

the physical future of marquette law school

When the doors of Sensenbrenner Hall opened to receive students in 1924, there was much satisfaction. The editor of the *Marquette Law Review* reported that the new building—which replaced Mackie Mansion just off 11th Street and Grand Avenue as the Law School's home—fulfilled the “earnest desire of our dean and every student and alumnus” for a suitable forum for formal legal education in Milwaukee.

That day in 1924 is no longer even a memory. While there have been subsequent modifications and additions to Sensenbrenner Hall in the more than eight decades that have ensued, these have scarcely matched the growth of the Law School's student body, the expansion of its library collection, the proliferation of information technology, or the evolving nature of legal education.

The fundamental problem, irreducibly stated, is this: Marquette Law School does not have enough space. This is not some idiosyncratic view or a mere intuitive feeling. The objective evidence is inescapable. Whether measured among the 14 Jesuit law schools, the 13 law schools at other Catholic universities, the 12 law schools at Big East universities, or the 20 private law schools in the upper Midwest, Marquette Law School ranks last or second-to-last in the standard measure of physical resources (net square footage per full-time equivalent student).

Lest there be any incorrect suggestion that these numbers were in any way gamed—e.g., that that we selected groups of schools against which we expected to fare poorly—permit me to note that we studied as well schools whose names begin with the letter *M* (another category into which we fall). There are fifteen such schools—Maine, Marquette, Maryland, McGeorge, Memphis, Mercer, Miami, Michigan, Michigan State-Detroit College of Law, Minnesota, University of Mississippi, Mississippi College of Law, Missouri-Columbia, Missouri-Kansas City, and Montana. Marquette comes in last.



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Dean and Professor of Law

So is this introductory note an announcement? Only of this: that I have identified the physical future of the Law School and, in particular, the size of our facility as challenges to our educational future and thus as matters that must be tackled. I have begun the complicated and uncertain process of working with those in the larger University (i.e., outside the Law School) to capture the extent of the problem and to work toward one of a number of possible solutions. Gone are the days of the early 1920s when, the annals suggest, a few conversations between the Dean of the Law School and the President of the University sufficed to settle upon a solution.

Nonetheless, the initial signs are encouraging, and the President remains the central figure of the University. Thus, I (and others) took it as significant that Father Wild, in his State of the University Address last fall, acknowledged the Law School's severe space constraints and adverted to one possible solution. To be sure, almost in the same breath, Father Wild stressed that any major building-related decision must consider the needs of the entire school and will require the participation of others in the University. These undoubtedly will include Madeline Wake, the Provost, and Greg Kliebhan, the Senior Vice President, and ultimately of course the Board of Trustees.

Father Wild also has underscored to me that the involvement of law alumni will be critical to any law school building project. I frankly acknowledge that my intent in this column is to start a conversation with alumni on this matter. My longstanding comment about answering my own phone and e-mail (the information for each being listed on the page opposite here) remains true, and I welcome any comments, suggestions, or reactions.

You will nonetheless find nothing further in this magazine about the building. Why is this? It is because the building is a detail (albeit an increasingly difficult and important detail) and the great work of Marquette Law School—its alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends—goes on all the while.

Some of this work is sketched out in this magazine. I hope that you share our pride in the magazine, which I believe is among the best law school magazines in the country. We increasingly set this goal of self-consciously seeking excellence for our other, more-important undertakings as well.

In all events, we are sharing this issue of *Marquette Lawyer* not only with alumni and friends nationwide but with all members of the Wisconsin bar. For do not all lawyers—indeed, all individuals interested in the legal system and justice in the State of Wisconsin and beyond—have a stake in Marquette Law School?

J.D.K.