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Commencement calls for review of annual milestones

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May 1, 2019



DEAN'S DESK

AUSTEN PARRISH
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
MAURER SCHOOL OF LAW

This weekend is a time of celebration in Bloomington, as we welcome friends and family of the Class of 2019 for our annual commencement ceremony. It's an important milestone in our students' lives. Commencement is also a time for looking back. The past year saw several significant milestones for the IU Maurer School of Law. I'd like to touch on just a few of them in this month's column.

We continue to make strides in building a student body that reflects the diversity of the nation. Each year, about a quarter of our applicants identify as the first in their immediate families to attend law school. For two of the prior three years, women have made up more than 50 percent of the entering class, and this year's graduating class had more women than men. Our Black Law Students Association was named Chapter of the Year for the Midwest region for three of the past five years. Our flagship Indiana Law Journal elected its first Latino editor-in-chief for the 2019-2020 academic year. This spring, we established a professorship in honor of Hon. Juanita Kidd Stout, the first African-American woman to be appointed to a state supreme court anywhere in the United States. The Stout Professorship is also the first to honor an African-American alumna of Indiana University. Finally, this summer, we will again host ICLEO, the Indiana program "designed to help underrepresented students excel at law school."

Over the past year, we launched new programs that enable our students to gain hands-on experience while benefiting Indiana's rural communities. This fall we will open an expungement help desk in Bloomington in collaboration with Indiana Legal Services. The culmination of a service-learning project overseen by Professor Victor Quintanilla — believed to be the largest implemented at any U.S. law school — the expungement desk will help persons convicted of misdemeanors, mainly because of opioid addiction, get a fresh start. Our students will staff the desk under the supervision of an ILS attorney.

A second community-based program is the brainchild of Indiana's Chief Justice, Loretta H. Rush, and Hon. Edward W. Najam Jr. of the Indiana Court of Appeals. Recognizing that many of the trial courts in our state's non-urban counties were staggering under tremendous workloads, Chief Justice Rush and Judge Najam asked us if we could provide summer clerks for these judges. Associate dean Aviva Orenstein responded by creating our Rural Justice Initiative in partnership with the Indiana Supreme Court. Five students in the program's pilot year will extern this summer in Greencastle, Monticello, Paoli, Salem and Terre Haute. Students receive a modest stipend from the law school to cover their living expenses, along with the opportunity to gain experience in the state's busy trial courtrooms. Programs such as this one contribute to our students having the lowest median debt of any Indiana law school — 35 percent of the Class of 2018 graduated with no student debt.

Other programs introduced this year continue to cement our reputation as one of the nation's best public law schools. The law school created a new legal profession course for the fall semester of the first year. This one-credit course provides students early opportunities to explore different legal careers, obtain an overview of the legal profession and meet with our Career Services Office staff. It also introduces students to dozens of professionals from different practice settings who visit the class in a series of career choices panels. The fall course complements our three-unit legal profession course in the spring. We remain one of the very few schools in the nation to fully integrate into the first-year curriculum significant instruction on the ethics and economics of the profession. To further assist our students, we have completely re-staffed our Career Services Office, led by assistant dean Anne McFadden, a longtime attorney from the Department of Justice, and three new directors with substantial experience in professional development and employer relations.

Another program is the Institute for the Future of Law Practice, launched this past year under Professor William D. Henderson's leadership, with which the law school is a founding school partner. IFLP's program consists of a three-week boot camp, followed by 10-week internships and seven-month field placements with sponsor-employers. Students in the boot camp get exposure to in-house practice, business fundamentals, practical legal skills, the tech industry and team exercises. Seven of our students will be participating in IFLP's boot camp and internships this coming academic year.

Programs like these build on other unique opportunities, such as the school's Wintersession and fall intersession programs, which respectively completed their fourth and second years. The intensive one-week courses in these programs — held just before the start of the spring semester or during fall break — cover a variety of topics, from depositions to pretrial litigation to transactional drafting. This year also marked the first year of an international law and institutions undergraduate degree in collaboration with the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, the expansion of the law and public policy degree in partnership with the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and the second year of our unique M.S. in cybersecurity risk management, offered with the Kelley School of Business and the School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering. Five of our students graduate this year with a joint J.D./M.S. in cybersecurity risk management, the largest cohort of joint-degree candidates in the Class of 2019.

Separate from curricular programming, our faculty continue to expand our understanding of some of the most important issues of our time. You have likely come across many of our junior faculty's research, even if you don't realize it: from Professor Pamela Foohey's work on the graying of American bankruptcy that was highlighted in the New York Times, to Professor Jessica Eaglin's work on mass incarceration and sentencing reform, to Professor Gina-Gail Fletcher's work on securities regulation and market manipulation. Professors Mark Janis and Leandra Lederman were elected to the American Law Institute, and Professor Hannah Buxbaum was named to the governing council of The Hague Academy of International Law. These are exciting times at the Maurer School of Law, and I am proud of all that our faculty and staff have accomplished together.

Last summer we installed banners outside Baier Hall honoring six notable alumni: Hoagy Carmichael, the American Songbook composer and lyricist; Sam Dargan, our first African-American graduate; Harriet Bouslog Sawyer, the labor relations pioneer; Hon. Sherman Minton, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court; Tamar Althouse Scholz, our first woman graduate, and; Justice Juanita Kidd Stout. These trailblazing alumni were remarkable individuals. As the Class of 2019 graduates, our goal is to continue to build a foundation for the next generation to go out and carve their own remarkable paths. •

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