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Legal Education, Professionalism, and the Public Interest

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A Message from the Dean

Legal Education, Professionalism, and the Public Interest

Alfred C. Aman, Jr.
Dean and Roscoe C. O'Byrne Professor of Law

Not long ago, I had the great pleasure of welcoming the Class of 2002 to the Law School. It is an academically outstanding class, diverse in many ways and well prepared to take full advantage of the educational opportunities provided at our School. I congratulated our newest students on the achievements that brought them here because I know what awaits them. I believe that we have one of the best law faculties in the country. Our professors are on the cutting edge of their own scholarly fields, and they bring all of this expertise and knowledge into the classroom. Indiana is a place where teaching and research go hand in hand, in ways that will benefit our students throughout their careers.

The law is always changing, and sometimes it changes very dramatically. What our faculty is able to do so well is to give our students the broad conceptual frameworks that

will be necessary for them to deal with problems in the future—some of which we can only guess at today. We give them skills to grow on, since their careers will stretch well into the 21st century. Our students will, of course, study the fundamentals of our legal system—property, criminal law, contracts, torts, civil procedure and the constitution. They will hone their writing skills (we believe deeply in learning by writing), and they will have opportunities to try cases in one of our three legal clinics or in our trial practice courses as well as mediate and negotiate settlements. They can study the relationship of law to high technology here—in areas involving computers, communications and genetics; they can take various interdisciplinary perspectives on law and study the globalization of law, international and comparative law and business and corporate issues in new contexts, both transnational and domestic. Our mission is

to prepare our students to deal with the issues and problems of the 21st Century and to help others deal with them. We hope their education here will challenge them, and that these challenges will turn out to be a useful dress rehearsal for what the future will demand of them.

Our commitment is to our students now, for the sake of their future service as professionals. Our mission centers on them as individuals, and their capacity for growth, concern and engagement. In that regard, we give them the analytical tools they will need to be first rate lawyers, and also provide them with opportunities to learn of the broader roles that law and lawyers can play in our society.

To help our first year students, in particular, reflect on the multiple ways lawyers can be involved in their respective communities, we have instituted a summer program that has

been extremely successful, the Public Interest Internship Program. This program offers *all* first year students the opportunity to perform legal work with a for-credit internship in the public interest in a variety of legal settings throughout Indiana and around the country. This past summer, seventy-two of our first-year students spent their summers in prosecutors' offices, legal services offices, the Indiana Attorney General's Office, judges' chambers, state agencies and other not-for-profit legal settings. It is very much a reciprocal relationship—our students gain hands-on knowledge and the partnering agencies receive the much needed assistance. In addition, the experience our students gain enables them to reflect on the various roles of a lawyer in their classes in the following years, especially those involving the legal profession.

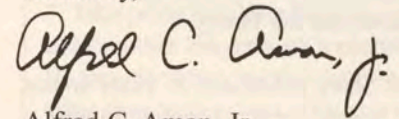
Programs such as these can help to develop a broad sense of professionalism in our students and they reaffirm what we try very hard to impress upon students while they are in law school: They need to become a very different kind of student than

they have been in the past. They have all been very successful students, and we want them to continue on this path. They have been conscientious as student, and we want to help them understand what it will mean to remain so as lawyers. They have pursued and achieved academic excellence and the rewards it can bring. In law school, we now encourage them to begin thinking about what it means to be a professional and what might lie ahead in their careers. As lawyers, they will have responsibility for peoples' lives and livelihoods. Their clients' homes, businesses and, in some cases, their very lives will depend on them. They will have to do their jobs, not just because of a fear of failure or for a good grade, but because justice may some day depend on it. They will, of course, be paid in practice (at least that is the goal) but they will also want to do their job well because it is their job and people will depend on them. The chance to gain the kinds of experiences open to our first year students in our Public Interest Law Program reinforces this sense of professionalism and, we hope, gives them the beginning of a broad sense of how

important a lawyer's role can be for society. We encourage new students to reflect on these experiences and, when they need a little extra discipline to ponder a tough case in law school just a little longer, to remember that they are, in effect, preparing for this kind of service in the future.

I hope you will all have the chance to meet our students in the future by coming back to the law school whenever you can. There are many alumni events throughout the year and I hope you will join us for one or more. I also hope you will feel free just to drop in whenever you are in Bloomington. We would love to see you—and I think you would all be proud of our students today and recognize in them the quality and dedication that have long been the hallmarks of this School.

Sincerely,



Alfred C. Aman, Jr.

Dean and Roscoe C. O'Byrne
Professor of Law