



January 16, 2012

Dear Future Marquette Lawyer,

Welcome to a new semester. I wish to give you a brief update.

These are challenging times not only for the economy generally but for legal education. The media, “new” and “old,” are replete with stories questioning the value of the education relative to its cost. These stories have a basis in fact on the cost side in that the debt assumed by most law students is significant, indeed. That is why, for example, the tuition increase for the Law School next year, as approved by the Board of Trustees, will be only 3 percent, well below the current national average of 4.6% for private schools. At my urging, this is also lower than the undergraduate tuition rate increase, and I am grateful to the vice president for finance, provost, and president for supporting this approach.

Our ability to help is greater on the value side of the proposition. One initiative in the past few months has been to increase the assistance available to you in the Career Planning Center. In particular, I am delighted that Letissa Carver Reid has joined us as assistant director of career planning. Ms. Reid practiced law in Chicago for the past decade, at both Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal and the Milwaukee-based firm Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan. She is a graduate of the Indiana University School of Law and a native of Milwaukee. Ms. Reid is working with Paul D. Katzman, assistant dean, and Erin M. Binns, director of career planning, in order to provide guidance and help for you and alumni in the career planning process: she has a particular portfolio for outreach to prospective employers. We were able to make this appointment because we reallocated a staff position from elsewhere in the Law School upon its becoming vacant. We might have directed the resource elsewhere, but we have no greater interest than in seeing you successfully employed in the profession, and sometimes that requires attention not merely to the curriculum but also to the administrative resources available to you. Please introduce yourself to Ms. Reid and welcome her to Marquette.

Another development has been our creation of certificate programs in litigation and in alternative dispute resolution. You have received several emails about this development, which seeks to recognize students who have taken a rigorous concentration of courses designed to ensure particular familiarity with these spheres. I do not say that either certificate will reflect *expertise*: that is not yet within the reach of one whose experience in the legal profession consists simply of formal legal education. At the same time, the certificates—awardable only in conjunction with the law degree itself—represent a step forward for Marquette Law School as we seek to incorporate into our program good ideas that suggest themselves to us from elsewhere. I am especially grateful to Associate Dean Matthew J. Parlow for leading the process whereby the certificates were approved, first by the faculty and then by the University. All involved in the process were seeking to increase the value of the Marquette law degree.

To continue on this value point, no one would doubt that the general prominence of Marquette Law School in this region has increased in recent years. While Eckstein Hall is an obvious manifestation of this, the activities within the school better explain our prominence. You are aware, for example, that former Senator Russ Feingold served with us the past two semesters as a visiting professor. He did it the right way, approaching his teaching responsibilities with the energy and seriousness—with the intellect, humility, and curiosity—that mark out good lawyers and teachers. This winter Sen. Feingold is at Stanford University

at its Haas Center for Public Service. We wish him well and hope that overlapping interests may find him with us again in the future.

Let us look to that future. This semester (indeed, during all of 2012), the Law School is joined by Charles Franklin, professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, as a visiting professor of law and public policy. In addition to teaching Quantitative Methods and a seminar at the Law School, Prof. Franklin is leading the new Marquette Law School Poll. This is the next major step in our public policy initiative. The Marquette Law School Poll is detailed in a ten-page white paper that I posted on the faculty blog in November, and soon the poll will have its own page up and running on our website. It will be the largest independent inquiry into public-policy and candidate preferences in the history of Wisconsin, and it will be run as an academic enterprise, with unusual—perhaps unprecedented—transparency of its questions and answers. While in some respects there is an integration between our public policy initiative and our program of direct legal education, you may wish to know that none of your tuition money supports the poll specifically or the initiative more generally. Nor is any of this a diminution in emphasis on what we have done longest and best: preparing Marquette lawyers. My own decision to teach every semester—as does not characterize every law dean’s approach to the job—is only a personal reflection of our continued primary focus. My colleagues on the fulltime and part-time faculty also—indeed, especially—reflect their commitment to your development as lawyers.

All of this is part of an unabashed effort to contribute to the community, both now and hereafter, in a large number of ways. The program of direct legal education is our historic stronghold. The newer public policy initiative has prompted the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* recently to characterize the Law School as “Milwaukee’s public square.” In recent decades, the interests of our faculty and the backgrounds and efforts of our students and alumni have given us a national footprint as well. We work hard to improve the Law School. For the effort to be successful, you, too, need fully to invest. In order to gain maximum value from your time with us, you must do a great deal. To be sure, you must pay significant tuition, but there is so much more: you must—as I stated on your first day of law school—commit your time, your energy, and your intellect to this educational venture; you must develop or exercise your habit of reading; you should come this semester to the Hallows Lecture on February 28 at 4:30 p.m. and the Nies Lecture on April 20 at noon (trusting us again to deliver excellence in these events, you should mark your calendars even before we announce publicly the speakers whom we have recruited); you should engage, as upper-level students, in the community, whether through our internships or our pro bono program; you should attend the Public Interest Law Society Auction on February 10 and the Jenkins Moot Court Finals (Hon. Elena Kagan, presiding) on April 3; you should attend Mass in our Champion Chapel if you are interested in the Catholic faith, or explore Marquette’s resources for folks with other faith interests (we can help you in this).

I am confident, not from conjecture but from conversations with many of your predecessors as Marquette law students—with *Marquette lawyers*, that is—that if you do these things, you will be poised for successful careers in the law. You may or may not become wealthy, but you *will* have every chance for fulfilling professional lives, marked—in the words of the University’s mission statement which so inspire us that we carved them in stone above the fireplace in the Aitken Reading Room—by Excellence, Faith, Leadership, and Service.

Let us have a terrific semester together. We are eager to help.

Sincerely,



Joseph D. Kearney
Dean and Professor of Law