New Development Dean Comes on Board

BY CHRIS HART

Ask Shelley Gitomer the difference between doctors and lawyers, and a broad smile crosses her face. "Well, I'm married to a lawyer, and coming from Hopkins I think I understand doctors pretty well, too," says the School of Law's newly appointed Assistant Dean for Development and Alumni Relations. "I recognize that both professions attract very bright, very driven people who, indeed, have their passions. Lawyers seem willing to accept that they are part of a larger picture. I think they have a friendly, accommodating culture, and that's how they survive and thrive."

Gitomer, who has just arrived at the university after nearly six years as Director of Development for the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center, says she already is feeling at home in a position that will put her in direct contact with a diverse population of alumni, donors, students, faculty and administrators. "There is a feeling at the School of Law that somehow we are all in this together, that the school represents a ship on which we have all set sail," Gitomer says. "That attitude can serve us quite effectively as we move into the 21st century."

The "ship" metaphor is an apt one, especially considering how the inhabitants have outgrown their quarters. Gitomer says her tenure will emphasize that only through the hard work of everyone connected with the school will the overarching goal of expanded and improved facilities be met.

"Dean Gifford has envisioned a building that appropriately addresses the needs of young lawyers, faculty and people seeking justice," she says. "I agree completely. When you go searching for the right law school for your children, or for yourself, you definitely look at the physical plant. We need a facility that correctly reflects the essential role that the School of Law plays in this city, in Maryland and beyond."

Raising funds for bricks and mortar is only part of the equation, however. Gitomer says she will redouble her office's efforts to improve the donor participation rate—which ranks among the top 10 law schools in the country—and to convince alumni that the gradual growth of their gifts over time translate into an investment toward an institution of increasing prestige, influence and, most importantly, economic opportunity.

"Until I came here, I never really knew how many different kinds of law there are—environmental, health care, international, and on and on," Gitomer remarks. "And I had never thought much about how they benefit the economy. All you have to do, though, is watch the students here working and practicing in the clinics. You get a major dose of reality. Lawyering is not what nine out of 10 people think."

Gitomer, a Baltimore native and graduate of Baltimore Hebrew University, says she is most excited about working with students—something she has never had the chance to do in her previous development positions at Johns Hopkins Oncology Center, THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore; and the Levindale Geriatric Center & Hospital.

"The enthusiasm of people who believe in the law, or of those who have had careers and now want to give something back to the community, is very exciting to me," she remarks. "To see someone meet the challenges of a legal education, you can't help but be encouraged by that. It puts everything in perspective."

Having labored alongside a group of world-class physicians at Hopkins, and now joining a group of nationally-and internationally-acclaimed law professors, Gitomer also has some perspective on what motivates intelligent people to do what they do. "What I see in all of these individuals is a deep commitment to prove and improve," she says. "They don't want to leave anything unresolved, or undeveloped. They see the common sense of applying the best ideas. To me, that's the very definition of a professional."

Gitomer looks forward to tapping into these passions as she leads an experienced team of development officers in search of new resources for a new era. "Yes, I'll be out there, as we all will be, asking for help from our friends and colleagues," she says. "We really are all in this together, and that's a great place to be."

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