Deans Debate Funds, Size and Future of Law

Deans from most of America’s law schools discussed the future of legal education at the American Bar Association’s mid-year meeting in Baltimore this winter. Co-sponsored by the School of Law and the ABA’s sections on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, the 1996 deans’ workshop was entitled “The Times, They Are A-Changing: The Future of Legal Education.”

The gathering of 140 law school deans was one of the largest in recent times, according to Donald Gifford, dean of the School of Law and conference co-chair. “Many people remarked that it was one of the best conferences they ever attended, but much of its content was depressing. In planning the conference, we made a definite decision to tackle the serious, tough, major issues facing legal education.”

Richard Matasar, dean of the Chicago-Kent College of Law and co-chair of the conference, agrees. “From all the feedback, I think this was the most provocative conference in years. People were challenged by the presentations and excited about dealing with the problems.” Matasar adds that law school deans discussed the difficulty in maintaining quality programs without passing the increasing costs to the students.

The national decline in law school applications was a major concern at the conference. Gifford explains that the tepid legal job market in the last five years was primarily responsible, with many deans reporting 15 percent to 50 percent drops in applicants.

As a result, Gifford reports, some law schools are undertaking modest downsizing. Ironically, he adds, the demographic trends suggest that by 2005, the demand for law school graduates will be greater than or equal to the supply of law graduates. In the 1960s and 70s, most law schools dramatically increased their enrollments and those lawyers will be retiring by the early part of the next century.

The conference also examined the future of financing of legal education. The deans discussed the need to moderate tuition increases because student loan defaults have increased while state funding for legal education has decreased.

The deans discussed how to reduce expenses and generate new revenue in the face of the dismal economics of legal education. Issues discussed included the increased use of adjunct faculty, the development of separate teaching and research tracks for faculty and possible strategies for saving in libraries and student services.

Other topics discussed included the use of technology in legal education through “electronic casebooks,” teleconferencing law school classes between cities, and the status of women in legal education. Professor Lani Guinier of the University of Pennsylvania Law School showed that despite having credentials comparable to men, women fare worse than their male counterparts in the first year of law school.

The conference concluded with a reception in Westminster Hall co-hosted by the University of Maryland School of Law and the University of Baltimore School of Law.

Quincey R. Johnson, JD ’93
Kudos Coming From ABA Site Review

The University of Maryland School of Law will garner high praise from the American Bar Association/American Association of Law Schools’ accreditation site review team, according to a preliminary report.

“It will definitely be a positive review,” says Richard Matasar, chair of the ABA/AALS site evaluation team and dean of the Chicago-Kent College of Law. The site evaluation team’s final report was sent to the American Bar Association Accreditation Committee in April.

According to Matasar, the law school provides “outstanding legal instruction” and programs that are “rich in theory and practice” and that take a multidisciplinary approach to legal issues. He also praises the school for its close ties to the community and its accomplished faculty of teachers and scholars. “There is much in which the school can take pride.”

Despite the positive review, Matasar says, the School of Law faces a serious challenge of providing adequate facilities to house its programs. First-rate programs are being undercut by the absence of adequate space in which to offer them.

For example, after praising the law school’s clinical program, Professor Gary Palm of the University of Chicago, a member of the site evaluation team, echoes Matasar’s concerns. “I think you have one of the top—if not the top—clinics in the country. The negative is the facilities. The people are doing an amazing job, but there will be a serious problem with effectiveness if the space issue is not solved,” Palm says.

The site review is part of the ABA/AALS accreditation process that the law school undergoes every seven years in order to be approved to submit graduates for legal practice across the country. The first step in the process was a self-study conducted by a faculty committee chaired by Jana Singer, associate professor.

With that report as background, the evaluation team, made up of leaders in legal education and practice, reviewed the facilities, faculty, students and administration.

“The team meticulously examined our budget and financial resources, visited many classes, met with a wide variety of students, spent time with virtually every faculty member, and subjected all aspects of our curriculum and administration to strict scrutiny,” says Mark Sargent, associate dean.

“We are eagerly awaiting the final report, which we fully expect to reflect the law school’s growing stature in American legal education,” he says.

Quincey R. Johnson, JD ’93

Wu Speaks at Westminster Hall

On November 7, 1995, Chinese human rights activist Harry Wu spoke at the School of Law to a crowd of about 250 people. His lecture was entitled “Surviving Prison Labor Camp in China.” A noted research fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institute and the founder and executive director of the Laogai Research Foundation, Wu continues to be one of the world’s most vocal critics of the Chinese government and the inhumane conditions that exist in Chinese labor camps. The lecture was sponsored by the School of Law, the University Student Government Association, the Student Bar Association, the Graduate Students Association, the International Law Society, the Asian/Pacific-American Law Students Association, the Office of Student Life, and the Office of Student Affairs.
Student Rescues Residents From Burning Building

Eric Feutel, a second-year day student, was recommended for the Baltimore County Fire Department’s Citizen’s Medal of Honor this year for helping residents escape a burning Pikesville building. Featured in The Baltimore Sun for his heroism, Feutel credited his military training for his quick thinking and leadership skills. He spent four years in the Army, flying over 50 hours of combat missions in a reconnaissance helicopter during the Gulf War.

Cummings Wins U.S. Congress Seat

Delegate Elijah E. Cummings ’76 was elected in March as the Democratic nominee to fill the Seventh Congressional District seat for Maryland. The special general election this April resulted in an expected democratic landslide victory. Congressman Cummings was sworn in on April 25, 1996.

Congressman Cummings’ contributions to the people and the State of Maryland are enormous. After 20 years as a partner in his own law firm, he was elected to the Maryland General Assembly as a delegate for the 39th Legislative District in 1982. He served four terms and in 1995 was elected by his colleagues as speaker pro-tem, the second highest position in the House of Delegates, making him the highest ranking African-American lawmaker in the state.

Bally Total Fitness Endows Scholarship in Memory of Charles H. Dorsey, Jr. ’61

Charlie Dorsey ’61 died suddenly on April 21, 1995 and left behind a legacy of caring. He worked his entire lifetime to level the playing field for everyone. Wilbur D. Preston Jr. ’49, of Whiteford, Taylor & Preston, wrote in the Legal Aid Bureau’s Memorial edition, “He was a lawyer who devoted his professional career to seeing that his fellow man, particularly the disadvantaged, had a voice speaking on their behalf in the justice system. Many times I heard Charles Dorsey say that for a lawyer there was ‘no higher calling’ than to help those who were not able to pay for help.”

Dorsey joined the Legal Aid Bureau in 1969 and became executive director in 1974, a position he held until his death. He expanded the bureau into a network of offices across Maryland. He organized a group of lawyers into a professional staff equal to any leading firm in the state. Under his leadership, the bureau took many cases to the Supreme Court.

Dorsey’s radiating enthusiasm made the lives of those around him better, mostly because he loved his work—helping the disadvantaged have access to the courts. He once said, “If people don’t have access to the courts, there’s more of a tendency to take the law into their own hands. I think that is detrimental to everybody in this society.”

In recognition of Charles H. Dorsey, Jr.’s lifelong commitment to the disadvantaged and to diversity, Bally Total Fitness Corporation has endowed the Charles H. Dorsey, Jr./Bally Total Fitness Scholarship in his honor. Bally’s generous gift of $40,000 will provide significant support to a deserving student who might not otherwise have the chance to continue law school. On March 11 in Westminster Hall, law school faculty, Bally officials, and many Dorsey family and friends met to celebrate his life and award the first scholarship.

If you would like to join others in a memorial to Charlie Dorsey, please send your check to the Law School made out to the University of Maryland Foundation/School of Law and note on the memo line Charles Dorsey Scholarship.

Law Student Awarded Food and Drug Law Institute’s Kleinfeld Scholarship

Third-year student Michelle Marks, Ph.D., was selected last June as a recipient of the 1995-96 Vincent A. Kleinfeld Scholarship by the Food and Drug Law Institute. The scholarship provided a $5,000 grant and will designate her as a Food and Drug Law Scholar. In addition, her paper received the H. Thomas Austern Writing Competition Prize from the institute.

In using the scholarship, Marks has been working with Barbara Gontrum, director of the Marshall Law Library, and Frances Palumbo, adjunct professor. The work has led to additional publications, including a recent article in the Federal Circuit Bar Journal and an upcoming publication, “The Legislative History of the New Patent Term,” The University of Baltimore Intellectual Property Law Journal, 4.