

Letissa Reid: Building relationships—and careers

Career Planning Center welcomes assistant director



Connecting with people is both a personal trait and a professional asset for Letissa Carver Reid. “I seem to be good at talking to people,” she says. “I know the gas station attendant very well.”

Her strength in networking has helped her throughout her career as a lawyer. And it is a core part of her new role as assistant director for career planning at Marquette University Law School. Reid joined the Law School November 1. Her position was added to the Career Planning Center better to support students and alumni. She joined Paul D. Katzman, assistant dean for career planning, and Erin M. Binns, director of career planning.

In the challenging job climate that law school graduates face nationwide, Reid’s talent for making connections is helping boost Marquette lawyers as they launch their careers. “I have a really positive story for students,” Reid says. There are several parts to that story.

One part is the importance of networking and relationships. Reid’s own story is a case study. She says she has benefited greatly from mentors and colleagues wherever she has gone. Reid grew up in Milwaukee and graduated from Divine Savior Holy Angels High School. She received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan and a law degree from Indiana

University School of Law. She became a clerk to an appellate judge in Chicago, which led to a position with a large law firm there. Reid had no prior interest in environmental law, but a mentor encouraged her to focus on the area, which she did. She continued that interest after she joined the Chicago office of a Milwaukee-based law firm, Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan. She took a career break after she and her husband, Michael, had a son.

Ironically, the only career step she took that didn’t benefit from prior relationships was her application for her current position. But Reid says she is finding that her ability to build and maintain relationships is helping open doors for Law School graduates. She says that she gets a warm reception wherever she goes. “The alumni are really, really receptive to me,” she says. “They understand that the climate is tough, and they want to help students with mentoring and networking.”

A second positive part of what Reid tells students is that there are opportunities and much room for success in today’s challenging job market, but it takes longer to find positions than it did a few years ago, and people may not get their first choice. Patience and persistence are virtues.

And a third part consists simply of trying to convince sometimes-stressed students of a simple message: “It’s going to be OK.” Walk by Reid’s office or spot her elsewhere in Eckstein Hall, and chances are good you will find her talking with students, helping them navigate a path ahead, and assuring them things will work out.

An African-American woman lawyer would have faced big hurdles a generation ago, and challenges remain. But Reid says she has had good opportunities. “I am proud of who I am,” she says, and she treats her identity as “a badge of honor.”

As for her new job, “I’m absolutely having a very good time here.” And she is eager to focus that positive energy on helping students and graduates find good professional situations of their own. ■

Justice Kagan gives students perspective on the Supreme Court— and on Eckstein Hall

In news stories and in the general public image, taking a case to the United States Supreme Court primarily means standing in front of the nine justices to present an oral argument.

Count that for about five percent of what goes into presenting a case, Justice Elena Kagan told the more than 200 Marquette Law School students packed into Eckstein Hall's Appellate Courtroom on April 3. The other 95 percent is in the briefs submitted to the justices. Kagan said that she would urge anyone preparing a case for the Court to concentrate on those written arguments.

Kagan visited the Law School to help judge the annual Jenkins Honors Moot Court Competition. In addition, she took part in a special one-hour "On the Issues" session with Mike Gousha, distinguished fellow in law and public policy, intended especially for law students.

Asked about the importance of oral arguments, Kagan said that she often wondered about this when she was solicitor general, the position she held before joining the Court in 2010. Having now seen things from both sides, she said oral arguments matter the most in lower-profile cases where there are no "priors," or previous similar cases.

Kagan added that the arguments can matter sometimes: "I can definitely think of cases where I went in [to oral arguments] thinking one thing and came out thinking another," as well as times when she went in undecided and came out supporting one side.

She also said that oral arguments can serve as a valuable time for justices to make points with each other, "and that is especially true if you have a little bit of an unusual take on a case." She said, "Oral argument is a great time to plant a seed." That is particularly relevant for her, as the junior member of the Court. For when it comes to discussing how to decide a case in the justices-only conferences, usually held a few days after arguments, every other justice gives a view before she gets her chance. The oral argument session can be a way for

her to get her views heard before the conference meets, Kagan said.

Responding to a student who asked why people should have faith in the Court, Kagan said that sometimes there are predictable 5-to-4 votes. "That's just the nature of things," she said. But she added, "There are a world of cases that people don't as often take note of, and some quite important, where there aren't these predictable divides." Those often are the cases that show the strengths of the deliberative processes the Court uses.

She called the Court "an inspiring institution." From the inside, she said, "what you're most impressed with is just how prepared the justices are." Despite strong differences expressed in some opinions, personal relations among justices are warm. "Everybody is struggling to get the answers right," she said.

Kagan clearly looked at her visit partly through the eyes of a former dean of Harvard Law School. "This is quite the building," she said of Eckstein Hall as she started the session with students. She said that she had built a building when she was dean but suggested that Eckstein Hall may be better (Gousha graciously did not press her on the point). Later in the session, she said being a law school dean was the hardest job she has had, adding that it made her use "every muscle I have." ■



Alumni honored for achievements



Natalie Black



Adrian Schoone



Stefanie Ebbens Kingsley



Ante Udovicic

Four Marquette lawyers were recognized at the National Awards Reception in Eckstein Hall in late April for their accomplishments. The four were:

Alumna of the Year

Natalie A. Black, L'78. Black is senior vice president and chief legal counsel for Kohler Co. and president of the Kohler Foundation. She is involved in a wide range of pursuits, from international business deals to advocating for effective programs to teach children to read. She is increasingly involved in philanthropic work and in efforts such as teaching her grandchildren the responsibilities of charitable giving. Black is a trustee of Marquette University. She and her husband live in Sheboygan County.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Adrian P. Schoone, L'59. Schoone has practiced in Racine County and headed his own law firm for more than half a century. He is a past president of the State Bar of Wisconsin and has served the profession in many other roles. He said he gets his strongest sense of accomplishment from “vindicating rights or enforcing obligations for clients in need of that.” He said he intends to continue practicing law “as long

as it is enjoyable and rewarding,” adding, “By that standard, I’ll be doing it indefinitely.”

Howard B. Eisenberg Service Award

Stefanie Ebbens Kingsley, L'05. A Cedarburg, Wis., native, Kingsley is now directing attorney for the Columbia, Kentucky, office of the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund. In addition to working with low-income clients and a wide range of legal needs, she is involved in advocacy on issues such as regulating payday loans. “I can’t imagine doing anything else,” she said. “It’s my mission that if better is possible, good is not enough.”

Charles W. Mentkowski Sports Law Alumnus of the Year

Ante Z. Udovicic, L'98. Udovicic is athletics and activities director of South Milwaukee High School. “It is very rewarding to be able to help students as they move through school and toward college or life after high school,” he said. “People used to ask me all the time if law school was a waste of time since I am not practicing law, and I always tell them absolutely not. Hardly a day goes by where my legal training at Marquette hasn’t helped in some way.” ■

IP Colloquium brings legal scholars to Eckstein Hall

Intellectual property law often focuses on restrictions on the use of others’ creative thinking and results, but a special program in the 2011-12 academic year allowed Marquette Law School students to benefit from share-the-intellectual-wealth offerings from a dozen experts in the field.

The Intellectual Property Colloquium Series, organized by Professor Irene Calboli, faculty director of the Intellectual Property & Technology Program, brought 11 professors from other law schools to Eckstein Hall for a half dozen lunch-time presentations in each of the two semesters. The sessions were open to the public as well as students.

The wide-ranging series addressed issues involving medicine, science, freedom of expression, sports, corporate identity, and other areas where intellectual property law plays a central role. From “Contraband: Art, Advertising & Property in the Age of Corporate Identity,” with Sonia Katyal of Fordham University School of Law, to “Jewish Process Thought and Copyright Policy,” with Professor Roberta Rosenthal Kwall of the DePaul University College of Law, the subjects were provocative and diverse.

“The goal of the series was to expose students to current hot issues in IP by bringing in academic leaders in the field and fostering academic debate,” Calboli said. ■

Youth Law Day brought about 150 students from a half dozen high schools in Milwaukee to Eckstein Hall on March 15 to get a look at how the legal system works and some of the things that are involved in becoming and succeeding as a lawyer. The program included a mock trial, presided over by Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Marshall Murray, and encouragement for students to pursue legal careers. Speakers included Dean Joseph D. Kearney, Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm, and several judges and attorneys. “Don’t let anybody else tell you you can’t be successful,” Judge Carl Ashley, L’83, told the students. ■



Certificates added in litigation and alternative dispute resolution

Newly graduated Marquette lawyers this May include the first students to receive certificates in two particular specialties in which they have received in-depth training. The new certificate programs are in litigation and alternative dispute resolution.

Matt Parlow, associate dean for academic affairs, said that faculty members worked to identify appropriate areas for certificates and develop rigorous requirements for students before adding the two certificates to the popular sports law certificate that more than 20 students earn each year.

“Marquette Law School has always been known for training practice-ready lawyers,” Parlow said of the litigation certificate. And in recent years, he noted, the Law School’s alternative dispute resolution training has achieved national acclaim.

To qualify for the certificates, students are required not only to take a substantial amount of classroom work related to those areas but to engage in significant co-curricular activities, such as internships, clinical opportunities, and participation in student competitions.

The litigation certificate program is headed by Professor Daniel D. Blinka. The alternative dispute resolution program is led by Professor Andrea K. Schneider.

Parlow said that certificate programs allow students to organize their academic work around particular interests, send signals to potential employers of a student’s commitment and beginning proficiency in an area, and signal in general the Law School’s strengths.

“Litigation and alternative dispute resolution are two strongholds for us, and we are eager to build on them,” Parlow said. ■

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