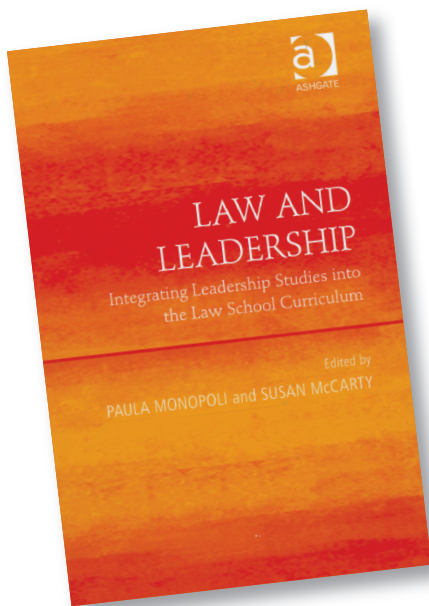


SCHOLARSHIP



Professor Paula Monopoli is founding director of the Women, Leadership and Equality Program



**I**n the 113th Congress, there are 128 lawyers in the House and 45 lawyers in the Senate. Half of America’s Presidents studied or practiced law before becoming the leader of the free world.

Now type “lawyer jokes” into Google and browse the some 19 million results. That’s the paradox.

While the American public holds lawyers in only slightly higher esteem than used car salesmen, lawyers are tapped time and time again to take on leadership roles. Not just in politics, but to run multinational corporations, nonprofits, and everything in between.

With the precedent set, now the question becomes: Are lawyers good leaders? It probably depends on whom you ask. However, the better question might be: Are lawyers getting enough exposure to leadership studies?

Paula Monopoli, professor of law and founding director of the Women, Leadership and Equality Program, finds that her colleagues both in and outside the academy are

becoming more conscious of these questions of leadership. In fact, many UM Carey Law faculty and alumni contributed to the new book, *Law and Leadership: Integrating Leadership Studies into the Law School Curriculum*, co-edited by Monopoli and UM Carey Law managing research fellow Susan McCarty.

“American law schools have come under significant scrutiny in the last several years in terms of what their utility is, whether they are structured properly, what value they add to society, and what we give to our students,” Monopoli observes. “I think it’s very important as part of that re-examination of the role of law schools to be able to articulate what it is that we add in terms of social value.”

In her essay “An Argument for Leadership Education in Law Schools,” Diane Hoffman, professor of law and director of the Law and Health Care Program, outlines two types of leadership roles that lawyers may assume. The first role requires more traditional skills such as

teamwork, effective public speaking and writing, and strategic planning, while the second is broader, with skills such as honesty, integrity, and the ability to put one's own needs aside for the greater good.

Avery Blank '11, a Rose Zetzer Fellow in the Women, Leadership and Equality Program and a contributor to *Law and Leadership*, says that the emphasis on women and leadership was what attracted her to UM Carey Law. "I had not seen any such program at any other law school," she recalls. But after participating in the Foundations of Leadership: Theory and Praxis course offered as a part of UM Carey Law's Leadership, Ethics and Democracy (LEAD) Initiative course, she firmly believes that there is a place for leadership in the law school curriculum. "The study of leadership helps to identify your strengths and weaknesses," she writes in her essay. "Leadership theory can also teach you more about yourself and your relationships with others."

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—Paula Monopoli

Monopoli created the Women, Leadership and Equality Program a decade ago with a generous grant from the Marjorie Cook Foundation, with the purpose of generating new understandings of gender and leadership in law students. Today the program continues to wrestle with issues not only related to women but to all lawyers.

"Leadership includes the ability to persuade others to embrace your ideas and to act on them. And that's the nexus between law and leadership," she says. "We teach students the art of persuasion the very first year of law school. The essence of 'thinking like a lawyer' is learning how to make sound legal arguments and convince a neutral decision-maker like a judge to adopt your position. That's one explanation for why so many leaders happen to be lawyers." ■

## LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD FOR WOMEN IN LAW

While Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In* recently articulated the now-familiar argument that women can rise through the ranks if they assert what its subtitle calls "the will to lead," Paula Monopoli, who leads UM Carey Law's Women, Leadership and Equality Program, paints a more complex picture of women and leadership.

Monopoli says that clashes between workplace culture and caregiving responsibilities are still significant obstacles to women's advancement in the law.

"Work/family balance is a profound impediment to assuming leadership," says Monopoli. "Women work a double-shift, still providing a disproportionate share of the caregiving at home. That makes it difficult for women with children or elderly parents to make the kind of time commitment that formal leadership roles in law demand. Altering that cultural reality is going to happen much more slowly than we thought."

The first of its kind in the country, and funded by a grant from the Marjorie Cook Foundation, the program's primary mission is to train women law students to help make that change happen—and happen more quickly. The program consists of a two-course curriculum and students chosen to participate—both men and women—are designated as Rose Zetzer Fellows (honoring the first woman to become a member of the Maryland State Bar Association). After completing a semester immersed in reading theory and social science research on challenges that women face in rising to positions of leadership, participants engage in a semester-long workshop emphasizing skill development.

"The applied workshop takes the research they do in the theory seminar and builds on it," Monopoli says. "In the seminar, students learn that there are structural barriers to women assuming formal leadership roles in society. In the workshop, we take that knowledge and help them hone individual skills to level the playing field. But we also arm them with the knowledge that it's not going to be easy...." Take salary negotiation, which is a key part of the program's applied workshop experience. "Women are socialized not to ask," Monopoli observes. "And women must be prepared for the reality that they will get a much more negative reaction than their male counterparts when they do ask because they are acting against cultural norms. So we also teach them to not internalize that reaction and to be persistent in the face of it."

Holly Combe '10, a staff attorney in the Maryland Office of Attorney General's Educational Affairs Division, is a graduate who says the program sharpened her own intuitive awareness of the often conflicting workplace messages faced by women.

"I am stealing from *The Daily Show* here," Combe writes in an email, "but what I mean is captured in playground messages: Little girls, and little girls only, are constantly admonished, 'Don't be bossy,' when they should be told, 'You have excellent leadership and entrepreneurial skills.' These subtle messages influence how women project themselves later in their careers. I think it is important that women become cognizant of these messages and learn how to push back without alienating everyone. It is an incredibly difficult balance to strike because of the exceptionally narrow window of rewarded behavior."

The successes of program alumni are crucial to eventually making greater strides in the legal profession for all women, says Monopoli. "Our students are preparing to work on parallel tracks," she says. "We give them the individual strategies to navigate legal workplaces. This enables them to assume the power necessary to make collective change that benefits all women."