

CLEVELAND-MARSHALL COLLEGE OF LAW

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
Geoffrey S. Mearns, Dean

October 2009

Dear Graduates and Friends:

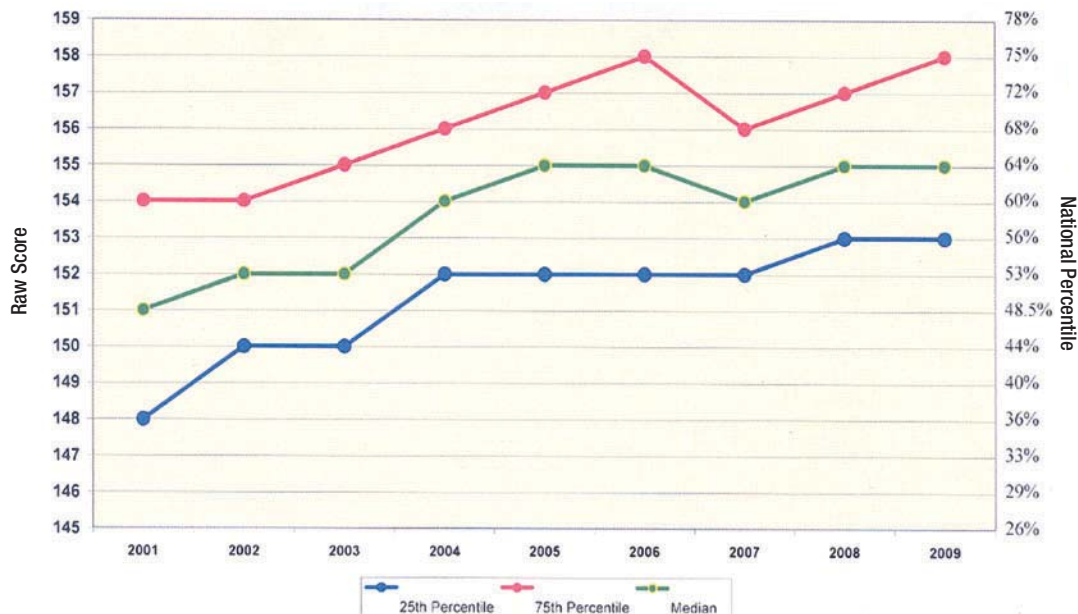
Outside the walls of our law school, it has been a difficult year. The economy is only now beginning to emerge from the worst recession in decades. Many people, including many lawyers, have lost their jobs. These external difficulties have had an impact on our law school, and I anticipate that more challenges are in store for lawyers and legal education.

I am gratified to report that our law school is addressing these challenges. Indeed, our faculty, staff, and students are seizing the opportunities that are created by these challenges. For our law school, I see a very promising future. Here is why.

New Students

In August, we enrolled 203 new law students. This incoming class is the most academically qualified class in the 112-year history of our law school. Applications to our law school this past year increased by more than 10%, an increase that is well above the national average. Therefore, we were able to be very selective.

Indeed, as you will see in the chart below, we have made substantial progress over the



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last eight years in attracting and selecting students with great potential to be outstanding lawyers. The median LSAT score of our incoming class now exceeds the national median by 14%.

This class is also a very diverse one. In fact, the number of students of color who applied to our law school last year increased by more than 17%, and the number of students of color who enrolled this year increased by more than 30%.

I am also pleased to report that this class is the most geographically diverse in our history. While more than 50% of our incoming students are Ohio residents, we continue to attract many more students from states across the country. The six other states from which we attracted the most students this year were New York, Virginia, Florida, Arizona, California, and Washington. This fact demonstrates that we are recognized by men and women from coast to coast as an excellent law school.

New Faculty

We have also recruited two new outstanding faculty members.

Professor Kelly Curtis joined our faculty in August to teach legal research and writing. She is our seventh full-time faculty member with that important responsibility. Professor Curtis is a graduate of the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, where she was the Executive Editor of the law review. Before joining us, she had worked in private practice for a major, national law firm and for the Ohio Public Defender's Office.

Professor Jonathan Witmer-Rich also joined our faculty in August. He will teach a variety of courses, including criminal law, criminal procedure, and a seminar on the law of counter-terrorism. Professor Witmer-Rich is a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Law, where he was the Associate Editor of the law review. In addition to his outstanding academic record, he was a law clerk to two federal judges: the Honorable Joseph R. Goodwin of the United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia and the Honorable M. Blane Michael of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Professor Witmer-Rich also worked for a major, international law firm and for the Federal Public Defender's Office here in Cleveland.

Since our law school was founded in 1897, the members of our faculty have dedicated their professional lives to educating and inspiring our students. I am confident that the two newest members of our faculty will extend this honorable tradition.

A New Staff Member

I would also like to introduce you to one of the newest members of our staff: **Jennifer Blaga**.

In July, Ms. Blaga became the new Director of the Office of Career Planning. She has 15 years of experience as a legal recruiter and as a law placement professional with several major law firms and other organizations.

Ms. Blaga joins our law school at a particularly challenging time in terms of the legal economy. She has begun to address these challenges with enthusiasm, optimism, and

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creativity. She has already drafted a strategic plan for our placement office. This plan will enable us to expand the number, variety and location of placement opportunities that will be available to our students over the next few years.

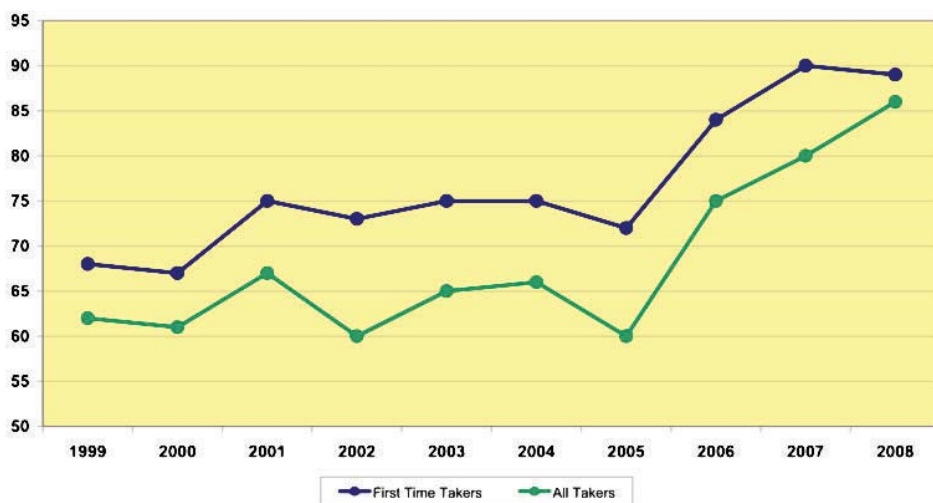
In order to execute this plan, though, we will need the assistance of our graduates and friends across the country. In the future, I will be sharing more information about this important initiative with you. In the meantime, I know that I can count on you to help our students realize their professional dreams.

The Bar Exam

Our faculty and staff continue to do an excellent job preparing our graduates to pass the bar exam. The chart below demonstrates that the bar passage plan that we implemented in 2004 has yielded great dividends. For the second year in a row, our graduates passed the Ohio bar exam at one of the highest rates in the state.

In a few weeks, we will learn how our graduates performed on the July 2009 bar exam. I am confident that our recent success will continue because our most recent graduates have an established record of achievement, and they are committed to excellence.

**July Ohio Bar Exam Results
Pass Rate Percentages
1999-2008**



A New Curriculum for the 21st Century

It is not enough for our students to pass the bar exam, however. They must be able to excel in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing world. In order to enable our students to meet these challenges, I believe that our law school must assess whether our students are receiving the knowledge and obtaining the practical skills they need.

Therefore, at the end of the last academic year, I appointed a special faculty committee

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to conduct a comprehensive review of our entire curriculum and academic program. The committee is chaired by **Professor Heidi Gorovitz Robertson**, whom I recently appointed to be the Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Student Achievement.

Over the years, our curriculum has evolved to respond to a variety of developments in the law and in our society. For example, we have recently expanded the number and variety of international law courses. In the last five years, we have doubled the number of externships in which law students work under the supervision of practicing lawyers and judges. And two months ago, we opened a sixth law clinic: the Community Health Advocacy Law Clinic. In this innovative program, our law students work with lawyers from the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and health care providers at a local public hospital to represent patients who have legal problems that are contributing to their adverse health conditions.

I am pleased with these new opportunities for our students, but I am not completely satisfied with the current content and structure of our academic program. I believe that we must do more to prepare our students to solve the problems that their future clients will present, and we must provide even more opportunities for our students to acquire the practical skills that they will need to succeed.

Over the next two years, this faculty committee will study innovative law school programs across the country. The committee will also consult with lawyers and other professionals. I am confident that, at the end of this process, our law faculty will embrace creative and innovative changes that will make our law school even better than it is today.

Your Support For Our New Initiatives

Our recent successes have been the product of a lot of hard work by many people – our faculty, our students, and our staff. Our plans for the future are dependent upon their continued dedication and diligence.

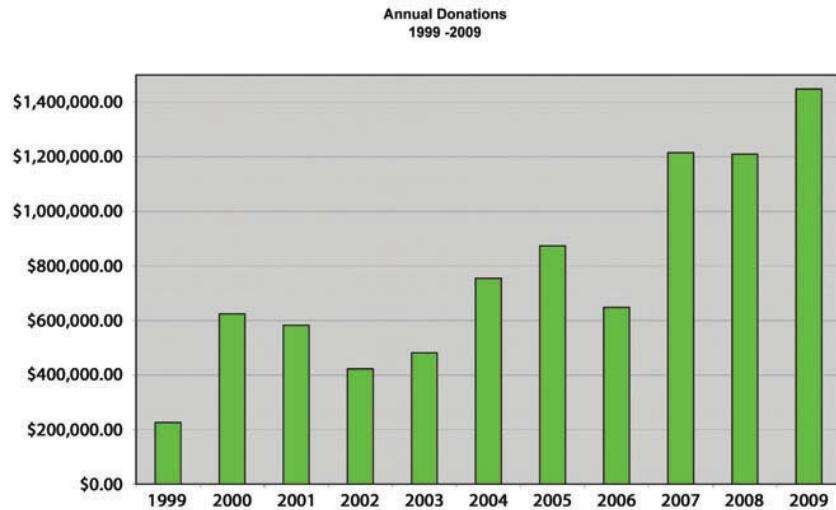
Our achievements and our goals are also dependent upon you, our graduates and friends. Over the past few years, you have given us the resources to succeed and the ability to dream. Indeed, last year, despite the challenges presented by the economy and the declining financial markets, we received more financial support from you than in any single year in our history – nearly \$1.5 million. The recent donations reflected in the chart on the next page do not even include the \$5 million donated by Mrs. Iris S. Wolstein in memory of her late husband, Bart, for whom our law building is now named.

Your gifts have enabled us to provide scholarships for outstanding students, and your generosity has enabled us to recognize and support several of the outstanding scholars on our faculty. Your generous gifts have also enabled us to make substantial progress on two other important initiatives that I announced last year.

First I told you about our plans to build a modern, technologically advanced mock trial courtroom. As I indicated above, we want our students to be able to compete in the 21st century. This new facility will help us to prepare our students to be outstanding trial lawyers in the digital age.

As of June 30, 2009, we have more than \$500,000 of the \$1 million needed to fund

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construction of **The Trial Courtroom**. I am especially grateful to the following individuals and institutions for their leadership gifts and pledges:

Burke, Rosen & Associates

Mr. Ian N. Friedman ('97)

Giffen & Kaminski, LLC

Lowe Eklund Wakefield & Mulvihill Co., LPA

Nurenberg, Paris, Heller & McCarthy Co., L.P.A.

The Rennillo Family Foundation

Our architect has nearly completed the plans for the trial courtroom. I am optimistic that, with some additional help from you, construction will be completed in 2010.



Second, you have also generously responded to our other major fund-raising initiative, **The Fund for Excellence**. Last year, I told you about this campaign to raise \$1 million over the next three to four years and to invest those new resources to fund programs

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that will yield measurable improvements at the law school. This campaign was launched with the generous support of **Mr. Steven W. Percy ('79)**, **Mr. James A. Thomas ('63)**, and **Mr. P. Kelly Tompkins ('81)**.

I am pleased to report that we are on pace to reach our goal. As of June 30, 2009, we have raised more than \$350,000 in gifts and pledges to this fund. Many of you have responded generously. I am particularly grateful to **Mr. Peter Klein ('81)** and **Mr. Joseph E. LoConti ('77)** for their generous support.

I hope that you will be inspired by their leadership to support our law school. Whether you make an annual gift, a multi-year pledge, or a commitment in your estate plans, all of your gifts will make a difference in the growth and transformation of our law school.

Last year, for example, while the tuition at other law schools, both public and private, increased substantially, our tuition did not rise at all – for the second year in row. While I suspect that we will have to raise our tuition modestly in the future, we have remained the most affordable law school in Ohio, because you have given us the financial resources to succeed without saddling our students with even more debt.

If you are interested in helping our students and our faculty, please contact me. Or come see me at one of our many receptions. In the coming months, I will be hosting events in **Buffalo, Columbus, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.** In the first few months of 2010, I will be hosting events in **Chicago, Denver, Phoenix**, and on both coasts of **Florida**.

Our New Mark of Excellence

One of the programs that is being supported by the Fund for Excellence is a new initiative to raise the profile of our law school.

A few months ago, we engaged a professional marketing firm to evaluate our publications and our other external communications. The firm's conclusion was that, although the materials were attractive and well written, they lacked a consistent, distinctive image.

So, with the help of these professionals and the support of the University's marketing staff, we developed a new mark: **CM|LAW** You have seen the full version of this mark on the cover of this letter, and you can see the shortened version on the bottom of each page. The mark will appear prominently on all of our written materials and very soon on our website.

When I announced this new initiative to our faculty and staff, I gave each person a t-shirt with the new mark. Within just two hours, students were already asking me for t-shirts and sweat shirts with the new mark. Like the faculty and staff, they wanted to show their pride in the institution by personally displaying the new mark. In the near future, you will be able to go on our website to purchase all kinds of items branded with our new mark from the Student Bar Association.

In addition to developing this new mark, we also endeavored to capture the essence of the institution in a simple phrase. We chose: **Learn Law. Live Justice.** I believe these four simple words communicate our historic mission and vision: to prepare our students to be outstanding lawyers and leaders and to inspire them to serve others in the pursuit of a more just society.

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It is my hope that our efforts will lead to greater recognition and an enhanced reputation for our law school. I believe that, very soon, **CIMLAW** will be recognized as a mark of distinction and excellence.

Our Renewed Commitment to Our Mission: Changing Lives

Although the mark and the phrase are new, our mission has not changed: our goal is to change the lives of our students in a positive way, so that they can improve the lives of others through service.

This past summer, many of our students learned more about the law and service. Several of our students worked for the Legal Aid Society or other public interest law organizations in Ohio. Some of our students worked for local, state, or federal government agencies, including the United States Department of Education. One of our students worked on behalf of women's rights and children's rights at a public interest law organization in San Francisco. Another law student worked for the Fort Hall Law and Order Commission, which operates the criminal justice system for the Shoshone-Bannock Indian tribe on a reservation in Idaho.

One very adventurous student, **Ms. Erika Frantz ('11)**, traveled to Moshi, Tanzania. While in Moshi, which is at the base of Mount Kilimanjaro, she worked as a volunteer for a human rights organization. Upon her return to Cleveland, Ms. Frantz told me that our law school had prepared her to provide valuable support to the organization in its efforts to educate and represent the residents of Moshi.

The law school provides some financial support to these exceptional students, because we believe that all lawyers, irrespective of how they earn a living, have an obligation to serve others. Your financial support enables us to make this aspiration a reality.

I am grateful for your engagement and your support. And when I hear about the meaningful work of our students, our faculty, and our graduates, I am grateful for the opportunity to be a member of this law school community. It is inspiring to know that our future is even more promising.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey S. Mearns
Dean and Professor of Law