


4-1-2003

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*Indianapolis Star*

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### Recommended Citation

Berggoetz, Barb, "Alumni, Fund Raising at Top of IU Law School Dean's List" (2003). *Lauren Robel (2002 Acting; 2003-2011)*. Paper 22.

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# Alumni, fund raising at top of IU Law School dean's list

## LAUREN K. ROBEL

- **Position:** Dean, Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington.
- **Accomplishment:** First woman named to head the Bloomington law school.
- **Age:** 48
- **Salary:** \$235,000 a year, effective July 1.
- **Time in position:** Expected to be confirmed Friday.
- **Previous position:** She taught at IU for 17 years, served as associate dean for 11 of those years, and has been acting dean since July.
- **Education:** Bachelor's degree, Auburn University, 1978; law degree, IU Bloomington, 1983.
- **Family:** Married to Steve Thrasher; three children.
- **Quote:** "I felt I had a clear vision of what the position entailed and what the challenges were facing this school in the next few years."

## By Barb Berggoetz

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April 1, 2003

For more than 160 years, men have headed the Indiana University School of Law in Bloomington.

Lauren K. Robel has broken that barrier.

The 48-year-old attorney, born into a military family, is the first female dean to oversee the 638-student law school, which has an \$18 million annual budget.

Nationwide, the number of female law school deans has more than doubled in the past three years, said Carl Monk, director of the Association of American Law Schools.

Now, women head 29 of 187 schools. The only other female dean ever to serve in Indiana's four law schools is Patricia O'Hara, appointed in 1999 at the University of Notre Dame.

For Robel, it was a gradual evolution to the top position of her alma

mater. She taught there for 17 years, served as associate dean for 11 of those years, and had been acting dean since July, when her predecessor, Fred Aman, retired.

"I felt I had a clear vision of what the position entailed and what the challenges were facing this school in the next few years," said Robel, whose appointment is expected to be confirmed by IU trustees Friday.

Chancellor Sharon Brehm selected Robel from three finalists suggested by a search committee that considered about 100 people.

"It would be difficult to imagine anyone having a greater breadth of knowledge," said law Professor Daniel Conkle, search committee chairman.

He said the issue of a female dean wasn't a factor in the decision.

Robel recognizes female law deans aren't that common, but her focus is now on how she can best reach out to the school's 8,000 alumni in Indiana and across the world.

She expects to spend half her time traveling to visit alumni, raising private funds and getting alumni more involved in the school's activities, such as judging moot court trials.

The dean's role as a fund-raiser, she said, is increasingly important because of limited state funding and the need to keep tuition as low as possible. Private funds are used to support the moot court program, career services, law journals -- everything except salaries and library books.

But she doesn't mind that part of her job. "I'm so proud of the school that being able to talk to people about what we're doing here . . . what could be better?"