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Festschrift for Dean Simon

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Festschrift for Dean Simon

Jay C. Carlisle*

I was hired as an assistant dean and assistant professor of law at Pace University in late 1977 and have been privileged to serve our wonderful Law School during the leadership of ten deans. Michelle Simon's remarkable deanship from 2007 to 2014 is the longest of any dean. She also served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs from 2001 to 2006 which means she has completed more than thirteen years of "deaning" at Pace Law School. In addition to the customary plate of decanal duties including student and faculty recruitment, outreach and development, financial stewardship, fundraising, pro bono programs, continuing legal education, admissions, coordination of faculty scholarship, curricular restructuring, and strengthening of the law school's academic program, Dean Simon was a vigorous and faithful supporter of faculty participation in community relations and bar association activities. She led the way by example, serving as president of the Board of Education for the Eastchester Union Free School District from 2006 to 2012 and as an active member of the Westchester County and New York State Bar Associations. In addition Dean Simon published outreach law review articles on women and the law and climate change.

Dean Simon believed legal educators should be involved in professional associations and the organized bar. She was an ardent supporter of local, state and national bar organizations. She regularly purchased a table for faculty attendance at dinners and events sponsored by bar groups and encouraged her faculty to attend these gatherings. Dean Simon used discretionary decanal funds to provide financial assistance to

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the Westchester County Bar and to the Women's Justice Center. She inspired her faculty to publish articles in the New York Law Journal, the New York State Bar Journal, and other bar publications. Dean Simon encouraged her colleagues to join and become involved in bar groups. During her deanship, Professor Chauncey Walker was appointed to the board of directors for the Westchester County Bar, I was elected as a director and then vice-president for the Westchester Bar Foundation, Prof. Merrill Sobie was appointed to leadership positions in the New York State and American Bar associations, and Professors John Nolon, Vanessa Merton, and Nicholas Robinson led professional associations in their respective areas of expertise. Dean Simon's generous financial support for these faculty activities inspired junior faculty to sign up for committee work with the Westchester County and New York City Bar Associations.

During Dean Simon's leadership, I served as a commissioner for the New York State Law Revision Commission, a referee for the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct, a Special Master for the New York State Supreme Court, a member of the Ninth Judicial District Task Force on Gender Fairness, and as a member of working committees for the New York State, Westchester County, and New York City Bar Associations. Dean Simon applauded my outreach activities and asked to be kept aware of them by periodic written reports and informal "news" sharing. She not only encouraged my work, but also made efforts to accommodate them to my teaching schedules. On occasion, she would allocate her discretionary funds to cover some or all of the expenses involved in these worthwhile activities. She believed that legal educators played a vital role in law reform and should participate with the bench and bar in volunteer work to improve the profession.

Since 1975, I have been a strong believer in continuing legal education for the bench and bar. I have served in CLE leadership positions for the American, New York, New York City, Westchester, and White Plains Bar Associations and have delivered countless CLE lectures to the bench and bar. During the Simon deanships, I was able to count on her support for this work. She believed law school professors should share

their knowledge with the practicing bar. Dean Simon regularly reviewed my CLE outlines and knew when, where, and what I was speaking about. Dean Simon financed and supported our CLE Office under the able leadership of Ms. Kathleen Carlisle and frequently asked leaders of the bar to participate in Pace CLE programs. Her personal “invites” and phone calls were essential to the success of our CLE programs. She was always available to serve as a moderator or to make introductions at CLE events and made sure to thank everyone for his or her participation.

In 2013, Westchester County Bar and White Plains Human Rights Commission (“HRC”) president Jerold Ruderman asked me and former Dean David S. Cohen to chair a special law revision committee for the HRC. Ruderman wanted the committee to engage in a thorough and complete review of the then-existing HRC rules and regulations and to produce a report proposing necessary changes to provide enhanced justice for the citizens of White Plains. Dean Cohen and I immediately informed Dean Simon of the invitation and, with her indispensable blessings, accepted the joint chairmanship of the HRC committee. We managed to convince ten outstanding lawyers and citizens of White Plains to join us on the committee. Dean Simon provided law school support in the form of space, secretarial services, and made her dean’s boardroom available for full committee meetings. The HRC Committee spent more than a year of in-depth research, committee review, public hearings, and other work, which resulted in the submission of a lengthy and detailed report for rule and revision changes. The Report was submitted to the Westchester County Executive and to the White Plains Human Rights Commission. It has resulted in important changes that will benefit large numbers of people in Westchester County. Without Dean Simon’s support, it is unlikely this worthwhile endeavor would have been possible.

Conclusion

Others in the Festschrift will list Dean Simon’s many decanal accomplishments and initiatives, and I join them in their praise. I understand and accept the principle that law

school faculty should be primarily engaged in teaching and scholarship, but I will always remember Dean Simon's commitment to encouraging and supporting faculty involvement in outreach activities that benefit legal reform, the bench and bar, and the citizens of our community and state. I hope her successors will continue her outreach work and wish my old friend and valued colleague Dean Michelle Simon many more years of professional success and personal happiness.