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### Cardozo Women on the Rise in Real Estate

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

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## CARDOZO WOMEN ON THE RISE IN REAL ESTATE



March 21, 2019

Three alumna real estate attorneys offered a penthouse view of their field: from high-end Las Vegas deals to navigating a male-dominated practice. Dean Melanie Leslie moderated the March 18 panel, which was co-sponsored by the Center for Real Estate Law & Policy and the Cardozo Real Estate Association.

Risa C. Letowsky '02, Partner at Duval & Stachenfeld LLP, developed her passion for real estate by watching her father work on construction sites. She said she turned down offers in other areas of law until she got her top choice of real estate.

“I knew where I wanted to end up,” she said.

Letowsky deals with many aspects of real estate law, representing both tenants and landlords. She has taken on a variety of clients, including Wynn Resorts in Las Vegas.

Letowsky said she has noticed some gender bias in Real Estate law. She said since the more senior positions in the field are male, they

### RELATED NEWS

August 26, 2019

[Cardozo Named One of Billboard's Top Music Law Schools for 2019 \(/news/cardozo-named-one-billboards-top-music-law-schools-2019\)](#)

Billboard named Cardozo School of Law one of the top law schools in the country for training lawyers in the music industry. Cardozo is ranked among law schools around the nation, including Harvard and University of California, Berkley.

August 16, 2019

[Cardozo Welcomes the J.D. Class of 2022 \(/news/cardozo-welcomes-jd-class-2022\)](#)

Integrity, generosity, grit and joy were the guiding themes of Dean Melanie Leslie's welcome to the Class of 2022 for their first day of orientation.

July 8, 2019

[Class of 2019 Gives Back to Cardozo \(/news/class-2019-gives-back-cardozo\)](#)

Cardozo's 3L Class Gift is an annual tradition at the Law School. Led

are often more comfortable taking the junior males to lunch and becoming their mentors or "sponsors."

"I really had to fight," said Letowsky. "Back then it was very male dominated."

Pam Swidler '07 also offered advice on how to navigate the field.

"To be a really good lawyer, you have to understand the business side," Swidler said. She encouraged students to mention specific deals in interviews.

Swidler is the Global Head of Real Estate Transactions & Special Counsel at WeWork, New York City's largest private tenant.

Dean Leslie discussed the difference between in-house and firm with the panelists.

Swidler said that at a firm there's a larger range of clients. "It's really a matter of are you the client or are you servicing clients?" Her projects have included Columbia University and the MTA.

Dean Leslie agreed: "Starting out in government doesn't preclude you from going to the private sector."

Laura Mehl Sugarman '09, Partner at Holland & Knight, took the public to private path. Her previous projects include the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation and co-op conversions.

Sugarman participated in the Bet Tzedek Clinic while she was at Cardozo and said many of her friends from the clinic became clients.

"I fell in love with this group of people and I fell in love with real estate," she said. "If a person is in a position to help you, don't be afraid to use it."

by a student committee, these individuals dedicate their efforts to enhancing engagement and fundraising efforts among classmates, friends and family in our community.

May 29, 2019

[Cardozo Hosts 41st Commencement \(/news/cardozo-hosts-41st-commencement\)](#)

A star-studded line-up kicked off Cardozo's 41th Commencement Exercises. Graduates received J.D. and LL.M. degrees at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall on May 28.

April 12, 2019

[Randall Rothschild '97 Talks Real Estate, Law and Business \(/news/randall-rothschild-97-talks-real-estate-law-and-business\)](#)

Dean Melanie Leslie interviewed Randall Rothschild '97 on April 9 as part of the *Pathways* speaker series. Rothschild discussed how Cardozo prepared him for a career in the real estate industry.

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