



Rochelle Blocka (JD'15) presents to Dean's Forum attendees.

Dean's forum explores the evolution of legal services and legal education

By **Debora Senger**

Over the past three years, the Dean's Forum has met three times to explore access-to-justice related issues. The forum is the result of a partnership formed between the Ministry of Justice and the College of Law. The two teamed up in 2013 to provide stakeholders in the justice system a Saskatchewan-based forum to discuss ongoing justice-related issues.

Since the inception of the forum, the Ministry of Justice has played a key role in its development and coordination, namely Assistant Deputy Minister Glen Gardner and his team from the Justice Innovation Branch. In addition, the Ministry has provided funding for research purposes.

The Dean's Forum participants and the college recognized that the unique involvement of students created a meaningful contribution to the overall project. Accordingly, the college approved the award of academic credit to students doing research to support the 2015 forum.

The third meeting of the forum was held on March 12, 2015 with many of the same attendees as prior forums. Participants included judges from the Court of Appeal and Provincial Court, representatives from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice (including Kevin Fenwick Q.C., Deputy

Minister and Deputy Attorney General, and Glen Gardner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Justice Innovation), the Law Society of Saskatchewan, the Canadian Bar Association, and other justice-related organizations in the province. In addition, student representatives from the Law Students' Association, Aboriginal Law Students' Association, and Pro Bono Students, and faculty and staff from the college attended.

This year, the two themes for the Dean's Forum were:

- **Sharing the Field:** Exploring the evolution of legal services, changing roles of lawyers, and creating space for non-lawyer professionals; and,
- **Looking Inward:** How can the law school program and community contribute meaningfully to more "accessible justice"?

In order to identify themes for the 2015 forum, Co-Facilitators Brea Lowenberger, Access to Justice Coordinator, College of Law, and Janelle Anderson, Associate Lawyer, WMCZ Lawyers, organized two working groups in collaboration and with mentorship from the Dean's Forum Steering Committee. In addition, the pair planned and coordinated the Dean's Forum day in collaboration with the Dean's Forum Steering Committee.



Dean's Forum instructors Brea Lowenberger (BA'09; JD'14), Janelle Anderson (BA'11; JD'14), and student participants with Acting Dean Beth Bilson at the third Dean's Forum on March 12, 2015.

Professor Michaela Keet, who has been involved with the project in an advisor role since the beginning said the following of the project: "It's a unique opportunity to shape a policy development multi-stakeholder process; students engage with high level government officials, judges, and leaders in the province's justice system; and research and suggestions can have an impact on decision-makers in this arena."

Keet added that it will ultimately "teach students how to define policy objectives in the Access to Justice arena, and to engage the people that matter – on the ground and in positions with decision-making power."

Once again deemed an overwhelming success by Dean's Forum attendees, "planning for a spring session of the forum is already underway" said Acting Dean Beth Bilson.

Bilson shares Keet's thought that "the forum has had an equally transformative impact on students, forum participants and stakeholders alike."