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Dean's Message

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Indiana University School of Law

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Dean's Message



[Note: On November 22nd, we held a formal ground-breaking ceremony on the east side of the Law School, adjacent to (but not in) Dunn Woods. The ceremony commemorated the long-awaited start of construction

of the \$11 million addition to and renovation of the Bloomington Law Building. The ceremony was attended by some 150 people. I, among others, had the privilege of saying a few words. As my Dean's Message for this issue, I thought I would share with you my thoughts and feelings on this exciting occasion.]

President Ryan has aptly described the need for and the importance to all of us of this new addition. Vice-President Gros Louis has equally felicitously given us an historical perspective and noted that law is not only a learned profession, but also an academic discipline.

As a learned profession, with a special if not unique responsibility to the society for providing the structure for individual rights as well as collective organization, we in the Law School must be attentive to the expectations of and the requirements imposed upon us by the courts, the Bar, and the public at large.

As an academic discipline, we share the values of the academy—a commitment to exploring the frontiers of human knowledge and understanding, and a dedication to conveying that knowledge, untainted by bias and venality, to the generations of the future. Nowhere can those values be better realized than in the bosom of a great university. We in law do not stand apart from the rest. History, sociology, economics, political science, philosophy, literature, arts—to name only a few—all contribute to what is law, just as law contributes to the ways in which we organize and experience our human- and humane-world.

That this symbiotic relationship is appreciated by our State's responsible leaders is attested to by the fact that we are here today. The Trustees of Indiana University, President Ryan, Ken Gros Louis and his predecessor, Bob O'Neil, as Vice Presidents of the Bloomington campus, all made this project a first priority for the University. They were supported in this by the organized Bar, the State Court, and the alumni of the School. The project earned the approval of key leaders in our State government, members of the Higher Education Commission, and the Legislature—not all of whom are lawyers. Our own faculty, staff and students gave unsparingly of their time and effort.

The project for which we have all worked and for which we break ground today will serve the Law School as a greatly improved and expanded laboratory for research and study. It will add a major new resource for our academic colleagues all over the campus, and will be appreciated by the hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students who, in addition to law students, use the resources of the law library each semester. And it will permit us better to provide the bar, the bench, and the people of Indiana with the public and professional service they have come to expect from Indiana University and its Law School.

You can see why I am truly grateful to each and all of you who have helped in so many ways. I thank you, and I enlist your continued support for President Ryan and the Trustees as we look toward the future, and the completion of this happy project.

[Addendum: The concluding sentence about supporting the President and Trustees as we look to the future was a not-too-subtle way of reminding everyone that once again we have to carry the University's message with at best only luke-warm support from the Higher Education Commission. In its submission to the Commission this fall, the University listed completion of the Law School project as its top capital project for the 1983-85 biennium. The Commission discarded the University's priorities, not only in comparison with other higher education institutions, but in terms of the University's own internal projects. On the Commission's list, the Law School Addition, Phase II, emerged 16th out of 18 prioritized higher education projects, in a category called "worthy of consideration."

We have \$5 million in hand now; we need bonding authorization from the Legislature for the remaining \$6 million. Clearly if we are not to be left for the indefinite future with a partially completed project, we must help the Legislature to see that it is the University, through its legally-constituted Trustees, and not the State Higher Education Commission, which is best situated and suited to determine the internal priorities of the University's own academic programs and units. We must also convey effectively to the Legislature the importance to the State of maintaining the high stature of the Bloomington Law School, and how this library addition is a key ingredient in doing that. I look to you, the alumni and friends of the School, to help us. We need your help, as much now as we did before. We are all grateful for your continued support.]

Sheldon J. Plager
Dean
IU School of Law-Bloomington