

Greetings DU Law Alumni & Friends,

The dean search is done, and I am thrilled to have been selected as the University of Denver Sturm College of Law's next dean. Having served as interim dean since July, I am excited to be able to continue the work we have all started, and to have the privilege of leading the University of Denver Sturm College of Law at this important time.

While I am looking forward to many projects, my first priority will be to develop an implementation strategy for our new strategic plan. In my letter to you in the last issue of the *Alumni Magazine*, I told you that my first priority was to get to work on a strategic plan for the College of Law. A good strategic plan is essential to identify the areas in which we can and must truly excel, and to focus our efforts so that we can succeed in this mission. And such a plan is particularly critical at this juncture, as we face a changing climate within the legal profession and new opportunities for improving legal education.

I am pleased to report that, in December, we reached an important milestone in our strategic planning process: We have developed, and the faculty has overwhelmingly approved, a blueprint for our strategic plan. And it is an excellent one.

The plan has two basic components.

First is the Modern Teaching Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to create first-rate lawyers, who are prepared to face the challenges of modern practice. We grounded this initiative in intensive research on modern legal practice and modern legal education, including the 2007 Carnegie Report on legal education. This research demonstrates a need to increase skills training and education on professional identity, and to integrate these into our traditional doctrinal curriculum, particularly through the use of experiential learning. This initiative builds on our existing strengths in integrated and experiential learning, including our excellent Clinical, Lawyering Process, Externship, and Trial Advocacy Programs. We propose to integrate more of our courses, and to provide many more experiential learning opportunities for our students. In fact, one of our goals is to create a pilot program in which a select group of students can choose an all-experiential third year – a program we believe will provide the best preparation for legal practice provided by any law school in the nation.

The second component of the plan is a Specialization Initiative. The point of the Specialization Initiative is to pick a limited number of subject matter areas, focus our efforts on those areas, and achieve excellence and recognition in those areas. Our subject-matter centers of excellence will be:

- International and comparative law
- Environmental and natural resources law
- Commercial and business law
- Workplace law
- Constitutional rights and remedies

In choosing these centers of excellence, we looked to both our existing strengths (for example, our existing, nationally recognized programs in international and environmental law), as well as to areas where we have a combination of existing strength and strategic opportunity. Our plan is to target our resources and our fundraising efforts on these areas in order to maximize our engagement in important legal and policy debates, our visibility, and our reputation for excellence in these areas.

We plan to take advantage of important synergies between our centers of excellence. For example, we will offer more courses on the interplay between environmental and international law, and on the increasingly important international aspects of business law.

We also plan to take advantage of important synergies between the Modern Learning Initiative and the Specialization Initiative. For example, in each area of subject-matter excellence, we will provide our students with opportunities for experiential learning, including clinical and externship opportunities. Additionally, students will have the ability to specialize in one of our areas of excellence, and to obtain certificates demonstrating to potential employers a high level of subject matter expertise.

This plan is an important first step. It sets out our goals and provides a broad outline of our path toward those goals. However, much work remains to be done. The next step is to develop implementation plans; more specific plans for how we will achieve these goals and measure our progress in achieving those goals. In this next phase, we will once again reach out to you – our alumni, other practitioners, and our colleagues across the University and across the country. We will ask for your thoughts and your insights on how to make this plan a reality and how to take the Sturm College of Law to the next level. We look forward to continuing to work with you on our future.

Our strategic plan blueprint can be found at <http://law.du.edu/documents/about/SCOL-Strategic-PlanFinal.pdf>

Regards,



Dean Martin J. Katz