

Cleveland-Marshall College of Law

Reporting Success

The Dean's Annual Letter





Cleveland State University

Cleveland-Marshall College of Law

Geoffrey S. Mearns, Dean

October 2008

Dear Graduates and Friends:

As another new academic year unfolds, I write with a report on the past year – a year filled with success, progress, and great promise for the future of our law school.

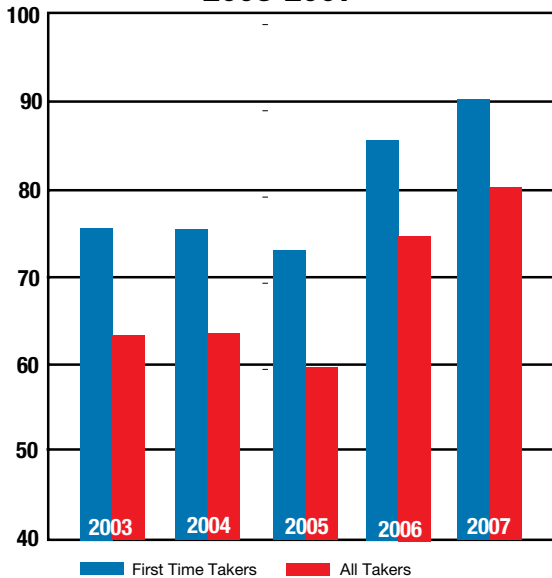
Outstanding Bar Results

In 2004, we developed a comprehensive plan to improve the performance of our graduates on the Ohio bar exam. Since then, we have implemented and enhanced that plan, and the results have been very good.

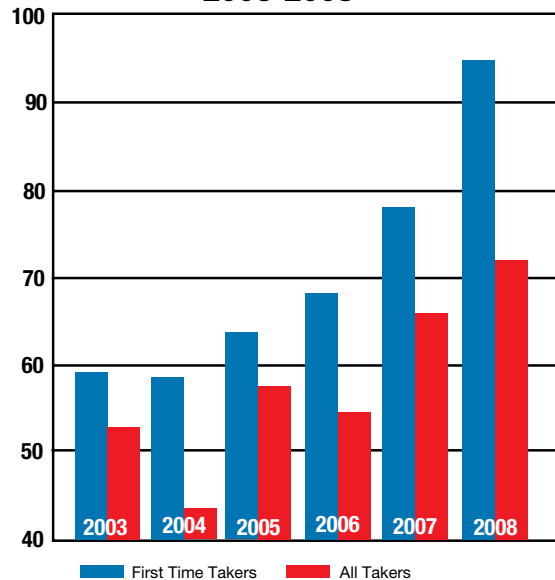
Last year, the results were outstanding. On the July 2007 exam, 90% of our graduates passed the Ohio bar exam on their first try – the second highest passage rate for first-time takers in the state. On the February 2008 exam, that key benchmark improved to 95%. And on that exam, the combined passage rate of all our graduates, both first-time takers and all repeat takers, was the highest of any law school in Ohio.

In order for you to appreciate our rapid and substantial progress on the Ohio bar exam, I have included two charts that demonstrate our success since we began implementing the bar passage plan.

**July Ohio Bar Exam
Pass Rate Percentages
2003-2007**



**February Ohio Bar Exam
Pass Rate Percentages
2003-2008**



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These charts clearly show that the bar passage plan has helped our graduates succeed on the Ohio bar exam. As we celebrate this success, we continue to refine and improve the plan, while providing even more support for student achievement.

Through the hard work of so many people, including the students who have demonstrated a commitment to excel, we are expanding a culture of success at our law school.

Other Notable Achievements and Activities

Our students also excel in many other ways. This past summer, **Mr. Patrick Charles ('09)** won first place – and \$10,000 – in a national writing competition: The Judge John R. Brown Award for Excellence in Legal Writing from the John R. Brown Scholarship Foundation in Houston, Texas. Mr. Charles's essay, "Bearing Arms in the Ohio Constitution: A Historical and Legal Analysis of Article I, Section 4," will be expanded and published as a book next year.

While many of our students spent the summer working at various private law firms in Cleveland and many other cities, ten of our law students spent the summer working in public-interest jobs in Ohio, Tennessee, New York, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C. Each of these students received Public Interest Summer Fellowships funded by the law school. This financial support, made possible in part by donations from our graduates and friends, enabled these students to perform public and community service, which is a fundamental responsibility of the legal profession.

One of our law students, **Ms. April Stephenson ('10)**, performed that service right here at our law school. Ms. Stephenson was one of three law students selected from Ohio law schools to teach high school freshmen in the Summer Law and Leadership Institute, which we hosted at our law school. This five-week program, made possible by financial support from the Supreme Court of Ohio, educated and inspired 25 students from the Cleveland Municipal School District by exposing them to the rigors of legal study and the rewards of being a lawyer. This program is only one of the many "pipeline programs" in which our students, faculty, staff, and graduates participate. These programs are just one part of our ongoing institutional commitment to opportunity and diversity in the legal profession.

That commitment is also evident in the expanded professional services that we are making available to our law students. A few months ago, we created a new position, Manager of Student Affairs, and we hired a recent law school graduate, **Ms. Inga Laurent ('05)**, to fill that position. Ms. Laurent will advise students on academic requirements and career options, develop and administer our "pipeline programs," and act as our administrative liaison to the student organizations.

New Students

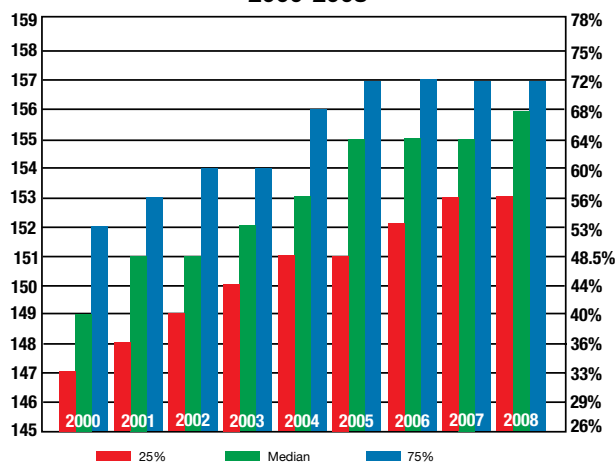
The success of our recent graduates on the Ohio bar exam and the diverse achievements of our current students have also helped us to attract the next generation of outstanding lawyers. While the number of people applying to law schools across the country declined again last year, the number of applications to our law school increased by 14%. In terms of objective factors, this year's incoming class of students is the strongest group of men and women in the history of the law school. In order for you to appreciate that strength, I have included a graph showing the LSAT scores of our full-time students for the past few years. The numbers on the left vertical margin are the "raw" LSAT score. The numbers on the right vertical margin are the corresponding percentiles for all law school applicants who took the LSAT in that particular admissions cycle.

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As you see, we have made substantial progress in less than ten years. For example, the median LSAT of our incoming, full-time students has increased from 149 in 2000 to 156 in 2008 – a 28 percentile increase. And our 25th percentile this year is higher than our 75th percentile was only eight years ago. The undergraduate GPAs of our incoming students have shown similar improvement over the last decade.

While we are gratified that our law school is becoming even more attractive to talented and ambitious students, we are particularly pleased that we have been able to retain our historic commitment to a student body that is diverse ethnically, geographically, and professionally. Our incoming students this year came from 88 different undergraduate institutions in 17 different states, as well as two foreign countries, and 15% of our incoming students identify themselves as ethnic minorities. Before coming to law school, they were teachers, engineers, paralegals, scientists, and business owners – and more than 10% of them already had one post-graduate degree.

LSAT Admission Data for Full-Time Matriculants
2000-2008



A new admissions season is already underway, and we have expanded our admissions staff and embarked on an aggressive recruiting campaign. A few months ago, we hired **Ms. Sandra English ('03)** as our second Admissions Coordinator; in this position she will also develop and implement the law school's multicultural recruitment efforts. Our team of admissions professionals, including Ms. English, Assistant Dean **Christopher Lucak**, and Admissions Coordinator **Amy Miller**, will visit more than 30 colleges and law school fairs in 22 states and Canada. If you know of a promising student who aspires to attend law school, please contact me; we welcome your assistance.

New Faculty

We also continue to have great success in recruiting outstanding men and women to join our law school community as members of our faculty. This year, two new tenure-track professors are continuing their careers here: **Matthew W. Green, Jr.**, and **Browne C. Lewis**.

Professor Green received a law degree, *magna cum laude*, from the University of Baltimore, where he was an editor of the law review, and he received an L.L.M. from Columbia University, where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar. Professor Green clerked for two federal judges: the Honorable Deborah K. Chasanow (United States District Court for the District of Maryland) and the Honorable Eric L. Clay (United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit). This academic year, Professor Green is teaching Contracts and Employment Discrimination Law.

Professor Lewis received a law degree and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Minnesota and an L.L.M from the University of Houston. Professor Lewis is an experienced

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teacher and an accomplished scholar, having published articles on children's and parents' rights, environmental law, and issues arising from artificial procreation. She is also the author of a case-book, *The Inheritance Rights of Children: Cases and Materials*, which will be published next year. This academic year, Professor Lewis is teaching Property and Estates and Trusts.

We also recently welcomed **Ms. Kristina Niedringhaus** as the new Director of our law library; she is also an Associate Professor of Law. Professor Niedringhaus received a law degree from the University of North Carolina and a library degree from the University of Missouri. Before joining our law school in August, Professor Niedringhaus was an associate dean at the Phoenix School of Law, where she was instrumental in the design and construction of a technologically advanced library at one of the newest law schools in the country. Professor Niedringhaus has many new and creative ideas that will enable our law library to become an even more valuable resource for our students, our faculty, and our community.

I am also delighted to report that, over the past summer, we welcomed back **Ms. Carolyn Broering-Jacobs**, one of our most accomplished legal writing professors. Professor Broering-Jacobs, who is the new Director of our Legal Writing and Research Program, received a law degree, *summa cum laude*, from Ohio State University, where she was the executive editor of the law review. After graduating from law school, she clerked for the Honorable Sam H. Bell (United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio). In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Professor Broering-Jacobs will continue to teach legal writing. I am confident that, with her leadership, our good legal writing program will become even better.

The foundation of any law school is its faculty. With the addition of these four talented and dedicated individuals, our foundation is stronger and our future is even brighter.

Law Building Renovations

Our law facility has also recently been transformed as the result of a major renovation made possible by the extraordinary generosity of **Mrs. Iris S. Wolstein**. The renovation project, which was completed in June, includes new offices and work areas for our law clinics, several new seminar rooms, a new suite of offices for our student organizations, a new faculty presentation room, a new main conference room, and a dramatic new entrance on the corner of East 18th Street and



Student work area in the law clinics office

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Euclid Avenue - an entrance that reinforces our law school's historic connection and commitment to Cleveland and its people.

Along with other improvements we have made to the law building over the past few years, we now have a facility in which our students and faculty can learn, teach, and write about the issues that challenge us in the 21st century.

But we have not yet completed all of the improvements that are needed. We have already developed plans to construct a modern, technologically advanced mock trial courtroom. Once this facility is built, it will enable our students to prepare to be outstanding trial lawyers.



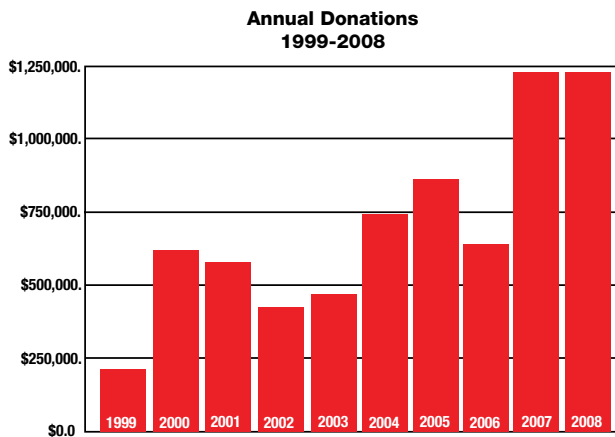
We will also make this trial courtroom available to practicing lawyers and active judges for mock trial and training exercises. Consistent with our mission, it will be an educational and community resource for engaged, practical learning and professional development.

To make this vision a reality, we will need your help. The total cost to build this modern facility, and to ensure that we have the resources to purchase new technology for it, is approximately \$1 million. We need your generous financial support.

Fund-Raising Success

Based on the extraordinary generosity of our graduates and community partners over the last few years, I am confident that we will have the resources to achieve our goals.

Last year, for the second year in a row, we received approximately \$1.25 million in donations from our graduates and friends. To put this figure in historical context, I have prepared a chart that shows the amount of money that has been donated to the law school in each of the last ten years.



These figures do not include the \$5 million donated by Mrs. Wolstein between 2005 and 2008 to fund the renovations of the law building, which is now named Bert L. Wolstein Hall in memory of her husband, a law school alumnus who passed away in 2004. Mrs. Wolstein's generosity was inspired by her husband's professional ambitions and personal dreams. And her generosity has been an inspiration to so many other people.

In addition to her \$5 million gift to support the building renovation, Mrs. Wolstein

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pledged to match, dollar-for-dollar, all donations to a new endowed scholarship fund – the Wolstein Endowed Scholarship Fund – up to \$1.25 million. As of September 30th, we have received more than \$1.5 million in gifts and documented pledges to the Wolstein Fund. We have successfully matched her generous challenge!

Many people are responsible for this extraordinary achievement. In fact, more than 1,000 individuals and institutions have donated to this fund. I am pleased to report that 13 law firms each contributed more than \$25,000 to the Wolstein Fund:

Buckley King, LPA	McDonald Hopkins LLC
Frantz Ward LLP	Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP
Hahn Loeser + Parks LLP	Reminger Co., L.P.A.
Jones Day	Squire, Sanders & Dempsey LLP
Kohrman Jackson & Krantz PLL	Thompson Hine LLP
McCarthy, Lebit, Crystal & Liffman Co., LPA	Tucker Ellis & West LLP
	Ulmer & Berne LLP

The generosity of these firms has demonstrated that this law school remains the foundation of the legal community in Northeast Ohio. Their financial support is also an investment in our collective futures.

But practicing lawyers and prominent law firms were not the only ones who contributed to this successful effort. For the third year in a row, student leaders organized a campaign to encourage the other members of the graduating class to make a donation to the law school. This past year, the Graduation Challenge was another great success: 47% of the Class of 2008 made a contribution or a pledge. I am very grateful to the student leaders who organized this campaign: **Ms. Jamie Cole, Mr. Nicholas Hanna, Ms. Susan Hughes, Ms. Katheryn McFadden, Mr. Shawn Romer, Mr. Adam Sauerwein, and Mr. Judson Stelter**. Their faith in the future of our law school is a source of inspiration for me.

Their faith has also inspired a few of our most engaged graduates to help me launch another important fund-raising initiative. Three members of our National Advisory Council, **Mr. Steven W. Percy ('79), Mr. James A. Thomas ('63), and Mr. P. Kelly Tompkins ('81)**, have agreed to co-chair a campaign to raise \$1 million within three years for a newly created fund – the Fund for Excellence. The resources donated to this fund will be invested to improve our law school in ways that can be measured, such as bar passage rates, LSAT scores, employment opportunities, and national rankings. These graduates have decided to make a substantial philanthropic investment in this fund, and to persuade others to follow their lead, because they are convinced that their investment will yield substantial returns – dividends for our students, our profession, and our community.

I hope you will also be motivated to support our students and our faculty – to invest in our excellence. The facts contained in this report demonstrate that these men and women are successfully achieving their professional goals. To continue that success, they need your help. I am grateful for your consideration and your generous support.

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Our Mission: Changing Lives

In closing, I would like to share with you a remarkable email I recently received from a student. This report to you consists primarily of descriptions of tangible achievements that are expressed in facts and figures. While numbers and data are important, the sentiments expressed in this student's note are even more important – and more meaningful, too.

In the note, this student described the challenges the student faced last year as a part-time student with a full-time job, a long commute, and a young child. The student also described struggling in a first-year course and considering dropping out of school.

Then, the student went to meet privately with one of our professors. During that meeting, the professor helped the student to realize that the student was, in fact, learning the material. The professor demonstrated genuine concern for the student as a person. At the end of the meeting, the professor assured the student, with a warm pat on the back, "You're getting it."

Of this encounter, the student told me:

That meeting was the most profound meeting I have ever had with a teacher in my entire lifetime.

In one 10-minute conversation with an understanding, approachable, and compassionate faculty member, my doubts were cast aside, my confidence rose 100%, and I was reassured that law school was the absolute right decision for me.

Many people in this world do things every day which positively affect other people, and they go unnoticed. [This professor] touched my life in such a profound way that I had to send you a note about how one of your fine law faculty members touched my life and salvaged my law school experience.

As educators, our goal is to prepare our students to be excellent lawyers. Our professional aspiration is to change their lives in a positive way, so that they can improve the lives of others through service and the quest for justice.

It is satisfying when I can report to you that we have achieved certain institutional goals, such as higher bar passage rates, improved median LSAT scores, and better fund-raising results.

It is extremely gratifying to know when we have achieved our professional aspirations. So, if one of our professors or another member of our law school community has made a difference in your education or your life, please let him or her know. While your financial support is important to our future success, your words of appreciation mean so much more.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey S. Mearns
Dean and Professor of Law