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## Introduction

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# INTRODUCTION

Thomas Buergenthal\*

A few years ago, a survey conducted at the Washington College of Law of the American University indicated that more than seventy percent of its student body had an interest in pursuing careers in international law. The school's rich and varied course offerings in international legal studies, provided for both graduate and undergraduate law students, expresses this interest and is based on the faculty's decision, taken in the early 1980's, to give the curriculum an international focus. The decision to develop an international legal studies curriculum was prompted by the faculty's belief that the last decades of the twentieth century would put ever greater demands on the American lawyer to practice in a world in which the provincialism of the past would be a luxury that neither the legal profession nor the country could any longer afford. In short, the Washington College of Law's faculty had grasped the pedagogic significance of the internationalization of American trade, industry, and government and had realized its implications for the practice of law in the decades ahead.

Today the international legal studies curriculum of the Washington College of Law permits its students to familiarize themselves with the basic methodology and doctrines of other legal systems, to study the law applicable to intergovernmental international organizations and private multinational enterprises, to explore techniques for the implementation of effective international systems for the protection of human rights, to gain an understanding of the vast new law of the sea, and to deal with the intricacies inherent in modern legislation, both national and international, affecting commerce, banking, and the transfer of technology, to cite but a few examples.

Washington is an ideal city in which to offer such a legal studies curriculum. Both the internationalization of American government and

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the many intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations that have their seat in Washington have transformed the District of Columbia into a true *Weltstadt*. The city provides an ideal environment for international legal studies and, hence, offers the Washington College of Law the intellectual, professional, and cultural resources without which such a program could not long survive. These considerations and the great skill with which Professor Claudio Grossman has directed and developed the American University's International Legal Studies Program explain why the program has expanded so rapidly and has become so successful.

The decision of the Washington College of Law to establish an international law journal, a decision which is attributable in large part to the tenacity and hard work of the founding student editors of this *Journal* and to Professor Grossman's support, is the logical next step in the development of the school's international legal studies curriculum. In addition to serving the important pedagogic functions performed in general by student-edited law reviews, this *Journal* fills an important professional gap. Although the number of international law journals has in recent years expanded at a dramatic rate, this *Journal's* orientation and its special interest in tracking the work of international organizations based in Washington should enable it to make a unique contribution to the profession. Moreover, unlike many other law schools, the Washington College of Law has a large reservoir of very able students with international experience and professional training, who should find it easy to maintain the high scholarly standards necessary for a publication of this type.

In welcoming the publication of this *Journal*, it is not inappropriate to note that the proliferation of student-edited international law journals has generally tended to reduce the available pool of good non-student articles, bringing with it the frequent appearance in print of articles which, given their poor quality, should never have been published. Because this *Journal* will in the future, no doubt, have to confront this problem, I would urge the editors to avoid it by publishing more student work than do other such reviews and by using its impressive professional board of advisers and faculty to help improve and maintain the quality of that work. This approach would foster the very learning experience that justifies the existence of student-edited law journals and their publication by law schools.

I congratulate the editors and the entire Washington College of Law community on the publication of this *Journal*. It is further evidence of the exciting things that are happening at the American University

Washington College of Law and of the high quality of its international legal studies curriculum.