

2-26-2010

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Recommended Citation

"Champion of Curricular Reform" (2010). *News Releases*. 1239.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1239

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Champion of Curricular Reform

02.26.2010 | Faculty, Law As dean of the University of Dayton School of Law, Lisa Kloppenberg championed curricular reform, bringing national recognition for the way the school rethought legal education. She will step down as dean on June 30, 2011, after a decade of service and return to the classroom.

During her tenure, Kloppenberg also led successful efforts to diversify the faculty; re-ignite a greater spirit of service in students — who are performing pro bono hours in record numbers — and boost job placement rates. She is one of just 40 female law school deans in the U.S., according to Association of American Law Schools. When appointed, she was one of the

youngest deans in the country and the first female to lead an Ohio law school. The University will launch a national search for her successor.

"It's been a joy and privilege to work with this amazing community. There has been a tremendous amount of support from students, alumni, friends, staff, faculty and the Marianists," Kloppenberg said. "This is a time of great momentum, and the 'Lawyer as Problem Solver' curriculum builds on a history of innovation in the School of Law. Before national calls for legal education reform, our creative faculty stepped up and met the challenge."

After the School of Law introduced the first accelerated five-semester law degree in the nation in 2005, it attracted media attention from *Time* magazine, *U.S. News & World Report*, *The New York Times*, NPR, the national Associated Press wire, CNN Radio, Bloomberg Radio and national legal publications throughout the country. In 2005, the school's legal writing program was ranked in the top 20 in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*. In 2006, the new curriculum, which offers a track in appropriate dispute resolution, received an award for excellence from the International Institute for Conflict Prevention and Resolution. In 2007, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching invited the University of Dayton and just a handful of other universities — including Harvard, Stanford and Georgetown — to examine how American law schools prepare lawyers and make reform recommendations.

"Dean Kloppenberg has enhanced the reputation of the School of Law in an incredible way and has strengthened our connections to the local and regional legal communities," said Joseph Saliba, provost. "On the curricular front, she is truly innovative, creative and world-class. Other renowned law schools are now following our lead. She's hired a number of incredibly talented young faculty from very prestigious universities who are making a positive impact in the lives of our law students. Most importantly, she appreciates and lives the University's Catholic, Marianist charism."

She's made a mark nationally, too. "I think she's perceived appropriately as a real visionary in the area of curricular reform," said Don Polden, dean at Santa Clara University School of Law and chair of the standards review committee of the American Bar Association. "I can certainly attest to the fact that she's very highly regarded by other American law school deans. She's done some very thoughtful things in the areas of student learning outcomes and the ethical and moral development of students."

A sampling of highlights from Kloppenberg's tenure include:

- In 2009, 93.4 percent of the class of 2008 reported finding employment within nine months of graduation, outpacing the national average by more than 3 percent.
- Minority students make up 17 percent of the entering class. The school consistently ranks near the top of Ohio law schools in diversity. In addition, the racial and gender diversity of the faculty has dramatically increased. Since 2001, the School of Law has made 17 faculty hires, including 10 women and five persons of color.
- The number of pro bono hours has increased steadily with current students having donated more than 10,000 hours of service around the nation. The school began awarding Pro Bono Commitment to Community Awards at graduation for students completing 50 or more hours of service, and a new Dayton Law Public Interest Award provides a stipend for students interning with such groups as Legal Aid of Western Ohio or the Office of the Ohio Public Defender.
- Faculty scholarship has increased significantly since the 1990s, with an upsurge in books, papers, presentations and media attention.
- The school introduced graduate degree programs in intellectual property and technology law for non-lawyers.
- Endowed scholarships have increased 34 percent, and, with the help of local law firms and donors, the school launched yearly conferences on such topics as the bailout, national immigration debate, nanotechnology, the death

penalty, cyberspace law and euthanasia.

"She's been very innovative and moved the law school forward," said Daniel J. Curran, president. "She's just done a wonderful job."

Kloppenber, 47, plans to teach courses in constitutional law and appropriate dispute resolution and finish a book about Judge Dorothy Wright Nelson, a federal appellate judge who blazed a trail in the field of settling disputes before they reach court. The second edition of her co-authored textbook, *Resolving Disputes: Theory, Practice, and Law*, was just released. She also wrote *Playing it Safe: How the Supreme Court Dodges Hard Issues and Stunts the Development of the Law*.

In 2009, the School of Law attracted more than 2,000 applicants from 25 states and two foreign countries for about 200 seats. The school enrolls approximately 500 students, with 5,000 alumni spanning the globe. The school reopened in 1974 after closing during the Great Depression.

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