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Message from the Dean

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MESSAGE FROM DEAN LEHMAN

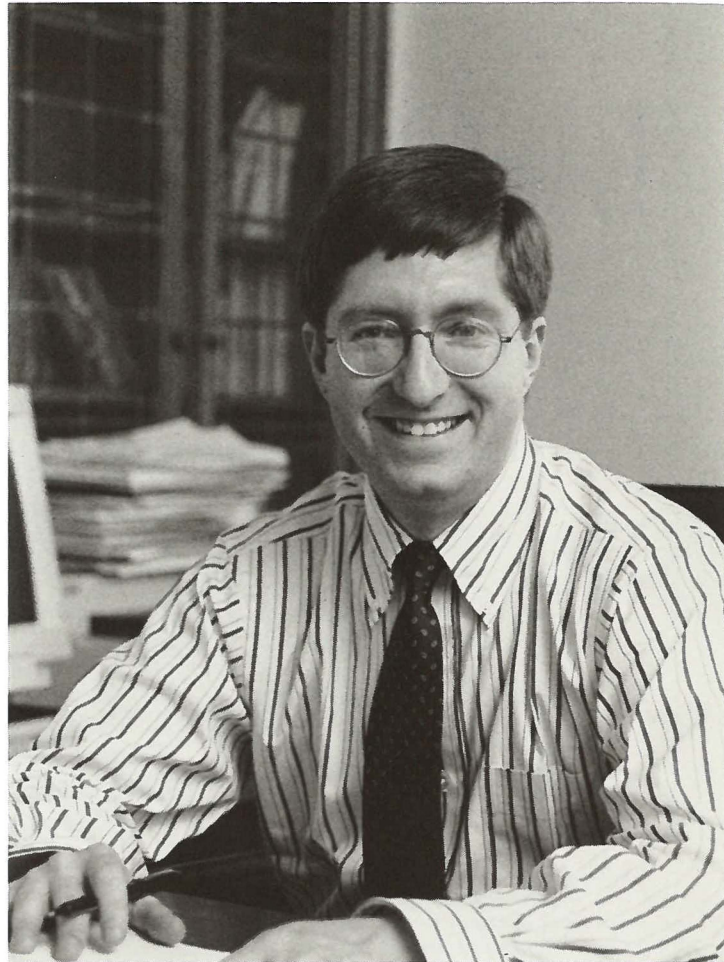
THIS IS MY THIRD MESSAGE about the importance of a commitment to continuous intellectual growth and renewal. I am thrilled to report that the Law School's own program of institutional renewal has been unfolding more quickly than I had imagined. And I would like to use this message to say "Thank you" to the readers of LQN for making that program possible.

No skill is more central to the lawyer's art than the ability to write in a way that is properly called "persuasive" as opposed to "argumentative." Persuasive writing addresses the concerns of a skeptical but open-minded reader with a crisp, reflective, and balanced style. It is as much the hallmark of an outstanding client memorandum as it is of an outstanding brief.

At Michigan, we have long sought to impart that skill through our Case Club program. And yet, in recent years we have heard many of our graduates wonder whether we might not be able to improve on Case Club. So last fall, I appointed a special committee of faculty and students to design a new program for teaching the craft of persuasive writing.

In early January, the special committee brought to the faculty an ambitious plan to replace the Case Club program with a new Legal Practice program. Whereas the Case Club program has depended primarily on third-year students, the Legal Practice program would deploy a group of full-time professionals who have demonstrated their talents as legal writers and teachers. The new program would offer first-year students a new quality of intensive, individualized instruction in persuasive legal writing.

When the proposal reached the faculty for a vote, the only serious question had to do with the new program's cost. The Legal Practice program will cost more than three times as much as the Case Club program; some of my colleagues properly wondered where the money for the new Legal Practice program would come from. Fortunately, I had a ready answer. At Michigan, the dean may direct any annual growth in the Law School Fund to support new initiatives. I very much wanted to have the resources to inaugurate the Legal Practice program at Michigan.



Your generosity provided those resources. During the first seven months of my deanship, substantial numbers of you chose to significantly increase the amount of your gifts to the Law School Fund, so that contributions to the Fund totaled much more than they had during the equivalent period a year earlier. The trend toward increased alumni support for the Law School enabled us to approve the Legal Practice program with excitement and enthusiasm.

Persuasive writing will be even more valuable to future legal practice than it is at present. Thanks to you, our program of institutional renewal will begin precisely where it should: by designing and implementing a model program of instruction in the craft of persuasive writing. I have every confidence that, thanks to your support, fifteen years from now the true masters of the art of persuasive legal writing will be graduates of the University of Michigan Law School.

Jeffrey S. Lehman