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First winners of Roy Snell Award for compliance writing announced

By Adam Turteltaub

Adam Turteltaub (adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org) is Chief Engagement & Strategy Officer at SCCE & HCCA.

Since 2008, the Mitchell Hamline School of Law's Health Law Institute has offered both law students and healthcare professionals an opportunity to develop "a deep understanding and real-life experience" in the field of healthcare law, including compliance.^[1] The school even has a program that provides the necessary coursework to help their students prepare for the Certified in Healthcare Compliance exam.

In 2019, the Health Law Institute embarked upon a new initiative. With support from the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics & Health Care Compliance Association (SCCE & HCCA), the school launched the annual Roy Snell Health Care Regulatory and Compliance Writing Competition.^[2] The competition was named in honor of SCCE & HCCA founder and former CEO Roy Snell.

Students were given a complex fact pattern of potentially serious wrongdoing. They were then challenged with writing two memos as compliance officers. The first memo was for the general counsel, outlining what had occurred and the potential compliance issues. The second memo was written to the fictional company's head of sales, with the instruction to share it with the sales team.

"The competition was created because we saw an opportunity to help students hone an especially valuable but oftentimes overlooked skill in their law school education: the ability to effectively communicate to a specific reader or audience," said Barbara Colombo, director of the Health Care Compliance Certification Program and professor of law at Mitchell Hamline. "Far too often written communication is not tailored to a particular reader and is instead drafted based in a format that the writer is most comfortable with. The essence of the competition was to test a student's ability to draft user-centered communication."

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