

# WLAA BOARD OF VISITORS REPORT

The Board of Visitors of the Wisconsin Law Alumni Association made its annual visitation to the Law School on October 16 and 17, 1983. For many of us it was the first opportunity to meet Dean Cliff F. Thompson. We were happy to have him attend the opening session on Sunday, the dinner Sunday evening and our closing session Monday afternoon. The Board in this report welcomes Dean Thompson to the University of Wisconsin Law School. We look forward to his dedicated leadership.

The greatest single concern of the Board of Visitors is the deplorable lack of adequate funding which is developing at the University of Wisconsin and, of particular concern to us, at the Law School. This lack of adequate funding is appearing at many levels. The need for additional library resources affects faculty and students as well. It is necessary to support research projects of the faculty. Because of a lack of resources, too few of the students have the opportunity to research with Lexis and Westlaw. At the time of our visit in October, there was but one Lexis terminal with restricted hours, to serve 900 students and a faculty of 50. This is clearly not adequate for legal education in the 1980's.

The problem of inadequate funding affects library resources but of greater concern is the disparity that is developing between salary levels of faculty at Wisconsin and other major law schools. Between 1978 and 1983 the median faculty salary at Wisconsin fell from 51st to 70th among the 157 law schools reporting faculty salaries. The problem is greatest for the experienced faculty. This group earned less than their contemporaries in 1978 (approximately \$4,700 less per year). By 1983 the gap increased to \$14,400 per year. The fact that we have been able to retain outstanding

faculty members is nothing less than a miracle. Few can argue that Lake Mendota is worth \$15,000 per year to anyone.

Fortunately the faculty still demonstrates enthusiasm in service, research and teaching. It is of high quality, but we would be fools if we did not admit that this disparity is going to affect recruiting of new faculty members. The difficulty in recruiting a person in the business law area is already apparent. The Board believes that we can no longer look exclusively to the Legislature to solve these problems. Greater effort on the part of the Alumni to support the Law School is urged.

It was suggested at the closing session of the Board that the visitors' agenda should include a meeting with Chancellor Shain to make him even more aware of these concerns. This may consist of a committee visit or a visit by the entire Board. An appropriate method of accomplishing this is under study.

Some of the visitors sensed that a lack of enthusiasm has pervaded the students because of the critical funding problems facing the administration. This is hard to assess. The noon luncheon does not seem to provide an adequate forum for a determination of student concerns. The Board suggests that the next visitation should provide an open forum from noon to 3 p.m. Sandwiches for the visitors can be brought in and wide publicity should be given to attract students, student leaders and faculty members. The present luncheon appears to attract only student leaders acting in a representative capacity.

Those students who did express concerns urged the Board (1) to involve the organized bar in legal education to a greater degree, (2) to expand placement services to counsel students on opportunities in the job market which are out-

side the generally accepted notion of what lawyers do, and (3) to urge the administration to expand its counseling program for law students. Members of the Board in turn suggested that second and third year students are well equipped to counsel entering students in many areas, and an effort should be made among student organizations to establish such a program.

The Board generally was disappointed in having only a minimal opportunity to appreciate the extent of faculty involvement in research, writing and public service. We were able to visit classes and were impressed as before with their skills in teaching. But we need to spend more time with faculty in open forum and at social events so that we may be informed and be able to assess their contributions to legal education and public service outside the classroom. We know there is much of this, but this Board particularly needs to know more about the extent and nature of that contribution. Various members of the Board of Directors have also expressed the need for greater faculty contact. A dinner meeting is urged for the express purpose of having the Board of Directors and the Board of Visitors meet with faculty to discuss their needs and those of the Law School generally.

Our desire, as always, is to help the University of Wisconsin Law School maintain its position of greatness.

Respectfully submitted:

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