Professor Judith McMullen: Law School Lodestar

Professor Judith G. McMullen joined the Marquette Law School faculty in 1987. During the ensuing 39 years, she has taught courses in family law, trusts and estates, alternative dispute resolution, and the law and mental health. At the end of the past academic year, she became professor emerita. On May 5, 2026, at the last faculty meeting of the year, two of her colleagues described her impact. Here are edited versions of their remarks.

PROFESSOR MELISSA LOVE KOENIG, L'99

I have been fortunate as a law student to take two classes with Professor McMullen and, for more than 20 years, to work with her as a colleague on the law faculty. She is a wonderful professor and an asset to our community. Judi is smart, intellectual, grounded, and kind. In her work, which will be remembered for a long time in our community, she has touched the lives of countless students and faculty.

I want to emphasize the word *grounded* as a theme. Judi's teaching, scholarship, and service all demonstrate her mission to consider the practical and real-world problems that individuals face and how lawyers can play a positive role in helping clients.

In class, Judi was a standout professor. She made the law come alive for me. I can still remember various lessons and examples Professor McMullen offered in my two courses with her, Trusts and Estates and, then, Parent, Child, and State. Judi is very good at describing real-life scenarios and helping students see and feel what a legal problem looks like. I can recall Judi describing the unique needs of parents planning their estate when they have children with special needs. That really stuck with me. The way Judi described the issue made me more empathetic and helped me mature in my thinking about the role of a lawyer as a problem solver.

I remember being astounded by the law's treatment of the relationship between parents and their children, especially the role of a father. Again, Judi's description of various scenarios, both in the textbook and through other examples she provided, allowed me to envision people's problems three-dimensionally. Her lessons stuck with me, and at various times in my career, I have been able to picture and hear her lessons as I have worked on cases, for instance, pending in the Wisconsin Supreme Court that involved termination of parental rights. Judi provided a lasting, grounded framework for my understanding of the law in relation to the complexities of family life.

Judi has served as a role model for my teaching. I have tried to picture what Judi did well in the classroom and to emulate that approach. She mentored me as a new professor. Through her guidance, I came to understand what students appreciate from a law professor. I welcomed her sincere guidance, which I took to heart and have tried to follow over these years. Many times I have used her advice to shape my courses. She has always been thoughtful, direct, and approachable. I have appreciated reading Judi's scholarship, which has taken an intelligent, practical, and heartfelt approach in connecting the theoretical aspects of law with problem solving.

Judi, thank you for being an outstanding professor, colleague, and friend all these years.

PROFESSOR KALI MURRAY

Very often, when we refer to "first(s)" in any given profession, we refer to them as a pioneer, and it is often an apt word, given the bravery and curiosity of pioneers. *Pioneer* is an appropriate term for the career of Professor Judith McMullen at Marquette, one of the first women hired at the Law School and one of the first three women to achieve the status of (full) professor of law.

I prefer, though, the term *lodestar*. Judi was a lodestar on our faculty in the sense that no matter where you were, whether a junior or senior scholar, a first-generation student, or an active alumnus, her steady, fiercely intelligent presence served as a guide for best practices in our community.

In scholarship, Judi's scholarly impact on family law was nationally recognized. Judi produced groundbreaking work on the law of children, including the impact of criminal records in youth, the effect of sexual and emotional maltreatment on children, issues related to underage drinking, and more. Her range has included trust and estate law, disability, and elder care. And she has served as a role model for how to build a sustained curiosity throughout a scholarly career.

In teaching, Judi was a rock star in our family law curriculum, teaching numerous courses related to family law and serving as a mentor to countless new professors in teaching the intricacies of trusts and estates in Wisconsin. In service, Judi calmly guided various faculty past the rocky shoals of promotion and tenure and countless students through those pivotal years of studying family law and trusts and estates.

In a faculty, it is useful to know where to look to learn the best values of a community, and it was a great privilege to look to Judi, our lodestar, to learn the best values of Marquette University Law School. ■



Professor Judith G. McMullen