

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First graduates of Houston-Calgary law school partnership earn dual JDs with degree emphasis in energy law

International Energy Lawyers Program trains next generation of lawyers to handle complex energy and natural resources issues on both sides of the border.

June 2, 2015 – The energy sector is a primary linchpin of the global economy, and its impacts on security, development and the environment are profound. The International Energy Lawyers Program (IELP) is an innovative, dual-degree collaboration between the University of Houston Law Center and the University of Calgary law school. Its principal goal is to train lawyers capable of handling complex global legal issues in the energy and affiliated sectors.

Andrea James, Julia Gill and Barrett Schitka are the first graduates of the program. They participated in the UHLC May convocation at Hofheinz Pavilion and were joined for the occasion by Ian Holloway, dean of the University of Calgary Faculty of Law.

Established in 2012, the IELP allows students to earn both Canadian and American law degrees in four years. Upon completion of the program, students can apply for admission to the bars in both the U.S. and Canada. In addition to the regular degree studies, the IELP is structured to facilitate internships in the energy industry.

Leonard M. Baynes, dean of the UH Law Center, noted the similarities between Houston and Calgary.

“They’re both dynamic cities, they’re both global cities, and they’re both cities known for energy and oil and gas,” he said.

Holloway agreed.

“The obvious thing that we share is the energy focus to the two economies. But really what underlies that is the spirit of optimism and dynamism. Calgary and Houston are the two most dynamic legal markets in North America right now. And the fact that our two law schools have

come together reflects in a way and embodies that dynamism that characterizes the two cities, which really are in so many ways sister cities,” he said.

With one graduating “class” under its belt, the IELP is poised to build on the momentum for the future, both deans said.

“We’re looking at other opportunities for us to expand the relationship— conferences, workshops, potentially internships in both regions and other opportunities. It really is going to be a major partnership for us as we move forward,” Baynes said.

“Clearly, the students have a warm welcome in both law schools,” Holloway said. “Employers like the fact that we’re working together, because we’re producing something that’s real and relevant for the future. It really is a wonderful partnership.”

All three graduates said the IELP has given them unparalleled advantages and opportunities as they embark on their careers.

“I was interested in doing energy and natural resource law, so it made a lot of sense to join this program,” said Gill, who plans to take the Texas bar in July. “I’d lived in Houston before. I liked the city, and I could see myself here.”

She will return to Canada in September to begin working for DLA Piper Canada LLP, a multinational law firm, where she will practice energy law.

For James, the prospect of seeing the world-famous Houston Rodeo was also a big draw.

“In Calgary, we have the Stampede, which is a big deal, but Texas rodeo is kind of legendary,” she said. “I thought it would be really neat to come down, watch rodeo, meet cowboys and learn law.”

“I own a really good pair of boots now,” added James, who is applying for a post graduate fellowship at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. She plans eventually to return to Calgary to begin her legal career.

“I think the biggest advantage about participating in the IELP program is the opportunities that it provides,” Schitka said. “The opportunity to learn from multiple legal systems, to interact

with different people from both markets— it just gives you a wider variety of opportunities that are so important to starting your legal career.”

Schitka enjoyed his experience in Houston so much that he is staying here to work in the oil and gas transactions group of Latham and Watkins.

“I find the city is very welcoming. It has a very entrepreneurial spirit. You can really make it what you want. You can forge your path for going forward. It’s a city where you don’t have to come from historic roots or have lots of connections, and going forward you can really make something of yourself,” he said.

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About the University of Houston

The [University of Houston](#) is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized by The Princeton Review as one of the nation's best colleges for undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city, UH serves more than 40,900 students in the most ethnically and culturally diverse region in the country.

About the University of Houston Law Center

The [University of Houston Law Center](#) is the leading law school in the nation's fourth-largest city. Founded in 1947, it is a top-tier institution awarding Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees. The Law Center is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.

About University of Calgary Faculty of Law

The [Faculty of Law at the University of Calgary](#) is grounded in the youthful and vibrant culture of one of North America's most dynamic cities. We connect the teaching and research of some of the brightest legal scholars with community leaders and innovators, which places us at the forefront of innovation in Canadian legal education.

About the International Energy Lawyers Program

Established in 2012, the International Energy Lawyers Program (IELP) is a joint JD program between the University of Houston Law Center and the University of Calgary Faculty of Law that allows students to earn both Canadian and American law degrees in four years. Upon program completion, students are able to apply for admission to the bars in both Canada and the US, and with skills and knowledge in energy law, will be highly employable across North America. In addition to the regular degree studies, the IELP is structured to facilitate internships in the energy industry.