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STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT GLOBAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

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Jessica Guerrucci—*Reporter*

As a part of Southern's Physics Colloquium, students got the chance to learn and engage in discussion regarding intellectual property.

On Wednesday, Feb. 20, the physics department hosted their first colloquium of the semester, calling it

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“Global Intellectual Property Protection.” John H. Mutchler, a partner of Murtha Cullina’s business and finance department and a member of the intellectual property practice group was invited to speak with the students.

While some students had prior knowledge about what global intellectual property protection was, Mutchler, who said he has been practicing law for 12 years now, was introducing a new concept to many.

“We look at intellectual property as kind of a holistic area for business. There’s the basic IP as we call it, in the patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets, both the enforcement and prosecution,” said Mutchler.

With intellectual property being a new work or invention that one can apply for a patent, trademark, or copyright for exclusive rights, it was relevant to students, especially physics majors such as Kenneth Jimenez, who said he has an inventive mind.

“I think it was interesting. Throughout the whole thing I was wondering what would I invent someday, like how that process would be, so it kind of opened my mind,” said Jimenez.

Binlin Wu, an assistant physics professor who also put the event together, said it was an opportunity for students to learn about a career path they may have been unaware of, but also that it is an important topic.

“The students are involved in some research and they are doing projects, and if those results could be commercialized, this is an opportunity for them to learn the process, especially those related to patent and copyright ideas.

Mutchler explained to students the application process for getting patents and trademarks, and how all of them are different.

As for patents, Mutchler said there are two kinds, provisional and non-provisional. Tyler Vander Vos, a physics major, said that part of the presentation stood out to him.

“The whole application process seemed really interesting, I didn’t know there were two kinds of patents, the patents are protected differently than the copyrights, it’s all very interesting.”

Mutchler also talked with students about trademarks, which he said in his PowerPoint are a symbol or phrase used to identify a manufacturer or seller as the source of its products or services.

“When obtaining a trademark, you want it to be distinctive. It can be distinguished from other trademarks and logos, and it can’t be generic or descriptive. It has to be suggestive or completely arbitrary,” said Mutchler.

Mutchler used Nike as an example and said when people see the Nike ‘swoosh’, they have confidence it is a good product, so they obtain a trademark so that no one can use their logo and make money off

it.

Wu, who restarted the physics colloquium series last semester, said Mutchler is one of three speakers who students will hear from this semester. While most of them are physics related, he said they are trying to include other topics as well.

Though most of the talks will be centered around STEM, Mutchler said intellectual property is relevant to everyone on campus.

"One of my spiels is that intellectual property is everywhere," said Mutchler. "If you run your own business and you want to protect yourself from competition, then you need to know how to protect, and what it is that is protected, and to keep you out of trouble for infringement against someone else and lose your business," he said.

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