



PASKUS STUDIO

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# ACCREDITATION REDUX

— Dean Kenneth B. Davis, Jr.

This is going to be a particularly busy year for the Law School. In addition to welcoming a terrific new class and providing a quality education for continuing students, working on the goals we identified in the 2005 Strategic Plan, recruiting new faculty, and continuing our efforts to connect with alumni and involve them in the life of the Law School, we will also be preparing for the very important re-accreditation process required for us to remain an ABA-approved institution.

Since 1952, the American Bar Association (actually, the council to their Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar) has been the U.S. Department of Education's recognized national agency for the accreditation of U.S. law schools. Every seven years, an accredited law school goes through an extensive evaluation in order to be re-accredited. Our seven-year evaluation will be in March 2006.

An ABA site evaluation is not something that schools necessarily look forward to. It is time-consum-

ing and requires a large investment of staff resources. Nevertheless, it is an interesting, thought-provoking experience that, like our recent strategic planning process, will give us an opportunity to review our resources, programs, services, and facilities in light of our mission and goals. It will also result in an outside view of our strengths and weaknesses, and identify opportunities for ways to improve.

For those of you who are interested in how the re-accreditation process works, here's the basic procedure.

We give in-depth answers to questions about how the Law School is meeting the ABA standards, which describe the requirements a law school must meet to obtain and retain ABA approval; complete a detailed, Web-based, statistical questionnaire similar to the annual one every law school answers each fall; and engage in a self-study that culminates in a comprehensive report addressing the current status of the law school. The self-study, like our strategic plan, covers topics ranging from faculty and students to

curriculum and the library. The report not only reviews recent progress, but also identifies institutional aspirations for future changes and issues that must be addressed. This information is given to each member of the site evaluation team approximately two months prior to the visit.

The visit itself takes three days — usually from a Sunday afternoon through a Wednesday morning. The team chairperson is always an experienced site evaluator and often a current or former law school dean. The evaluation team usually consists of one or two academic law school faculty members, a law librarian, one faculty member with expertise in professional skills instruction (clinical, simulation skills, or legal writing), one judge or practitioner, and one university administrator who is not a member of a law faculty. Nancy Rogers, dean of the Ohio State University-Moritz College of Law, will be the chair of our site visit, and the other members of the team will be named shortly.

During the visit, the team meets with the president, chancellor, and other university administrators. The team also meets with me, other leaders of the faculty, and the Law School administration. And, ideally, one member of the team meets individually with every member of the faculty. The team also visits as many classes as possible during its visit, in order to make judgments concerning the quality of instruction. It will also hold an open meeting with students and meet with student leaders. In addition, the team meets with members of the bar and judiciary who are familiar with the school.

At the end of the visit, the team meets with me and the chancellor to provide an oral report of the team's findings. Shortly after leaving the school, the team drafts

and finalizes an extensive written site evaluation report, covering all aspects of the school's operation. It includes faculty and administration, the academic program, the student body and their success on bar examinations and in placement, student services, library and information resources, financial resources, physical facilities, and technological capacities. The site evaluation team does not decide whether the school complies with the ABA standards; its role is to provide a factual report that accurately describes the situation of the school and provides a comprehensive basis for the Accreditation Committee and the council's judgments.

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The completed site evaluation report is sent to the Law School, which is given an opportunity to provide written corrections of any factual errors. The Accreditation Committee reviews the report, and if it concludes that the school fully complies with all the standards, we receive a letter telling us we will remain on the list of approved schools. If it finds that we need to do some more work to comply with all of the standards, the committee will send an action letter specifying the standard or standards with which the school does not comply and asking us what steps we will take to comply. When the school takes those steps, it earns its re-accreditation and remains on the list of approved schools.

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As you will read elsewhere (see pages 15 and 42–43), this is a historic issue of the *Gargoyle*: it is the last time we will see Ed Reischer listed as editor. Ed is retiring this fall, after thirty years of devoted service to the Law School. He has presided over this magazine in a continuing labor of love. His regular "From the Editor" column has brought readers a series of enlightening and humorous essays, filled with knowledge of the Law School's history and its individual graduates.

When Ed was not busy with the *Gargoyle* or the myriad other projects that more than filled his work week, he was also an ambassador for the school. He and I have clocked many a mile as we paid visits to alumni throughout the country in the last several years. I have learned from Ed and enjoyed his company immensely. Nobody I know is more devoted to this Law School.

In his typically modest way, Ed has told us that he does not want a retirement party. However, if anyone would like to celebrate Ed's work at the Law School or the beginning of his next chapter, you may want to make a contribution to the scholarship fund he has established in memory of his parents. (Contact Ann Flynn, 608-263-2202 or [Ann.Flynn@uwfoundation.wisc.edu](mailto:Ann.Flynn@uwfoundation.wisc.edu).)

Ed will be missed enormously by all of us here in the law building and by the many alumni who have known him and looked forward to seeing him here or in their own home territory. I have a strong feeling, however, that we will not lose Ed from sight. I feel sure that he will continue to be a devoted alumnus (Class of '72) and an active member of the Law School family.