



Marlene England At the helm of the law school is an influential legal scholar and respected professor with high standards, high energy, and high hopes for the institution she calls home.

Everyone knew Karen H. Rothenberg, JD, MPA, would make a great dean. School of Law faculty and staff—including many who had worked with Rothenberg since the early 1980s—strongly encouraged her to seek the position. She heard from deans at other law schools and her colleagues in the judicial community, all assuring her that she was the right person for the job. But Rothenberg was difficult to convince. Serving as dean was never her professional aspiration. Then in 1983 former Dean Michael Kelly persuaded Rothenberg to leave a successful practice at Covington & Burling in Washington, D.C., to become assistant professor at the School of Law. Sixteen years later, after cultivating a passion for legal education, Rothenberg reluctantly accepted the position of interim dean in August 1999. She was concerned that accepting the deanship—even on an interim basis—would detract from her completion of an in-depth empirical study on the risks and benefits to communities participating in genetics research.

I said ‘yes’ to the interim position, mostly out of institutional loyalty and because I knew the job was temporary.” Rothenberg never expected to become a candidate in the nationwide search for a new dean. During the interim phase, Rothenberg felt “very supported by devoted and talented senior administrators, faculty and students.” Their support and the urging of colleagues, alumni and friends—as well as the growing realization that she actually enjoyed being dean—changed her mind.

In April, President David J. Ramsay, DM, DPhil, announced Rothenberg’s appointment as dean of the law school. She is the first woman to head the school in its 184-year history.

“We are extremely fortunate to have found such an outstanding administrator, teacher, and noted legal scholar to lead the law school,” Ramsay stated in his formal announcement. “Dean Rothenberg’s outstanding scholarship and passion for the law will inspire students and colleagues alike as our School of Law moves into the ranks of the nation’s best.”

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“She’s an accomplished scholar”

Members of the search committee for the new dean echo Ramsay’s accolades for Rothenberg. “We conducted a vigorous national search with quite an impressive pool of candidates,” explains committee Chair Richard Boldt, JD. “Karen emerged as the leader because she is bright, energetic, committed, and cares deeply about the institution. She’s an accomplished scholar with national prominence,” he continues. Her work on the ethical, legal and social implications of genetics has enabled her to collaborate on a number of cutting-edge issues with Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD, director of National Human Genome Research Institute at NIH. Collins notes that “Her powerful logic and impressive rhetorical skills caused many a self-interested combatant or murky thinker to retreat. Her impact on the development of policy and legislative solutions to the problem of genetic discrimination is profound.”

A *magna cum laude* graduate of Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs with undergraduate and master’s degrees, Rothenberg worked in health policy before enrolling in the University of Virginia School of Law.

“My expertise was in public policy analysis, but then I decided a law degree would further enhance my ability to make a significant difference in health care.” Rothenberg graduated Order of the Coif in 1979, winning Virginia’s Trial Advocacy Award. She soon accepted a position with Covington & Burling, where she provided legal advice and litigation for state health and welfare agencies with regard to health policy and financing issues.

Shortly after beginning her career at the law school, Rothenberg founded and directed the Law and Health Care Program, which since 1995 has been ranked as one of the top five health law programs nationwide by *U.S. News & World Report*. The program prepares students to deal with increasingly complex health law issues and to consider these issues from both legal and interdisciplinary perspectives. Establishing the Law and Health Care Program, which links research, service, scholarship and experiential learning, has well-prepared Rothenberg for the role of dean. Judith Areen, dean of Georgetown’s law school confirms, “She’s a superb choice, she brings together not only outstanding academic talent, but also has (with respect to the Law and Health Care Program) already experienced the administrative side.”

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The Law and Health Care Program's Interim Director Diane Hoffmann, JD, MS, credits Rothenberg with recognizing the need for students from different disciplines to network and gain practical experience in tackling real-world issues. "Karen is a visionary who understands the future of legal education and the importance of multidisciplinary practices," Hoffmann says, adding that Rothenberg was also instrumental in establishing the *Journal of Health Care Law & Policy*, which provides additional opportunities for student involvement. "Karen is always thinking about ways to improve the experiences of our students...how to motivate them to discover the visions and the strengths within themselves."

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Dean Rothenberg with deans Jim Forsyth and Dana Morris at the weekly deans' meeting.

Rothenberg's commitment to students and her passion for teaching have not gone unrecognized. She received full professor status in 1992 and was named Marjorie Cook Professor of Law in 1994. Rothenberg was honored with the Joseph Healey Health Law Teachers Award from the American Society of Law, Medicine, and Ethics in 1996. She continues to teach the Law and Medicine course, lecture and publish.

Throughout her teaching career, the new dean authored numerous publications on genetics, AIDS, women's health, new reproductive technologies, and other cutting-edge issues. Rothenberg serves on the American Bar Association's Coordinating Group on Bioethics and the Law, as well as on the Advisory Council to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at NIH.

"All of us on the search committee were impressed with Karen Rothenberg and what she's done," reflects the Hon. Andre M. Davis '78, who serves as president of the School of Law's alumni association. "She has a tremendous amount of energy and seems to never tire of working for the law school.

I'm confident she'll do what is necessary to make us one of the top law schools in the nation." Davis is thrilled that his term as alumni president coincides with Rothenberg's appointment as dean. "It's a happy coincidence for me," he says.

"She knows where the law school needs to go"

Professor Alan Hornstein, JD, a longtime colleague of Rothenberg's, has worked with the new dean in several capacities over the last two decades. "She knows where the law school needs to go, and she knows how to manage—in the very best sense of the word," he says. Rothenberg's contributions to plans for the new law school building particularly impressed Hornstein. "The building will be infinitely better than it would have been without Karen Rothenberg," he states. "Thanks to her input, our new building will be a model not just for law schools but for all academic buildings across the country."

As interim dean, Rothenberg reviewed the new building plans last summer and solicited suggestions from faculty, staff and students. To better accommodate the needs of support staff, work

areas were relocated to include outside walls with windows and additional common areas were created for students and faculty. Although the new building met standards mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act, simply complying wasn't good enough. Under Rothenberg's guidance, handicapped access was redesigned to ensure that the building, its technology, and facilities were dignified and welcoming for all individuals.

According to Rothenberg, the new building, which is scheduled for completion by summer 2002, will shape legal education in Maryland for the 21st century. "This is a very exciting time for the law school," she explains, "not just because of the building itself but because of what the building represents and what it will enable us to do. The technology we're putting into place is cutting-edge yet flexible enough to change as technology expands over the next few decades."



“Creating new connections”

Rothenberg is confident that the new building and its state-of-the-art resources will support her “collaborative vision” for the campus. “Law is not a discipline in isolation, and we cannot survive or thrive on our own,” she says. Rothenberg cites the success of existing multidisciplinary efforts on campus, such as the Law and Health Care Program and the *Business Lawyer*, which has been published at the law school since 1990. “We need to continue to take a leadership role in multidisciplinary practice—by generating original teaching and research, strengthening and expanding our special programs on and beyond this campus, and building on one another’s strengths to raise our level of excellence as an institution.”

Motivating faculty, staff, students and alumni to establish a culture of interdependence is a challenge Rothenberg welcomes with enthusiasm. “Together we are greater than the sum of our parts,” she says, “and I love creating new connections...helping people find their passions and discovering new and exciting ways of working together within and beyond this campus.”

By her own admission, Rothenberg is a dreamer and a doer. “I have to have lots of balls in the air at the same time,” she says. “I try to live every day to the fullest, because I never want to miss an opportunity that will benefit the law school.” The new dean is working with faculty to undertake a major curriculum review to make certain that the law school’s course of study is the best it can be. To ensure that students who want to work in public service can afford to do so, Rothenberg established a loan repayment assistance program, which has already received a half-million dollar gift (see related story on p. 2). This summer, she allocated \$400,000 in endowment monies for faculty summer research projects that are sure to stimulate the intellectual life of the law school and impact the legal community.



Dean Rothenberg with SBA officers Michael Siri and Myesha Ward.

“It has to be a passion”

Rothenberg hopes to increase the state legislature’s involvement in initiatives being studied on campus, such as intellectual property issues in biotechnology and housing and community development. “The legislature already values our role as an educational institution, but we need to show that we’re not just a Baltimore school,” she explains. “We’re a regional player in the metropolitan area, up the East Coast, and throughout the nation—and we have a lot to contribute on many different levels. We have a responsibility to educate leaders for Maryland and the nation, to shape the quality of tomorrow’s lawyers,” the new dean continues, “and we have important obligations to be attentive to the legal needs of our community.”

Fueled by her passion for the law, legal education and the institution she now leads, Rothenberg looks forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. At her welcoming reception in May, she quoted from *The Leadership Challenge*, in which a U.S. Army general wrote: “The secret to success is to stay in love. Staying in love gives you the

fire to ignite other people, to see inside other people, to have a greater desire to get things done than other people.” For Rothenberg, the general has said it all. “For me, it can’t be just a job. It has to be a passion. That’s why I want to be a dean here,” she reflects. “That’s what gives me the enthusiasm and energy to do this job.”

When asked about her family, Rothenberg answers with passion and pride. She joined the faculty at the law school when her eldest daughter, Andrea, was just 2 1/2 and gave birth to Rebecca that first summer. “My children grew up in the law school,” she explains. Her husband, Dr. Jeffrey Seltzer, a psychologist with a *juris doctor* degree, has a unique understanding of her life as a law school professor and dean. Over the last 10 years he has offered a presentation to “significant others” of first-year students, providing insight about living with a law student. Concurrently, Rothenberg conducted a mock class to give significant others a peek at what the students would encounter in the classroom.

Rothenberg holds tight to the principles taught to her by her parents. “Honesty, integrity, fairness and loyalty” guided their lives and ultimately guide hers. Rothenberg explains, “These are the principles that help me make important decisions and drive my institutional philosophy.”

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