



August 22, 2025

Dear Future Marquette Lawyer:

It is a privilege to welcome you to the beginning of a new academic year. While you will spend the bulk of your time this semester with our faculty and your fellow law students, please know that an entire community, on the Marquette University campus and beyond, is eager to help support and guide you in your education and development in the law. I encourage you, even while acting independently, to embrace the help and opportunities that abound.

This letter seeks principally to ensure that you are aware of new faces and resources among our faculty and staff. I will also note some of our important upcoming events, beyond classes, which one involved in the study of law may profit by attending—and we are *all* involved in the law and its study.

Welcomes and Transitions Among Faculty and Staff

Karen Sandrik joins us as professor of law. She served in this role and rank at the Willamette University School of Law in Salem, Oregon, where she also held the post of associate dean for faculty. Professor Sandrik's interests encompass Contracts and other commercial-law courses as well as intellectual property, including Patent Law; indeed, she arrived here early this past summer, to teach Business Associations, a familiar course for her. She is a native Floridian who attended Florida State University's law school before entering practice and then academe. Most recently, last semester, she served as a Fulbright U.S. Global Scholar in Bratislava, Slovakia. We are pleased to welcome Professor Sandrik.

Felicia Caponigri comes aboard as assistant professor of law. A native of South Bend, graduate of the University of Notre Dame's law school, and holder of a Ph.D. from the IMT School for Advanced Studies in Lucca, Italy, Professor Caponigri will teach courses including both Property and Trusts and Estates. She, too, has an intellectual property interest, one that will expand the reach of our IP program and additionally complement our sports law program: viz., an expertise in the law affecting fashion, art, and cultural heritage. Her immediate past experience was as a visiting scholar at Chicago-Kent College of Law, and we are grateful that Professor Caponigri has made her way along the lake to us, if by a rather circuitous international route.

Also joining us as assistant professor of law is Jacob Hamburger. A native of the Chicago area and a graduate of the University of Chicago's law school, Professor Hamburger arrives after a two-year stint as a visiting assistant professor of law at Cornell University. Prior thereto, he worked as an attorney at Legal Aid Chicago, and with us he will teach courses such as Civil Procedure and Immigration Law. Like other

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faculty, Professor Hamburger looks forward to the full range of opportunities available to our faculty, even beyond the classroom, both in academic scholarship and by participating in the legal and broader community that he now calls home. Indeed, I have seen him and our other new colleagues begin already to embrace these possibilities. We are glad that he is with us.

We are fortunate to welcome each of those individuals and others yet. Daniel Sawall, a Marquette lawyer, is a new full-time reference and instructional services librarian, after practicing law in this area and completing a master's degree program in library and information science at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Lexi Garczynski joins us as the recruiting specialist in the Law School's Career Planning Center. Jen Sherer, a colleague in Marquette's office of University Advancement, is the Law School's new director of development. While we will miss Donnette Tinsley, an administrative assistant to a number of faculty, who retired early this summer, I hope that you will join me in welcoming Annika Parks, her successor.

As the foregoing reflects, not just faculty but also staff contribute mightily to your educational experience here. For a special note, we remain grateful to Steve Nelson, who retired in June after thirty-five years at the Law School, many of them as a resident specialist in legal instructional technology. Steve's talent, patience, and good humor helped so many of us in circumstances that ranged from solving small computer crises to seizing broader opportunities to use technology as a teaching tool. We welcome Joey Brucie, who takes Steve's seat (or budget line), as a web application specialist.

Let me move to conclude the focus on personnel: Other changes include titles, reflecting greater responsibilities, with Phil Plestina now director of law school business affairs and Rasha Kluge admissions coordinator. Even as we welcomed the aforementioned new full-time faculty, we said goodbye last May to Jason Reinecke, assistant professor of law, who has decamped to the University of Wisconsin Law School in Madison, his hometown and undergraduate alma mater, after beginning his teaching career here. And it is rather a regret to have generally to leave aside developments with respect to part-time faculty, whose contributions and service to the Law School and students such as you are immense and greater even than their numbers.

So in that last regard, even toward the conclusion of the general topic, please permit me a representative example of each sort: a departure and an arrival among our part-time faculty. Toni Vacca retires after helping coordinate our alternative dispute resolution program these past several years. I am very grateful to Professor Vacca for her experienced leadership. Tom Reed, long-time head of the state public defender's Milwaukee trial office, returns as an adjunct professor of law after several years away from the faculty if not the school. He retired from the full-time practice this past spring, but he is scarcely finished with the law or the legal community. In addition to co-teaching a course next spring, he is available to engage with students concerning public defender or trial work, and he already is engaged in any amount of law school programming. Welcome back to Professor Reed, and, for the large point of these

representative examples, a warm “thank you” to each member of Marquette Law School’s part-time faculty and staff.

All of these individuals will influence your or your fellow students’ education. I know this from long experience, of course, some of it with Marquette lawyers looking back on their own careers. Among those colleagues often remembered to me by alumni have been Professor John Kircher and Professor Carolyn Edwards, senior members of the faculty upon my arrival as an assistant professor in 1997 and emeriti faculty since their retirements a decade or more ago. Both Professor Edwards and Professor Kircher passed away this summer, but their combined more than eighty years of service in the classrooms of Marquette Law School have left an enduring mark on our institution and, most especially, on so many of their former students—Marquette lawyers. My current law school colleagues, full-time and part-time, faculty and staff, look forward to their own work, direct and indirect, with *you*.

Some Upcoming Events To Note and Opportunities for Broad Engagement

Opportunities to engage in the legal community beyond your classes abound in Eckstein Hall. Next month, for example, on September 25, we will host the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. The main event will be a window into the court’s regular work: the court will publicly hear oral arguments, in six pending cases, in our Lubar Center, with first-year students attending in connection with their Legal Analysis, Writing, and Research course and upper-level students also invited to attend. There will be more to the day beyond the arguments, as will be announced as we get closer, and your participation will be welcome. While the panel is not announced publicly until the morning of the argument, by Seventh Circuit practice, I know that the Hon. Diane Sykes, a proud Marquette lawyer, will be in attendance at an early-evening reception in the Zilber Forum. This will give us the opportunity to come together as a community and to mark the conclusion of her service as chief judge of the court, for Judge Sykes will take senior status within a week of the event, as announced this past spring. All will be welcome.

The Barrock Lecture on Criminal Law will be another premier event this fall. At 5 p.m. on November 13, Ron Wright, the Needham Yancey Gulley Professor of Criminal Law at Wake Forest University, will deliver the lecture. He will speak on “The Place(s) for Localism in Criminal Law and Enforcement.” We invite such a distinguished lecturer to learn from him or her, yet you may be sure that Professor Wright comes in part out of his respect for our faculty and community and his awareness that he will learn from us. In any event, I hope that you will join us—look for registration details down the road.

So those are some special programs, if you will—and very much consistent with this letter’s recent theme of providing representative examples rather than an exhaustive catalogue. Let me mention another set of ways to participate. Marquette University has become unusually well known throughout the nation—renowned, even—for the engagement of its students in service in the community. This seems to me almost in the natural order, given the historic mission of Jesuit schools in the United States, so frequently located in urban areas. Yet the pull of these programs is not inevitable but requires an open heart and mind. At Marquette Law School, our

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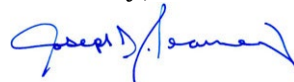
development of the Office of Public Service (we created OPS in 2006) may be relatively latter day in our history (which dates to 1892), and the inspiration comes in part from our effort to secure a legacy for my great predecessor, the late Howard B. Eisenberg, whose service as dean was relatively short (1995–2002). But, for my fundamental point here, the effort has been succeeding, with our making contributions through pro bono and public service work, principally because individuals like you—Marquette law students—have seen advantages all around in being of service to others through your developing legal skills. You will not regret continuing to look for and seize upon these opportunities.

And where will you find these opportunities? Well, no one would doubt the frequent incidental value of the ordinary conversation with another member of our dynamic law school community: this is one of the reasons that we designed Eckstein Hall to be so *attractive* and to engender interactions. Yet the Law School also offers organized or relatively formal ways to connect and learn about opportunities. The greatest key to all of this is our twice-weekly electronic newsletter or email, *Law News*. Whether it is Lubar Center events (for example, you might register promptly for the September 4 program involving a screening of the new documentary, “Becoming Thurgood: America’s Social Architect”), offerings of student organizations, research assistant positions, access to information about OPS programs, or such seemingly far-off matters as registration materials for next semester (including supervised field placements and other such “Hammerships”) and general details about final exams in December (if you can imagine), *Law News* will help you unlock information about possibilities available to you, just as *Marquette Today* will inform you about university activities more generally.

In short, the work at hand is, inherently, on you, and we hope that it will continue to stoke the fire *in* you. We can provide the building, the new faculty, the programs, and much else—even the spirit and ideals developed over more than a century by your forebears. *You* must provide your time, intellect, and energy. If you do, I have an idea or, at least, a hope concerning (y)our future. It may seem parochial for me to express it, but in fact the concept to be invoked is broad, capacious, and timeless, though not altogether immutable. For me, it is well captured in a remark by a graduate some years ago when we honored her with the “Alumnus of the Year Award.” In accepting the award in 2016, Judge Diane Sykes began her remarks with this single sentence: “I am so proud to be a Marquette lawyer.” During my many years as dean, I have not heard a more heartfelt or inspiring statement. While I focus here on you, permit me to say that the faculty and staff would consider our own work a success if, years hence, any of you should have occasion to speak or even think along the same lines as that member of our Class of 1984.

Let us together get to the more immediate work.

Sincerely,



Joseph D. Kearney
Dean and Professor of Law