IU Law Dean Boshkoff Optimistic

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Law school deans are doing what they did 20 years ago, but they are doing it for a shorter period of time, according to Douglass G. Boshkoff, who recently was named dean of the Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington.

Dean Boshkoff, in an interview, believes law deans, like many university administrators, are taking on administrative jobs for a limited period of time and then returning to teaching. In many cases, like his own, they still manage time to do some teaching, even with the increased duties and responsibilities as dean.

Just what does a law school dean do? First of all he doesn’t have the total administrative load on his shoulders. Dean Boshkoff has Nicholas White as assistant dean for administration and Bryan T. Underwood Jr. as assistant dean for student affairs. F. Reed Dickerson is associate dean for bar relations. All are members of the faculty.

The dean supports developments which will improve legal education offered by the school, and urges caution and reconsideration for any proposed action which he thinks may be hasty or ill-considered. He seeks support for the school, both within the University and around the state. Although the term “bar relations” is used, Dean Boshkoff feels that the school must consider its relationships, not only with members of the bar, but with students, the alumni association, the IU Foundation, the President’s Office and the Chancellor’s Office.

Students ask why certain courses are offered and why are certain things happening in the law school. Members of the alumni association, the state bar association, and other constituencies ask the same question.

“My responsibility,” Dean Boshkoff said, “is a very important one. It’s explaining or interpreting the law school to all the people who support the law school. We have to tell everybody what we are doing and convince them that it is good, then we enlist their support.”

Some, but not all people, are apparently impressed by administrative positions and titles. Dean Boshkoff explained:

“I’m amazed and perhaps a bit uneasy with what a title does. A few weeks ago I was acting dean. I had exactly the same opinions then as I have today, but nobody asked me what my opinions were. Now that I’m dean, everybody wants to know what I think. I don’t feel that a title has changed me at all and I hope other people won’t think that either.

“On the other hand, I don’t think students respect people simply because they are administrators. I believe you earn their respect by being a good teacher rather than by being a good administrator. Now I’m not saying that’s right, but I think that’s the way it is. I think that it’s very important that we keep in touch with our students by appearing in the classroom and talking about our special area of study.”

Dean Boshkoff believes there is a general trend toward broadening legal education. The IU school here already offers a joint Doctor of Jurisprudence and Master of Business Administration program, which permits a student to get the two degrees in four years. There are also many students who have some background in other disciplines, but Dean Boshkoff thinks that the emphasis for the foreseeable future will continue to be on a professional legal education which will prepare men and women for the practice of law.

Dean Boshkoff tries to keep his schedule arranged so he can be home for dinner with his wife and four young daughters. Often this means taking work home at night and on weekends. A dean can’t spend all his time with administrative and teaching duties and Dean Boshkoff has outlets to help him escape the pressure of the daily routine.

Both Dean Boshkoff and his wife are members of the Bloomington Chamber Ensemble, a local choral group which gives two concerts a year.