

2008

Encouraging Diversity in Law School Deanships

Kellye Y. Testy

University of Washington School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/faculty-articles>



Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kellye Y. Testy, *Encouraging Diversity in Law School Deanships*, 31 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 737 (2008),
<https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/faculty-articles/334>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at UW Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of UW Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact cnyberg@uw.edu.

INTRODUCTION

Encouraging Diversity in Law School Deanships

Kellye Y. Testy[†]

A former law school dean recently shared a helpful tip: in the legal academy, a “secret” is something that you tell just one person at a time. The intended lesson was, of course, that too *few* things are kept secret. That may be, but the opposite is also true. Under his helpful definition, there also may be too *many* secrets in the legal academy. This symposium explores one such area, focusing upon something that has too often been told to “one person at a time”: the pathway to becoming a law school dean.

This symposium, and the conference that was the basis for it, sought to encourage more diversity in law school deanships by making explicit the role of the dean, how to become a decanal candidate, and how to succeed both in a dean search and in the dean’s job. The connection between intentionally disseminating information on career pathways and encouraging diversity in those careers is now well understood.¹ Without such intentionality, mentoring and career development advice tends to get passed on informally only to those few people with whom one is closest, making it much more likely that new holders of the position will be demographically similar to the former ones. Historically, the pathway to deaning has taken place very much in this more network-reliant, “clubby” way. As a result, while the persons holding law

[†] Kellye Y. Testy is Dean & Professor of Law at Seattle University School of Law. A Board member of both the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT) and the American Law Deans Association (ALDA), her areas of expertise include corporate law and governance, legal education, and social justice. Dean Testy thanks four of her faculty colleagues who were especially helpful in developing, organizing, and presenting this conference: Professors Janet Ainsworth and Margaret Chon, Vice Dean Annette Clark, and Associate Dean (and former SALT co-President) Tayyab Mahmud. She also thanks SALT and the editors of *the Seattle University School of Law Review*.

1. E.g., David A. Thomas, *Race Does Matter in Mentoring*, <http://hbswek.hbs.edu/item/2267.html> (last visited June 29, 2008).

deanships today comprise an ever-more diverse group, much progress remains yet to be made.²

To encourage that progress, Seattle University School of Law and the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT)—sharing as they do strong commitments to academic excellence, diversity, and justice—co-organized this inaugural conference, which was held at Seattle University School of Law on September 28–29, 2007. The conference will be held every two years, with the next one slated for Seattle in late September of 2009.³ While the conference itself was well-attended and a great success, the organizers decided that our goals of broad dissemination would be best served if the learning generated at the conference was published so that those who were not in attendance could likewise profit from it. This symposium issue is the result.

In the pages that follow, there are two forms of conference material presented. The first is a series of essays written by conference presenters following and drawing from the remarks they shared at the conference. The second is a series of edited transcripts of the conference proceedings from those speakers who preferred this live format over an essay. It is an honor and privilege to present the authors' insights, and I do so with great thanks to each and all of the inaugural participants for making our first venture into unlocking the secrets of law obtaining and succeeding in a law deanship so successful. On behalf of all of the organizers and presenters, we hope that the conference and this symposium helps to deepen and diversify the pool of decanal talent as successors to the dedicated and accomplished deans now serving our law schools. If that is so, it will enure to the benefit of individual law schools, legal education, and the students and public we are all dedicated to serving.

2. See Laura M. Padilla, *A Gendered Update on Women Law Deans: Who, Where, Why, and Why Not?* 15 AM. U. J. GENDER SOC. POL'Y & L. 443 (2007); LeRoy Pernell, *Reflecting on the Dream of the Marathon Man: Black Dean Longevity and Its Impact on Opportunity and Diversity*, 38 U. TOL. L. REV. 571 (2007).

3. For updates, visit www.law.seattleu.edu.