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Dean's Desk: Amid COVID-19 shutdown, IU Maurer displays resilience

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Maurer School of Law
Bloomington

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Dean's Desk

Austen Parrish
Indiana University
Maurer School of Law

The spring semester is coming to a close in Bloomington, but in ways none of us expected. The COVID-19 pandemic required us to shift to teaching remotely in a matter of days, and all on-campus events — including commencement — have been canceled or postponed. Fortunately, when classes resumed remotely March 30, our students, faculty and staff more than rose to the occasion and pulled together, and the transition has been smoother than expected.

Our community's resilience and positive attitude through the pandemic have led me to reflect more broadly on the wonderful support — financial and otherwise — we receive from alumni and friends of the school. It seemed an appropriate time to extend a tremendous thank you to all of the incredible alumni, friends, faculty, staff and students who have shown their love and support for the law school, and to share just a few examples of how that generosity continues to make a significant difference. It's a particularly appropriate time to reflect as Indiana University winds up its historic bicentennial capital campaign this summer.

Our students would not be where they are today without alumni help. Each year, the law school provides millions of dollars in scholarship assistance to students. A key part of that is made possible through alumni generosity. Endowed student scholarships were created last year by Michael E. and Lori Flannery, Robert P. and Troy Kassing, and Millard and Wendy Lesch, and by George P. Smith II in memory of our former library director, Colleen Pauwels. And that doesn't include the many gifts that we received in prior years, such as the school naming gift from Mickey and Janie Maurer that has been dedicated entirely to student scholarships.

Thanks to the generosity of these and many other alumni, our students' average debt level on graduation is in the bottom third of all U.S. law schools — the lowest of any Indiana law school, lower than neighbors like Ohio State, and much lower than schools like Chicago, Northwestern and Michigan, not to mention Harvard and Yale. Over a third of our students last year graduated with no loan debt.

But it's not just through scholarships where alumni have made a difference. A recently announced gift from Kathleen DeLaney and Ann DeLaney, which will support students in the school's moot court and trial competition program, provides another great example. Kathleen and Ann are members of the Indianapolis firm DeLaney & DeLaney. Our Moot

Court Room is being named in the DeLanays' honor, and a formal ceremony commemorating their gift will take place after Baier Hall reopens.

The law school is part of one of the nation's leading research universities, and alumni also have helped the law school fulfill our research ambitions, endowing professorships that enable us to attract and retain world-class faculty. In 2015, Glenn Scolnik and his wife Donna established the Scolnik Clinical Chair, which has been held by Prof. W. William Weeks III. The first clinical chair to be established in the law school, it supports the law school's important collaboration with the Conservation Law Center. Alumni endowed three professorships in 2017: the George P. Smith II Distinguished Professorship, held by Robert L. Fischman, an expert in environmental law; the Stephen F. Burns Professorship, held by William D. Henderson, an expert on the legal profession; and the Milt and Judi Stewart Professorship, held by Jayanth Krishnan, a leading socio-legal scholar on law, the legal profession and globalization. The Stewarts' gift also funded the Center on the Global Legal Profession, which was named in their honor.

Finally, last year, after a large anonymous gift from an alum — combined with leadership gifts from former deans Lauren Robel and Alfred Aman, from me, and from many other faculty and staff — we established an endowed professorship in honor of an alumna who was the first African American woman to serve on a state supreme court in the United States. It is the first in the history of Indiana University to honor an African American woman and the first in the law school's history to be named after a woman of color.

Unrestricted gifts to the law school have played a major role in the success of the bicentennial capital campaign, and so too have gifts to renovate our facilities. Unrestricted gifts provide us with the flexibility to fund programs that have the greatest need, depending on the circumstances, and are a great help during uncertain times.

Significant unrestricted gifts to the campaign during the past year came from Allen R. Reed and his wife, Denise Rippetoe-Reed, and from Bill and Nancy Hunt. In addition, we enrolled 33 new Partners in Excellence, whose five-year pledges of at least \$2,500 annually will provide additional unrestricted funds as part of the Bicentennial Brick Campaign. We now have 58 Partners in Excellence, compared with 25 at the beginning of the campaign. These gifts help the law school with much-needed funds today, since many of the larger gifts will be realized years from now. Significant gifts from a range of alumni over the past five years have supported the Fromm Fund, in honor of the late dean of students Len Fromm, which has been essential in providing assistance to students with emergency financial needs as a result of the pandemic. The Office of Student Affairs is being named after Len Fromm to honor his many contributions to the school and to student success.

We are also grateful for the very significant estate gift from Lowell Baier, which is dedicated to supporting facilities and building plans. In honor of his gift, the law school's main building was named in his honor and, at Lowell's request, our library was named in tribute to his favorite professor and mentor, Jerome Hall. Others have made an impact on our facilities, too. As a result of support from our Board of Visitors, the law school was able to replace its wood floors, update several classrooms and begin refurbishment of other spaces in Baier Hall.

Finally, our alumni have stepped up support of the school in nonfinancial but incredibly significant ways. As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, it became clear that the employment outlook for both summer and post-graduation was changing in significant ways. I sent out a call to all of our alumni asking for their help in three ways: identifying summer job opportunities — paid or unpaid — to help fill unplanned résumé gaps; supporting our Bridge to Practice program, which provides fellowships to recent graduates while they await their bar exam results; and hiring our graduates as full-time employees. The initial response to my request has been overwhelming. We have already heard from dozens of alumni offering to help, or who have reached out to their networks.

Others helped, too. The Indiana Supreme Court and the Board of Law Examiners have been national leaders in thinking carefully and thoughtfully about the bar exam and how to support new lawyers during this pandemic, and the Indiana State Bar Association reached out immediately to the law schools in the state asking how it could be of help.

It's going to be a challenge for our new graduates and law students with the economic impact of the pandemic, and we know our students will continue to need alumni support. If you are able to assist our students with summer jobs or their employment prospects, please contact Anne McFadden, assistant dean for career services, at anmcfadd@iu.edu.

We are grateful to our alumni and friends for providing support throughout the bicentennial campaign. All of us are looking forward to the day when we can reconvene in person and celebrate brighter days. For now, I am proud to be dean of one of the nation's best public law schools, whose alumni care so much about it and our students' success. •

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