

The American College of Employee Benefits Counsel

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Washington D.C. – The American College of Employee Benefits Counsel (ACEBC®) has named Nathan Hensley from the University of Chicago Law School and Alexander (Alec) Sewall from the University of Cincinnati College of Law as the winners of the College’s 2024 Student Writing Competition Awards. Mr. Hensley won the 2024 Sidney M. Perlstadt Memorial Award for his paper entitled “Pleading Prohibited Practices: Clarifying the Pleading Standard for Prohibited-Transactions Complaints Under ERISA § 406.” Mr. Sewall’s winning entry entitled “Is a Normal Transaction a Prohibited Transaction? Prohibited Service Transactions in Retirement Plan Administration: Navigating Circuit Splits and Policy under ERISA” won the 2024 Brian J. Dougherty Memorial Award.

Frances King Quick, Chair of the Student Writing Competition Committee, presented the awards at the College’s 24th Annual Induction Ceremony held on Saturday, September 14, 2024, in Washington, D.C. at the National Portrait Gallery & Smithsonian American Art Museum in the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard.

The ACEBC® Student Writing Competition Committee deemed three additional student papers as worthy of the Honorable Mention designation in the Student Writing Competition. Kelsey Roberts, a 2024 Juris Doctorate graduate from the University of Chicago Law School, received Honorable Mention for her paper entitled “The Uncertain Future of ERISA Section 502(a)(2) Arbitration.” Halim Nurdin, a 2024 Juris Doctorate graduate from Drexel University Thomas R. Kline School of Law, received Honorable Mention for his paper entitled “An Ongoing Mental Health Epidemic: The Need for Stronger Mental Health Parity Laws in the United States.” Kasey Lee, a 2024 Juris Doctorate graduate from the Fordham University School of Law, received Honorable Mention for her paper entitled “The “Meaningful Benchmark” Standard as Applied to ERISA’s Duty of Prudence.” ACEBC® is a not-for-profit organization whose mission statement is: “Fostering excellence in the practice of employee benefits law and advancing public understanding of employee benefits.” The College advances its mission by encouraging the study and development of employee benefits laws and of significant legal and social policy issues impacting the regulation and management of pension, retirement, group health, welfare, and disability plans. It pursues those goals by initiating professional discussions and high level symposiums of significant issues, offering a searchable database of Fellows who are willing to serve as expert witnesses and/or mediators, cosponsoring continuing legal education programs, and recognizing the achievements of distinguished employee benefits attorneys.

In addition to its national law student writing competitions to encourage legal scholarship in this evolving area of law, the ACEBC® also sponsors:

- a law student outreach mentoring program,
- a Simplification Award to inspire ideas to simplify the regulation of employee benefit plans, and
- the Annual Ellen A. (Nell) Hennessy Moot Court Competition in partnership with The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law, addressing cutting edge employee benefits issues.

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