
OPENING THE DOOR TO MUCH MORE

Creation of Lubar Center for Public Policy Research and Civic Education will build on the Law School's innovative work of the past decade

It was a pair of announcements that raised people's eyebrows. In mid-2006, Mike Gousha, longtime news anchor on Milwaukee's WTMJ (Channel 4) and regarded as the preeminent broadcast journalist in Wisconsin, announced he was leaving the station after 25 years. Several months later, Marquette University announced that Gousha was joining the university's Law School as distinguished fellow in law and public policy.

What did that mean? Gousha wasn't going to teach. He wasn't a lawyer. What was he going to do?

Dean Joseph D. Kearney said at the time that the goal was to add a dimension to the Law School's service. In addition to the core mission of educating students to be lawyers and its secondary mission of public service or pro bono work, the Law School would strive to be a crossroads for serious, evenhanded discussion of major public issues. In programs open to the public, Gousha would interview significant and interesting people; host debates involving candidates in major elections; moderate panel discussions on crucial issues facing Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the nation; and, in general terms, broaden and elevate public discourse.

To be sure, the plan was not so detailed. Indeed, Kearney acknowledged at the time that he was proceeding as much on an intuition as on a specific proposal. But the general interest was clear: Marquette University Law School would help a broad audience understand the issues facing the community. The school would not be an advocate but a convener—a place where important thinking about issues is offered in constructive ways that are accessible to wide audiences.

That was the aim. And, almost 11 years later, this much is clear: The idea is working.

The public policy initiative, which has grown larger and more far-reaching year by year, has an expanded and newly ambitious future starting this fall. A \$5.5 million gift from Milwaukee philanthropists Sheldon and Marianne Lubar, announced in April, will combine with \$1.5 million donated by the Lubars in 2010 to create a \$7 million endowment to support future policy initiatives. The policy program has been named the Lubar Center for Public Policy Research and Civic Education.

The gift reflects what Marquette University President Michael R. Lovell characterized as "the belief of Sheldon and Marianne Lubar in our university's ability to bring greater understanding through constructive conversations." There is particular reason for that belief, Shel Lubar said when the gift was announced: "In recent years, in particular, Marquette Law School has played a leading role in significant discussions and research in important topics." ▶▶

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Indeed, shortly after the opening in 2010 of Eckstein Hall, the Law School's extraordinary home, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* characterized the school as "Milwaukee's public square." But few would disagree with Shel Lubar's coda to his own statement: "There is so much more to do."

So what lies ahead for the public policy initiative—that is, for the Lubar Center? Ambitious ideas are in the works. Charles Franklin, professor of law and public policy at the Law School, called on Shakespeare this past spring to frame the overall answer: "What's past is prologue." That is, the best sense of activities to come can be gained from looking at the growth and accomplishments of the public policy initiative to this point. It is a narrative worth recounting, chapter by chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

Professor Michael McChrystal gets credit for offering the idea to Kearney that the Law School ought to hire Gousha and have him lead public programs—or, more generally, give him a platform for his work. After some brokering by Professor Janine Geske to help arrange an initial meeting with Gousha, the ensuing conversations led to an attractive vision for Gousha's role in expanded public programming at the Law School.

What resulted? The signature effort has been "On the Issues with Mike Gousha," a series of programs now in its 11th year. They are one-hour programs, free and open to the public and generally held at 12:15 p.m. on weekdays, regularly filling, with audiences of 200-plus, the room at the Law School now known as the Lubar Center (previously the Appellate Courtroom). The programs are also live-streamed and archived for later viewing online.

The gatherings are serious but relatively informal, consisting of a conversation between Gousha and the guest, with time for questions from audience members. Who are the guests? They form a long, diverse, and impressive list, from major public officials to prominent authors to leaders in shaping policy issues to occasional sports or entertainment figures. Name a subject, particularly one shaping life in the Milwaukee area and Wisconsin more broadly, and it's almost certain to have been the focus of an "On the Issues" program.

Gousha has also hosted debates, often shortly before election days, with candidates for governor of Wisconsin, the U.S. Senate, and seats on the Wisconsin Supreme Court. An especially memorable session brought Republican Gov. Scott Walker and Democratic challenger Tom Barrett, the mayor of Milwaukee, to the new Eckstein Hall as the last major campaign event prior to the nationally spotlighted recall election for governor in June 2012. The two had debated before—as the first major public event in Eckstein Hall in 2010. Many of the debates have been broadcast live on television stations in every major market in Wisconsin. Some have been broadcast on the C-Span national cable channel for political events.

Gousha has also helped organize and has moderated sessions at major conferences at Eckstein Hall, addressing issues such as regional development, sex trafficking, capital punishment, water quality, and the metropolitan area's cultural assets. He also anchors a half-hour television program on Sundays, "UpFront with Mike Gousha," hosted by WISN-TV (Channel 12) in Milwaukee and shown statewide, offering a forum for leading figures in political issues to give their views.





Mike Gousha



Alan Borsuk



Charles Franklin

CHAPTER TWO

The first addition to the public policy team came in 2009 when Alan J. Borsuk ended a distinguished career as a journalist at the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and, three months later, became a senior fellow in law and public policy at the Law School. Borsuk's longtime reporting specialty was kindergarten through twelfth-grade education. He has continued his work on that subject, both through a weekly column on education for the *Journal Sentinel* and by organizing events on education policy at Eckstein Hall.

The education events have brought to Milwaukee national thought leaders such as the chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, best-selling author Paul Tough, and leading researchers and analysts of education trends, often in conjunction with the Marquette University College of Education and Dean Bill Henk. A week before the April 2017 election for Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Education, Borsuk moderated a debate at Eckstein Hall between incumbent Tony Evers and challenger Lowell Holtz. Borsuk also is editor of *Marquette Lawyer* magazine and a frequent contributor to the Law School's Faculty Blog.

CHAPTER THREE

It was clear in 2011 that the following year was shaping up to be an historic one for Wisconsin politics. Providing insight would be a great public service. And one of the crucial aspects of understanding what was unfolding would be to know what the general public was thinking.

Those thoughts underlay conversations, especially among Gousha, Kearney, and McChrystal, that led to the launch of the Marquette Law School Poll and the arrival of Charles Franklin as director of the poll.

Franklin, an established political science professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, took a leave to lead Marquette's polling effort during all of 2012.

The poll is the largest effort ever to understand public opinion in Wisconsin. It quickly earned a reputation as the "gold standard" of polling in Wisconsin by almost uncannily accurate readings of how elections were unfolding. In the course of 2012, Wisconsin saw the special recall election for governor, a U.S. Senate election, and a presidential election—and primaries for each. The last Marquette Law School Poll before election day in each of those cases was almost exactly in line with the actual results.

To build on the success in 2012 of the Marquette Law School Poll and to help build out the public policy initiative, Franklin left the University of Wisconsin and became professor of law and public policy at Marquette Law School. Polling has continued since then on a frequent and in-depth basis. While the "horse race" information heading into major elections is the most widely followed aspect of the poll, the numerous rounds of polling regularly have asked many other questions about what people across Wisconsin are thinking about the economy, major public issues, public leaders, and aspects of their own lives. In specific rounds of polling, questions have focused on everything from water quality to criminal justice practices to use of public libraries.

All results from the poll are made available to the public on the Law School's website (law.marquette.edu/poll). In total, the results of the poll, now almost six years old, provide an unrivaled warehouse of data on public opinion in Wisconsin that will be available and valuable to researchers for years to come.

The poll has become a source of national attention and engagement for the Law School and the university. ▶▶

CHAPTER FOUR

Another initiative has involved Lubar Fellowships for news reporters. With the goal of extending the reach of the public policy initiative, the Law School over the last five years has underwritten in-depth reporting projects focused on major policy issues. Journalists are given lengthy periods—typically, six months or more—to set aside regular duties and immerse themselves in a project, generally leading to a major series of stories easily available to the public. The Law School is involved in selecting the reporters and the topics; the journalists and their news organizations retain control of the work and the resulting stories.

Among the completed projects have been a data-rich analysis of the political polarization of the Milwaukee area and Wisconsin overall, written by Craig Gilbert, the Washington bureau chief of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*; in-depth coverage of the issues and politics involved in the decision to build a new basketball arena in downtown Milwaukee, written by the late *Journal Sentinel* reporter Don Walker; a three-part examination of the future of Milwaukee's Mitchell Field, written for the *Milwaukee Business Journal* by freelance reporter Larry Sandler; and a series of stories on how numerous types of life trauma affect children in Milwaukee, written by *Journal Sentinel* reporter John Schmid.

CHAPTER FIVE

In 2015, Dave Strifling, L'04, was named director of the water law and policy initiative. With Marquette University increasing its involvement in water-related matters, as part of a broad initiative led by President Lovell and Professor Jeanne Hossenlopp, vice-president for research, Strifling has become recognized for his background and insights on water law and policy. These can be found on the Law School's Faculty Blog, in the classroom (Strifling teaches a course on water law), and in public events such as a conference on public policy and American drinking water at Eckstein Hall in 2016.

Most recently, since fall 2016, Professor Amanda Seligman has been a visiting fellow contributing to the policy initiative on a part-time basis. She is chair of the history department at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, senior editor of the *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, and author of several books concerning urban affairs.

Kearney has worked assiduously with university colleagues and alumni and friends of the Law School to ensure that the public policy initiative does not rely on

student tuition money. "The initiative has had a profound effect on our public profile and reputation, especially in this region," he said, "without in any way competing with the program of legal education. Indeed, for interested students, the policy initiative enhances their experience."

CHAPTER SIX AND BEYOND

So what lies ahead? The future of the Lubar Center's work is beginning to take form, but, as is true of the policy effort to this point, the initiative will evolve. The efforts to date are going to continue: "On the Issues with Mike Gousha" programs; rounds of the Marquette Law School Poll; conferences on education, water, and other subjects; new fellowships for journalists to do in-depth work.

"We'll continue in our role as the region's leading convener, bringing together news and policy makers to discuss and debate the issues of the day," Gousha said. But the Lubar endowment opens the door to new directions, expanded research, and more-ambitious programs.

One new undertaking being launched this fall is called the Milwaukee Area Project. It will be directed by Franklin, in close collaboration with John Johnson, who in 2016 became the Law School's Lubar Research Associate.

"The Milwaukee Area Project (MAP) is a comprehensive examination of public opinion, public policy, and social, demographic, and economic conditions throughout the region," Franklin said. "It will provide a forum for the discussion of issues confronting the area, through public events at the Lubar Center in Marquette Law School." The project will include polling of citizens in the region to provide both the public and elected officials with detailed information on the concerns and preferences of residents, information not available from any other public source.

In addition, Franklin said, "the Milwaukee Area Project will provide state-of-the-art statistical analysis of a comprehensive set of administrative, census, and economic data on the region to provide objective information on the current conditions of the area." MAP will use data from administrative records, census collections, and economic reports, as well as unique and original surveys conducted for the project. "These data together provide an integrated perspective on the region as a whole, how the parts fit together, how one area is linked to another, and where disagreements may hamper mutual benefits," he said.

The focus area for the project includes Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Washington, and Waukesha counties.

“As the largest geographic concentration of people, jobs, cultural resources, and economic output in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee area represents a vital center for social and economic development,” Franklin said. “But as with every urban center, the region also faces the challenges of inequality, social disorder, and concentrated poverty.”

Franklin envisions a broad and important project. “The Milwaukee area is interdependent. Suburbs do not flourish without central cities that provide large markets and high-end professional jobs. Flourishing regions also provide a wide range of housing, from affordable to extravagant, and jobs from the least skilled to the most skilled. No successful urban area exists as a monoculture of all poor or all rich, all urban or all suburban. Rather, it is the highly varied niches, both economic and social, that create the dynamism that makes metropolitan regions prosper and grow.”

Gousha said, “With MAP, we’ll place a greater focus on the fortunes of metropolitan Milwaukee. We’ll use polling to provide regular snapshots of public opinion and priorities, and we’ll identify and analyze data to help assess the region’s economic and social well-being.”

Borsuk said he viewed the Lubar grant as offering “both an opportunity and an obligation to think bigger and do better.” He said the gift has energized his commitment to organize programs at Eckstein Hall focusing on education subjects in a broad sense of the term. “I want to see us be a crossroads for exploring policies related not only to what is going on in schools but to everything shaping the paths that lead children toward who they become as adults. That includes subjects such as early childhood education and the broad healthiness and stability of children’s lives, including emotional and mental health.”

More broadly, Gousha said, “The new Lubar Center will also be looking to build on the public policy initiative’s reputation as a thought leader. As part of that

mission, we’ll be inviting leading academics, researchers, and public policy experts, whether at Marquette University or from around the country, to join us at the Law School. The goal is to make the Lubar Center a place for new thinking and fresh ideas, as we look to address some of the region’s biggest challenges.”

Daniel Myers, the provost of Marquette University, expressed enthusiasm and optimism about the directions the Lubar Center will pursue and the impact it will have.

A university, he said, can and should be “an intellectual catalyst” for broader communities. The expertise of faculty members, the research they do, and the contributions of the whole university community can and should make Marquette a large contributor to success in addressing the issues of greater Milwaukee. Marquette wants to reach out to Milwaukee, to be a good citizen of Milwaukee, Myers said. Broadly conceiving the area in some instances to include Chicago—as in the Law School’s past conferences with the *Journal Sentinel* concerning the “Chicago Megacity”—is important, he suggested.

Myers said that the Law School and particularly its public policy work have played these beneficial roles well already. He regards the public policy initiative as a great example of filling the need for serious, objective, provocative, constructive work and called the initiative, to this point, “a tremendous contribution.”

Continuing to expand Marquette University’s involvement in various ways with the Milwaukee community is “hugely important,” Myers said.

Reflecting on the \$1.5 million grant the Lubars made in 2010 and the success of the Law School’s public policy initiative to this point, Myers said, “This is a perfect reflection on an investment the university made good on.”

“What a shining star that effort has become,” he said. “It is a jewel for the whole university.”

And yet, at the same time, the mission for the new Lubar Center is to expand beyond what has been accomplished. As Sheldon Lubar said, “There is so much more to be done.” ■

