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Dean's Desk: Partnerships prep students for Indiana legal careers

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November 5, 2014



DEAN'S DESK

Austen Parrish
Indiana University
Maurer School of Law

The growth in Indiana's economy has been a strong success story since the Great Recession. Manufacturing, real estate, health care and life sciences are making a comeback, driven by talented entrepreneurs operating in a favorable business climate.

A growing economy needs all kinds of professional support – including leaders who have been trained in law and know how to problem-solve. That's why we have developed several new programs at the IU Maurer School of Law designed to attract the best and brightest students to our school, introduce them to the growing global economy – and, we hope, keep them in the Hoosier State.

Partner scholarship programs. Our experience proves that graduates of liberal arts and engineering schools make great lawyers. And because the demand for patent lawyers is strong, so is the demand for law students with engineering degrees. Toward that end, we have funded law school scholarships at some of the finest colleges and universities in Indiana and across the nation. For example, the Purdue Intellectual Property Law Scholars Program enables Purdue's College of Engineering to send up to two of its graduates to the Maurer School of Law each year with a half-tuition scholarship. Students also will be named research fellows in our Center for Intellectual Property Research and be paired with an upperclassmen mentor to guide them through their law school experience. Depending on where the student is from and other factors, the program will save them between \$45,000 and \$75,000 over their three years of law school.

We have established similar programs with our state's other outstanding engineering school – Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology – and with Wabash College, one of Indiana's liberal arts standouts. We have expanded the program to other great engineering and liberal arts schools throughout the country, including Dartmouth College, Georgia Institute of Technology, Grinnell College, Knox College, Princeton University and Vassar College. Discussions are underway in our own backyard, too, with IU's College of Arts and Sciences, Kelley School of Business, Jacobs School of Music, School of Global and International Studies, and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

“Back Home Again.” At a recent Evansville Bar Association event, I met a lawyer who grew up and spent her entire life in Indiana but moved to Illinois right after college. She lost her Indiana residency as a result, and we lost a fine student to the University of Illinois because she couldn't afford nonresident tuition.

To prevent this from happening again, we recently introduced our Back Home Again program, which offers a guaranteed minimum annual scholarship of \$20,000 to nonresident students who meet certain entering credential requirements and have lived in Indiana for at least 10 years, even though they might not meet the state's residency requirements for in-state tuition. Because our nonresident and resident tuition is currently about \$49,000 and \$30,000, the scholarship effectively reduces qualifying students' tuition to in-state levels.

While the "Back Home Again" reference should resonate with Hoosiers, this program is more than a clever slogan. It should encourage our best to return to Indiana. As our state's economy rebounds, greater opportunities for lawyers will develop – as practitioners, in business and in public service. Once students get here, we can further strengthen their ties with the state and the important role they play in the state's prosperity and future.

Direct admit. The Maurer School of Law enjoys close ties with many other schools across the IU Bloomington campus. For the past few years, we have waived the LSAT requirement for outstanding IUB students who forge ties with our law school while they are still undergraduates. Students with a GPA of 3.85 or higher, and who commit to making our school their first choice, are eligible for the program – and the program's gaining momentum. Thirty-three students have matriculated since the program's inception in 2011, and 16 have already committed to it for the class of 2017.

Global partnerships. As Indiana's economy becomes increasingly globalized, law students need to have an understanding of how they will play on the international stage. We have strong exchange programs with numerous global law schools, and those schools send their most talented students to Bloomington every year. They sit in class side-by-side with their American counterparts, each learning from the other about the customs, cultures and legal traditions of their respective home countries. We count these 14 partner schools in three continents – and their students – among our most valuable assets for preparing tomorrow's lawyers.

As one of the top public law schools in the nation, we attract students from all over the United States – and the world – who understand the advantages of an IU education. As the state's flagship law school, however, we also have an enduring commitment to educating Indiana's best and brightest and encouraging them to stay in the state and contribute to its growth. Taken together, these three programs will go a long way toward advancing a strong commitment that goes back to our founding in 1842 as one of the oldest law schools in the nation and the first state-funded law school in the Midwest. •

Austen L. Parrish is dean and James H. Rudy Professor of Law at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law. The opinions expressed are those of the author.