

Tech law graduate garners State Bar Award

BY KELI JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

Richard Anthony Baker, a Texas Tech Law School graduate, received high honors June 13 when he was presented the State Bar of Texas Legal Professionalism Award.

Erin Brockovich, the inspiration behind the Oscar-winning film by that name, presented the award to Baker in Dallas.

The award is granted to the top law student in Texas who furthers the administration of justice, enhances professional responsibility and provides service to the public.

"It was a great honor to receive this award from someone so famous," Baker said.

Kay Fletcher, assistant dean

of the Tech School of Law, said nominations of candidates are made based on contributions to the law school and promotion of ideals of professionalism.

Law schools in Texas can nominate individuals, and a panel decides on one person from each school, narrowing the field to five finalists.

"Richard was one of five finalists for the award. The other contenders came from Texas Wesleyan, SMU, UT and St. Mary's University," Fletcher said.

Baker said The State Bar Association was looking for an individual who was well-rounded and involved in several extracurricular activities and community service projects.

Kimberly Houston, a senior representative of the State Bar of Texas for Tech School of Law and vice chairwoman of Law Student Division of the State Bar of Texas, and Tina Tuccelli, the student representative for Texas Young Lawyers, nominated Baker for the award.

"Richard is highly admired among the faculty and staff at Tech, and he has been phenomenal with the student

body as well," Houston said.

In May, he received a doctorate of jurisprudence and a master's in public administration.

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Richard Baker
TECH LAW GRADUATE

Tech also offered Baker a scholarship, he said.

"I was on various committees including Student First, as the law school representative;

president of the Black Law Students Association; representative on the dean search committee; and I organized poetry readings for Black History Month," Baker said.

He said his experience of growing up in inner-city neighborhoods in California has been the motivation to complete law school to serve the impoverished and disenfranchised communities.

Baker said he intends to remain in Texas and practice public interest law and said he hopes to eventually provide free legal service to juvenile delinquents.

"Communities are in fear of crime from this group, so if you can help these kids, you help eliminate the problems in the community," Baker said.