

## A Promising Beginning

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When I began teaching at the University of Massachusetts in August 2012, one of my first encounters was with the newly-formed *UMass Law Review*. The editorial staff was wrapping up its initial preparations for publishing *the* inaugural volume. Now, over a year later, those nascent processes have since been refined; the inaugural year is over. We are excited to say that the *UMass Law Review* enters its sophomore year with this current issue, affectionately dubbed “9:1.”

The birth and development of the *UMass Law Review* have, in many ways, paralleled the beginnings of the law school whose name it bears: the University of Massachusetts School of Law–Dartmouth. Like the law school, the law review had a different character when it was the *Southern New England Roundtable Symposium Journal*. Then, nearly overnight—much like the transformation of the Southern New England School of Law into the first and only public law school in Massachusetts—the publication shed its previous identity and became something new. And just like the young law school, the continued expansion, invention, and import of new energy into the law review are still riding on its initial hope and expectations of success.

It’s a remarkable thing when one considers how law schools—and even law reviews—are coming under increasingly vocal scrutiny from a vast swath of American society. The early-to-mid part of the 2010s has ushered in a new period of revaluing legal education. I hope this will give way to viewing the profession as legal educators do: as having unlimited potential to positively affect the whole of society. Ideally, this shift would include gaining an understanding of the pressures that society places upon lawyers in exchange for the power lawyers have to affect lives.

When mainstream critics question the utility of law reviews and legal scholarship, the birth of a new law review might seem inopportune. I disagree. The risk of starting a new law review is symbolic of our law school’s commitment to innovation and our willingness to interact with other disciplines. This symbolism, as I can attest, is the significance behind the rise of *UMass Law Review* itself.

Since that encounter during my first month at the law school, I have grown with the law review. I have had the fortune, as a junior faculty member, of being asked to give advice on nearly every aspect of the running of the publication—from operational questions, to how best to staff the editorial board, to broader questions about establishing a presence in the legal community and what that presence signifies. Throughout the late-night consultations in the law review’s basement

office, the lengthy and inquisitive phone calls over dinner, and the weekend visits to staff meetings, the law review and I have grown together.

In my opinion, the most important piece of advice I've offered is this: discover an identity. That identity should be incorporated into the structure of the law review, and it should pervade everything the law review strives to accomplish. The law review's identity should impress upon all who view it that this is an organization personified by the students who run it. To be sure, a law review's relevance is not just based on its content and reach, but its *ownership*, and this is not just the bundle of rights perspective taught in the law classrooms upstairs. It is a deeper and more personal notion—something conjuring a sense of embodiment that strikes to the core of the institution and its inhabitants.

So this year we've been preoccupied with who we are and how we are connected to the work that we do at the law review. A publication is always and should always remain a work-in-progress with each issue, volume, and year's work reflecting current legal sensibilities of the law and our perspective on it. This attribute of collective self-reflection in publishing is, I think, the best part of participating in law review. Questions approached by students running law reviews are the very kinds of questions that produce the next generation of legal minds. Whatever the answers actually are—whatever *they* end up being—is something to be explored over the life of this publication.

We hope that we've narrowed the gap between where we once were and where we want to be. First, through engagement with scholarship we've had the pleasure to bring to fruition volume 9:1. And next? Our annual symposium in April 2014, where the *UMass Law Review* will study issues concerning veterans and the law; where we will present discussions on access to justice within the veteran's community, LGBT rights, and policy issues, such as housing, healthcare, and education. All of these issues have been chosen carefully by the law review to showcase our desire to be topical while remaining prescient. As it happens, these choices also respond well to current criticisms of the content and utility of law reviews.

And then there are contributions from *UMass Law Review* that need no analysis. During the fall 2013 semester, staff members sponsored donations and a campus-wide canned goods drive for homeless veterans' shelters. The improvements made in the law review's editorial procedures have garnered attention from the National Conference of Law Reviews, and the law review will be

holding a presentation during that organization's annual meeting in March 2014 in Los Angeles, California. I can only hope that these achievements—no less important than the task of publishing a journal itself—have provided a well-deserved sense of accomplishment for the law review's staff.

So quite the contrary, I think it is an auspicious time to start a law review, and I look forward to the publication of every future issue—each likely to have an affectionate nickname. But for now, because of these triumphs and others unnamed, I congratulate the editorial board and staff of the *UMass Law Review* on the publication of this issue, and I celebrate its promising beginning.