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THE DEANS' LETTERS: 1956/2016

JOHN Y. GOTANDA*

As student Bob Garbarino walked along a law school corridor, he encountered Dean Harold Gill Reuschlein. The Dean waylaid him and informed him that he would be the first editor-in-chief of the *Villanova Law Review*. And so the adventure began.

ON this sixtieth anniversary of the *Villanova Law Review*, our annual Norman J. Shachoy Symposium takes a celebratory retrospective look, examining various significant articles previously published in the journal. For this issue, I would like to focus on one of the very first writings to appear in Volume I: an introduction in the form of a Dean's Letter, penned in 1956 by our founding Dean, Harold Gill Reuschlein. There, Dean Reuschlein introduced the inaugural issue of the journal by proudly proclaiming that it marked "a point of time when the program of the School of Law has come to full flower."¹ He proceeded to paint a picture of the then two- and one-half-year-old school: an institution with first-rate students and an innovative academic program, along with a faculty dedicated to teaching, scholarship, and service. In addition, he used the occasion to announce the building of "the most modern and adequate law school facilities to be found anywhere"—Garey Hall.² Dean Reuschlein was a remarkable leader and a true visionary. In record time, he built Villanova Law into one of the country's top law schools, laid the foundation for future generations of successful Villanova lawyers, and set forth the blueprint for the law school to thrive in today's changing legal world.

Dean Reuschlein also set forth his vision for the law school, which included attracting students who would be leaders in the profession, offering innovative academic programs, maintaining a student-centered focus,

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1. See Harold Gill Reuschlein, *The Dean's Letter*, 1 VILL. L. REV. 2 (1956) [hereinafter Reuschlein, *Dean's Letter*].

2. *Id.* at 3.

founding centers of excellence, and establishing a first-rate facility. By pursuing these goals, the law school has flourished.

I. STUDENT LEADERS

One of the great strengths of Dean Reuschlein was in the area of admissions: he was a tireless student recruiter who had an eye for talent. He not only convinced many students with outstanding academic credentials to forsake offers of admissions from well-established institutions, Dean Reuschlein traveled from college to college, seeking out those with leadership skills and military service, encouraging them to join the fledgling law school. This strategy paid off handsomely for Villanova Law.

Graduates of those early classes, many from backgrounds with limited financial resources, would go on to become managing partners in leading law firms, heads of multinational companies, members of Congress, distinguished judges, general counsels of Fortune 500 companies, and leaders committed to serving their communities. Moreover, they paved the path for future classes, as well as provided role models for countless students. Indeed, today, our alumni include a U.S. Senator; a member of the U.S. House of Representatives; a former Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; the Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania; numerous federal and state court judges; CEOs and general counsels of major companies and businesses; the President of the AFL-CIO; the COO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; managing partners of some of the nation's largest law firms; and lawyers who are at the forefront of some of the country's most high profile matters, like the 9/11 first responders suit and the NFL concussion litigation. And true to our mission, Villanova lawyers, no matter their calling, distinguish themselves through serving the profession and their communities.

II. INNOVATIVE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

From its beginning, Villanova Law has been committed to an innovative program that provides a first-rate legal education. In fact, when asked by the Pennsylvania Board of Bar Examiners whether the new school would comply with the American Bar Association's standards, Dean Reuschlein responded that such standards only set forth the minimal requirements for accreditation, and that Villanova would strive to provide a superior legal education that would greatly exceed them.³ He set out to build a program that included a wide range of offerings, including new courses designed to "give our students as much in the way of practical training as is possible."⁴ To this end, he engaged not only the eight mem-

3. See HAROLD GILL REUSCHLEIN, J. EDWARD COLLINS & ROBERT P. GARBARINO, THE VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW (A HISTORY) 15 (1991) [hereinafter REUSCHLEIN ET AL., HISTORY OF VILLANOVA LAW].

4. See Reuschlein, *Dean's Letter*, *supra* note 1, at 3.

bers of the faculty, but also distinguished members of the bar and other disciplines.

Today, we still follow his blueprint. The program of legal education at Villanova Law not only provides first-rate analytic skills, but real world experiences so that our graduates can hit the ground running on day one. Students hone their advocacy and writing skills through an intensive writing program containing six semesters of writing requirements. They also can gain highly-valued, hands-on experience through more than 150 externship opportunities and seven in-house clinics. We also have broadened our interdisciplinary offerings, particularly at the intersection of law and business, so that students learn to collaborate with professionals in other fields.

III. STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

Villanova Law has built a tradition of placing students at the heart of the law school. The school's inaugural faculty established an open-door policy with respect to students. They served as advisors, counseling students on "career planning, curriculum matters, and all other problems that may be associated with the study of law."⁵ In addition, Dean Reuschlein engaged the university's practicing alumni to assist students in obtaining preceptors for the Pennsylvania Bar. He also set up a placement service to help students obtain employment. This tradition has continued ever since.

Just this past year, the law school instituted an innovative, three-year, mandatory professional development program. One of the most robust programs of its kind among law schools, Villanova's professional development program encourages and engages students in individualized and active career exploration and professional development. This collaborative program among Villanova Law School faculty, the career strategy office, and alumni mentors ensures context for and continuity between academic work, clinic experiences, and externships. Through lectures, individual and small group meetings, self-directed assignments and career strategy events, the professional development program covers topics such as professionalism, networking, communication and presentation skills, goal development, time and project management, professional independence, and the lawyer as entrepreneur. By requiring these new professional development courses during all three years of law school, we are working to ensure that our students not only have top-notch legal skills, but also the "soft skills" so coveted by today's employers.

IV. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Dean Reuschlein also recognized that a law school must not only provide a top-quality education to its students, but it must also play a role in

5. *See id.*

the creation of knowledge, provide a forum in which “information and opinion may be brought and weighed by persons,” and serve as a resource for the profession and the community.⁶ He thus founded the Institute of Church and State Relations to serve these goals.

Today, Villanova Law is home to three endowed centers of excellence: the Jeffrey S. Moorad Center for the Study of Sports Law; the David F. and Constance B. Girard-diCarlo Center for Ethics, Integrity and Compliance; and the John F. Scarpa Center for Law and Entrepreneurship—each established with a generous \$5 million gift to the law school. These centers have made Villanova a thought-leader on laws and public policy in their fields. They bring leaders in academia, business, government, and the community to the law school to discuss today’s most important issues. They provide students with innovative courses, as well as journal, clinical, and externship opportunities.

Plans are underway to establish a fourth center of excellence: the Center for Law and Religion, which would bring under its umbrella the many programs already existing at the law school in this area, as well as the goals of the Institute of Church and State which for many years had been silent. Furthermore, the Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation has established Villanova Law as the statewide clearinghouse for training and information regarding the urgent issue of sex trafficking in Pennsylvania.

V. FROM GAREY HALL TO THE NEW SCHOOL OF LAW

In 1953, the law school welcomed the first class to its temporary home in Falvey Library. Of course, from the beginning, Dean Reuschlein had grand plans for a permanent facility. As he announced in the introduction to the first issue of the *Villanova Law Review*, the law school would be moving the following year to a new home in Garey Hall. When it opened in 1957, Garey Hall had a library capable of housing 160,000 volumes, twelve faculty offices, and a “well-appointed student lounge replete with a great stone fireplace and an adjoining outdoor flagstone terrace overlooking the campus.”⁷ It also had three classrooms—“one for the first year students [that] could comfortably accommodate 170, [one] for the second year [students that held] about 90, while the third year students were assigned to an attractive courtroom with [a] jury box . . . which seated 60 students.”⁸

While Garey Hall underwent many renovations throughout the years, it was clear by the nineties that the law school needed a new building. After years of searching the Main Line for a suitable location, we settled on the perfect site—the lot adjacent to Garey Hall. With the generous

6. *See id.* at 4.

7. *See* REUSCHLEIN ET AL., HISTORY OF VILLANOVA LAW, *supra* note 3, at 30.

8. *Id.*

support of the university and our alumni, in 2009, we moved into one of the finest buildings in all of legal education.⁹

Our new facility boasts over three times the usable square footage as Garey Hall when it opened. It has approximately five times as many classrooms and faculty offices, a state-of-the-art ceremonial courtroom, dedicated offices for the law school's three journals and Moot Court Board, and a beautiful library with 45,000 net square feet of space, with stack space for over 350,000 volumes. The building also contains an open two-and-one-half story commons; a dining room on the lower level and coffee bar on the first level, providing breakfast, lunch, and snacks; a faculty center; a student lounge; and space for student organizations. It not only provides an exceptional teaching environment, but also an ultra-modern facility to host academic conferences, workshops, and symposia. Today, it stands as the home for the school that Dean Reuschlein envisioned—one of “the most modern and adequate law school facilities to be found anywhere”¹⁰

VI. VILLANOVA LAW REVIEW THEN AND NOW

Dean Reuschlein closed his introduction to the first volume of the *Law Review* with a discussion of his hopes and dreams for the new journal. He wanted it to “serve as a worthwhile tool for the better training of students in the skills of legal research and writing.”¹¹ He wanted it to “stimulate productive thinking in the purposeful study of problems, particularly current problems in new and expanding fields.”¹² And he wanted it to represent “the depth and intensity of our program.”¹³ He concluded by “predict[ing] for it a bright future.”¹⁴

As I noted at the outset, Dean Reuschlein was indeed a visionary. Today, the *Law Review* is one of the country's leading academic law journals. It publishes articles from prominent scholars, judges, and lawyers on important and pressing issues. It not only contributes to the academic discourse, it shapes it, as evidenced by numerous citations to the journal by courts and commentators, including by the United States Supreme Court.

True to its mission, the *Law Review* continues to provide critical training for students who hone their research, writing, and editing skills, de-

9. See Mike Stetz, *Best Law School Facilities*, PRELAW, Fall 2014, at 26, 26–27, available at http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/cypress/prelaw_2014fall/#/26 [<https://perma.cc/5RUW-A4EM>] (ranking Villanova seventh in preLaw Magazine's list of “Best Law School Facilities”). In selecting institutions for inclusion, the magazine assessed aesthetics, square footage per student on campus, library hours and amenities, and accommodations, including dining options, parking, and lockers. See *id.*

10. See Reuschlein, *Dean's Letter*, *supra* note 1, at 3.

11. *Id.* at 4.

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.*

14. See *id.*

velop a critical eye and an attention to detail, and build organizational, leadership, and advocacy skills. Perhaps most importantly, through this experience, students have learned to work as a team and have forged relationships that will not only carry into practice, but also last a lifetime. In short, the *Law Review* has become all that Dean Reuschlein envisioned and so much more. It stands today as a shining example of what the institution has accomplished over the past six decades.

* * *

Dean Reuschlein was justifiably proud of what this fledgling institution had accomplished. Sixty years later, I believe he would also be proud of what the law school has become.