator **who joined Orrick in 2015** from Covington & Burling, has an educational background in history and philosophy. She told the students that it is still possible to practice IP law without a technical degree, but it’s important to hone the skill that can explain complex technologies in plain language. Van Zant noted that jobs such as being a waitress in a restaurant can help students prepare for a career in Big Law, since much of a lawyer’s work is to serve clients, while presumably keeping them happy.

Other pieces of advice discussed by the Orrick panel included mentorship and work-life balance. Those who participated agreed on the most important lesson—for young women to follow their passion and do what they love to do.

Isabel DeCastro, a 17-year-old headed to college at the University of California, Santa Cruz, said her biggest takeaway from the presentation at Orrick is “to do something you love, to find something you love, to reach out.”

This is the third year that ChIPs has been running its program in the Bay Area. The group of young women hosted by the nonprofit got to experience firsthand interactions with in-house lawyers from robotics and artificial intelligence startup Anki, Dropbox Inc. and Salesforce.com Inc. The ChIPs group has also met with U.S. District Judge Susan Illston of the Northern District of California and saw litigators in action as they conducted mock arguments of IP cases in U.S. Magistrate Judge Sallie Kim’s courtroom.

The program ended with a law school panel discussion at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. ChIPs also announced this week the launch of a new \$5,000 scholarship **named after Rachel Krevans**, a veteran IP litigator at Morrison & Foerster **who died last year at 60**. The scholarship is for women law students interested in pursuing a career in IP law.

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