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Teaching Gone Wrong

By Elihai Braun

Some classes we'll remember forever, or at least promise to. But even in forgetting, we'll remain grateful to the professors who trained our minds as supplements never could, especially when compared to the few professors who taught us so poorly that there is little to forget.

We celebrate our great teachers. We ignore our terrible ones. We should recognize both.

With the RG's platform, I cooked up the L. Hart Wrong Award for Awfulness in Teaching, parodying the L. Hart Wright Award for Excellence in Teaching, and sent two emails, one to lawopen and the other to lsorgeomt, soliciting nominations. In two days, I received 70 nominations - 63 for professors, five for the RG, and two for me. The 63 professor nominations comprised 24 names, but more than half named just three professors, whom I will not name.

Don't look so disappointed. Or relieved. You could probably guess them.

A couple observations stand out, even in this small data set. Tenured professors took 21 of the 24 spots. Lecturers took an additional two spots, leaving just one non-tenured but tenure-track professor, who was also the only named professor under 40. Men took 19 of 24 spots and comprised 86% of the nominations. Happily, not a single legal practice professor, and not a single clinical professor, made the list. And 15 professors were nominated just once.

Consider, for reference, that Michigan Law employs 81 full-time professors, and another 100 or so adjuncts, lecturers, professors from practice, and public interest/public service fellows.

"Just Doesn't Care"

A teacher wasn't terrible just for teaching in the clouds or not quite getting it despite ardent efforts. Instead, a terrible teacher, in the words of students, "does not care whether we learn," "just doesn't care," "only talked at us," "never wanted to answer questions," "goes off on wild tangents regarding medieval/feudal law," was "long on war stories, short on teaching," was "always in a bad mood," was "proud to be a douche," "played favorites," "used old slides," used "boring slides," and "used an outdated book." Terrible teachers, said students, were conceited, condescending, contemptuous, flippant, pompous, ill-prepared, inaudible, and disorganized.

Professors also "rescheduled class during other popular class times"; "never held office hours, not even after the midterm"; "told us that he doesn't use email even though he does"; "made up missed classes by starting at 8:30 a.m. for three weeks"; or "teaches a class called [redacted], but believes that he is teaching a legal skills course." Another professor: "His entire course is constructed for his own entertainment."

Racism and sexism were recurrent complaints. Lawyers are no longer "white men from wealthy families who studied Latin in college and celebrate their German heritage," said one student. Yet one professor, reading the name of a Latina student...
Letter from the Editor:

Hey y’all -

We’re back! Kind of. We don’t know whether you’ve noticed the lack of RGs this year littering the hallways, bathrooms, commons, etc. But believe us, we’ve been trying. Littering’s our passion and we’ve been trying to make it happen with blood, sweat, and tears, to little avail. We’re going to get real with you for a hot minute.

The problem is that no one wants to submit articles. And it seems that a big (part of the) reason is the interwebz. A lot of people agree to write, hem and haw, ask if they can be published anonymously, and then decide not to take the risk. They don’t want their names splashed across websites like Above the Law. Understandably. But it makes us sad that the result is the near demise of a beloved 63-year-old school newspaper. We took down our website, we agreed to not post articles digitally, we offered to pay people—but still, would-be-writers are nervous.

The result is this: we are deprived of the brilliant, funny, interesting, introspective, and unique pieces that Michigan law students are capable of producing. We’ve received articles this year—great, creative, sometimes edgy articles—that we were excited about, just to have the author email us later and say they changed their minds about running it. And the fact that no one is getting to read these articles is really a shame.

The terrible and great thing about websites like Above the Law is that they call people out. Law firms and schools get called out and shamed for the awful things that they sometimes do. We think more transparency is usually a good thing, but it also means that individuals are sometimes singled out and embarrassed for honest mistakes, though this really rarely happens. The truth is that unless you write an incredibly offensive or incendiary RG article, you won’t get on Above the Law.

Internet aside, people don’t want to write because it’s a lot of work. And yes, it is. We get that. With law school, any bit of extra work seems like Sisyphus’ rock. (Our own piles of unwashed laundry is proof). Despite this, we think that the RG is worth it. It’s a forum for students to discuss things that are on their minds—things that they are concerned about, things they are curious about, things they want people to know more about, etc. It’s a place where events and people can be memorialized forever in our official school newspaper archives (we have pictures of J.J. White with hair, for God’s sake!).

So this issue is a collection of the articles that we’ve gotten this entire school year. A whole year of wheeling, bribery, and begging. We hope you’ll enjoy it, and if you like it, maybe think about writing an article or two. Please?

Thanks for reading.

Your friendly neighborhood EICs,

Connie Chang & Alyce Thompson

P.S. The year is coming to a close and the RG needs fresh blood. Do you have a vision for the RG? Are you interested in writing or editing? Email us at connieyi@umich.edu and awilyn@umich.edu. We’ll give you the keys.
Mid-Sized Market: Detroit

By Jared Sugarman

Between 2009 and 2011, The University of Michigan Law School sent 358 of its newly minted graduates east, to Washington, D.C. and New York. Eighty-four alums headed west to the Bay Area or Los Angeles, and 132 more decided to start their careers in the Midwestern city of Chicago. Supported in part by an alumni network of over 20,000 lawyers, UMLS students have opportunities to find work in almost any part of the country, or even abroad. But each and every year, many find jobs right here in the Great Lakes State, in a city where the link to the University remains strong, and the opportunities may be getting better.

“[Detroit] provides just such a fruitful ground for innovation or new types of projects,” said Brandon Weiner, who graduated from the Law School in 2011. “It really engages the legal process in ways that aren’t happening in other cities.” Along with another member of his class, Weiner founded Creative Rights, a nonprofit organization headquartered in the Motor City. According to its website, Creative Rights is “dedicated to providing free legal representation, educational programs, and project coordination services to the creative community.”

“I always say our organization is a sanctuary for social imagination, and that’s the first thing I say about it. The law comes second,” said Brandon Weiner, who is from Grand Blanc, Michigan, and did work as a filmmaker in California before attending law school. “Our whole mission is to find a way to really increase creative thinking,” Weiner said.

Jose Bartolomei, who graduated from UMLS in 1999 and currently practices in Detroit as Senior Corporate Counsel for Quicken Loans, sees ample opportunity for more groups like Creative Rights to grow in Detroit. “It feels like a more budget version of Brooklyn,” Bartolomei said of Michigan’s most populous city, where he worked for the law firm of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, from 2002-2006. Miller Canfield is one of the state’s oldest and largest firms, employing over 260 attorneys. “[Detroit] is a place that I think begs for-out-of-the-box corporate formation practices,” Bartolomei continued. “You’ve got folks who are saying, I’ve got to set up a business, I’ve got to get it off the ground, and I need the venture capital to get that going. That means I need to negotiate all the formation documents and all the contracts that come along with it.”

Bartolomei, a native of Puerto Rico, left Detroit on multiple occasions to take positions in cities such as Dallas, Chicago, and Jackson, Mississippi. He then returned to Ann Arbor, where he now lives with his wife and young son. “I’m not from here. I’m not a Detroiter by birth or anything like that, but I champion it because I do see the potential for growth,” Bartolomei said.

Without a major in-state legal market, Michigan Law School can’t provide its students with the type of “home-town advantage” offered by some of its peer schools on the coasts or in other parts of the country. But even if Detroit never measures up to cities like New York or Washington, D.C. in terms of prestige, it is still a place that UMLS graduates should be eager to embrace, says Assistant Dean for Career Planning Susan Guindi.

“It is a relatively small community, and that’s one of the advantages of Detroit. People feel like they can really get involved in the community,” said Guindi, who graduated from Michigan Law School and practiced in Washington, D.C. before coming back to be the Associate Director of the Office of Public Service in 1995. In addition to opportunities in the private sector, Guindi mentioned public service jobs with organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and Legal Services of South Central Michigan.
After two years as LSSS President, third year JD/MS candidate Liz Och is finally stepping down. What follows in an exclusive RG interview with Liz:

RG: It’s been a busy couple of years for you. With the election for your replacement this week, how are you feeling?

Liz: It’s definitely bittersweet. On the one hand, LSSS has been a defining element, if not the defining element, of my Michigan Law experience. On the other hand, I’ve really enjoyed reading the candidates’ ideas for next year—I think there’s a lot of positive change that could result from an LSSS Exec Board with fresh ideas and new perspectives.

...Also, I hear free time is great. Apparently there’s a lot of Netflix I’ve been missing out on.

RG: So you’re saying you don’t watch House of Cards?

Liz: That’s exactly what I’m saying. Everyone keeps making House of Cards references to me, and I’m just like, I don’t know what that means.

RG: Everyone is in agreement that from the outside, you’re a study of constant activity. How much of that is just you, and how much of it is the job?

At this point, it’s actually a little hard for me to separate the two. My leadership style is pretty hands-on, and I’ve always tried to be accessible to the student body—especially to students who don’t know me personally. This naturally results in a lot of emails in my inbox starting with the line, “I’m not sure if you’re the right person to contact about this, but...” Honestly, I love that. And I think that any good LSSS president is going to have a certain amount of busyness, just by nature of the job. There’s an unavoidable responsibility that comes with being president of any student organization, but, at the end of the day, I also just really enjoy having a full planner.

RG: What would you say was LSSS’s biggest accomplishment over the past two years?

Liz: Two words: Game Room.

RG: Really? That’s it?

Liz: I mean, there’s a lot to be proud of. Last year, we started a relationship with MDen that has let us sell MLaw gear online and accept credit cards. This was a huge jump into the 21st century for LSSS. We also negotiated the policy for the Commons, which reserves times when only law students have access to the space. And we lobbied to get our budget (which had been the same for as long as anyone can remember) raised, which let us increase student group funding by 50%. We’re also running a pilot program this year to provide travel funding for 3Ls going on interviews. We advised on the renovation of student org offices, and of course, the opening the Game Room. Those are the big items, but there have also been day-to-day improvements—Blue Jeans Lectures, $1 coffee refills, and some exciting new stressbusters—and personally, I can’t help but be proud of having two successful proms.

RG: Speaking of, what’s your ideal Prom theme?

Liz: So, I can’t take credit for coming up with either Space Prom or Promtanic, but those were both pure gold in my mind. I was personally pulling for “Dean Caminker’s Retirement Party: A Formal Affair.”

CONTINUED on Page 15
By Connie Chang

Last semester, I snagged a spot in the mini-seminar: ‘An Insider’s Guide to the Supreme Court’ with Professors Dave Moran and Richard Friedman. It seemed like an easy credit, and I was excited because I knew that with mini-seminars, you get to go into professors’ houses and creepily see how they live. (Do they really sleep under their desks tucked in little law-book-forts?) What I did not know was that I was in for one of the best classes of my academic life.

Professor Dave Moran had gotten certiorari granted in *Michigan v. Evans*, a case that asked, basically, whether the Double Jeopardy Clause bars retrial if a judge grants an acquittal based on an error. (Spoiler alert: The answer is yes. Yes it does.)

At every meeting, the professors regaled us with stories of their past feats before the Notorious Nine. They gave us insider tips for when we would ourselves argue at the Supreme Court—and seemed oddly sure that this would someday happen: “Don’t bring a legal pad to the podium at the Court—it’s too small to fit a legal pad,” warned Professor Moran; “Don’t use the word ‘orthogonal,’” warned Professor Friedman, who was second chair on the case.

The lucky twelve students in the mini-seminar got to watch Dave prepare, and got to pick his brain on his thought processes at every stage of preparation. We read the briefs in the case and in one session, mooted him for oral argument. Exactly how helpful this particular moot was is questionable—although a question asked by 3L Shannon Leitner was later asked verbatim by Justice Scalia in D.C.

In November, all twelve students attended oral arguments in Washington D.C. The night before his argument, Dave treated us to dinner at La Lo-mita Dos, a Mexican restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue. “I always have dinner here the night before [a Supreme Court] argument,” he informed us, while we students quietly questioned the wisdom of eating bean burritos before such an ordeal.

The next morning, we reconvened at the Supreme Court cafeteria for a quiet and nervous breakfast of surprisingly delicious omelets. The students were then walked through a quick line before nabbing our seats for the show. The courtroom is smaller than you’d expect, and very quiet. Marble Greek columns surround the court, and heavy red velvet curtains serve as the backdrop to nine empty chairs. It is incredibly intimidating. “So when the justices come in, should we bow?” whispered one fellow flustered student.

The courtroom was packed--there

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Another law school year is slowly but surely drawing to a close. April is a lovely month in most parts of the country. Here in Michigan, however, April is a cruel joke. We keep thinking warm weather is just around the corner, but the cold persists long past Easter. Once it is warm enough to break out shorts and sun dresses (you know, 50 degrees or so), final exams are nigh and we poor law students must spend those lovely days indoors hitting the books. As much as we might want to play ultimate frisbee in the Quad or join that epic drum circle on Hash Bash, such spring fun is reserved for the undergrads. Sorry!

Actually, I should insert an asterisk there. Believe it or not, there is one group of students for whom April is not all that bad. 3Ls! The Class of 2013, who decided back in 2009 that they would escape the Great Recession by attending law school (LOL), have nearly reached the end of this long and winding road. They survived the stresses of 1L, the humiliation of OCI, the crushing workload of 2L, and the epic boredom of 3L fall semester. Between the bar exam studying, monumental debt load, and all-around life of drudgery awaiting them after graduation, they find themselves on the event horizon of “real life.” This is not a great place to be, my friends, but a little denial and a lot of booze can make anything enjoyable. The bottom line is, 3LS DO NOT CARE ABOUT LAW SCHOOL ANYMORE. And in law school, “not caring” is about as close to happiness as you will ever get.

For these 3Ls, “going to class” means showing up drunk to HH100 for the SFF auction. Instead of forming a study group, they do an embarrassingly bad rendition of Gangnam Style with their friends at Law Prom. They spend more time on their March Madness brackets than on their outlines, and they do not read for class because they have not bothered to order their casebooks yet. This does not apply to all 3Ls, of course. Some of them are disgusting gunners to the bitter end. But for the most part, the final semester of 3L is a blurry haze of parties, pub crawls, last chance hookups, and Netflix marathons. It is enough to make even the bitterest law student sad to see it all end.

I have written a number of advice columns for my fellow classmates over the years. I will not get the chance to write many more. But as I look through your letters and contemplate the fails and foibles of my fellow MLaw students, I would like to send a special congratulations to my fellow 3Ls. We were full of fail, it is true. But the classes of 2014 and 2015 clearly have bigger problems than we ever did.

And with that, let me go to your letters:

The Phid House party is coming up on April 5th. I know it’s gonna be crazy. Any advice on how a 2L can do something that makes me the talk of the law school?

Wait – why do you want to be the talk of the law school? Don’t you know that, aside from Mr. Wolverine and Campbell, it is not a good thing to be law school famous? Hell, even people who book multiple classes don’t really want others to find out about it. Worse, you want to be famous for out-crazying the crazy motherfuckers who populate Phid house parties. Are you nuts? I guess so.

But fine – you asked for my advice and I’ll give it. First, you will not make an impression by dancing on a table, or drinking more booze than everyone, wearing an elaborate or slutty costume, or getting lots of...
An Interview with Daniel Halberstam, Scholar of the Law and Supporter of Squirrels

By Surya Kundu

Surya Kundu: Zingerman's names a sandwich after you, what's in it?

Daniel Halberstam: First I'll fight the hypothetical. I'll say kosher pastrami with coleslaw and Russian dressing on rye. Pickle on the side. If I don't want to fight the hypothetical, I'll keep it vegetarian. Avocado, Swiss cheese, what else?

SK: Why?

DH: Why? Because it's there.

SK: What did you wear to senior prom?

DH: We didn't have one in Germany. But I'll give you a different story - I had a teacher since fifth grade that was also the sports teacher. He proposed we have a big sports fest for our high school graduation, and I thought this was a terrible idea given Germany's past. I thought there was a terrible association between sports and managing the population so I started a petition saying this is not what the school was about and graduation shouldn't be about sports. We wound up having a very modest ceremony and I'm not sure that the teacher ever forgave me.

SK: Squirrels, pro or anti?

DH: Definitely pro.

SK: If you could be a superhero, who would you be?

DH: Batman seems to have fun. Yeah, I think I'd like squaring off with the Joker.

SK: When you were a child, what was your dream grown-up job?

DH: I don't know if I had one. I'll tell you one thing - I definitely didn't want to be a lawyer.

SK: In case of a zombie apocalypse, which two professors would you have on your team?

DH: West of course because he lifts weights and Miller because he'd be more scared than me.

SK: But not your wife?

DH: I'd rather keep my wife out of the hands of zombies.

SK: Who would win in a fight - a bear, a shark or an octopus?

DH: Alien.

SK: Why do you like Michigan?

DH: I like Michigan for the faculty, for the school, for the town, the students AND this interview.
EASY FOOD FOR BUSY PEOPLE

By Surya Kundu

1 clove
GARLIC
1 crushed

1 TOMATO
diced

1 ONION
chopped
1 AVOCADO
diced

1 LIME
juiced

1 tbsp CUMIN
Water CAYENNE

Trusty Pot

BLACK BEANS

OLIVE OIL
as needed

(1) Gather your ingredients. And your pot. Heat on medium.
(2) Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil.
(3) Add spices and stir.
(4) Add the can of beans. Fill can with water and add it too.
Mix well. Add tomatoes. Mix well.
(5) Lower heat and let simmer for 15 minutes.
(6) Add salt and lime juice to taste.
(7) Put in bowls. Add avocado and cheese.
(8) Eat, then back to work.
Debt Wizard: Simple Enough for a Law Student

By Elihai Braun

"The University of Michigan Law School has created something beautiful," says Elie Mystal, an Above the Law blogger who otherwise has nothing positive to say about law schools.

That something is the Debt Wizard. It tells you, based on three simple inputs, how much money you can expect to have left each month after you've paid your monthly student loan bill and your rent.

From three drop-down menus, select your post-grad employment (government, private practice, public interest, etc.), your city of residence, and your total loans. Based on these inputs, the Debt Wizard produces 12 bar graphs, one per salary level, with choices from $40K to $160K.

Each bar graph has four bars, representing, respectively, a 10-year loan repayment plan, a 25-year loan repayment plan, the government’s IBR repayment plan, and (if you’ll qualify) MLaw’s own LRAP. When you move the cursor over any individual bar, it tells you how much of your net monthly income will go to debt repayment. Subtracting these two “fixed expenses,” it tells you how much you'll have left... if you'll have anything left. You might not. Your fixed expenses could exceed your income.

An example will help. Say you enter government in D.C., making $60K per year. You have $200K in loans. Can you repay that amount on a 25-year loan repayment plan? A $60K salary will give you a net monthly income of $3,520. You’ll spend $1,486 of it each month paying your loans and $1,866 paying for your housing. These fixed expenses total $3,352, comprising 95% of your net monthly income and leaving you with a paltry $168 for everything else. Not going to happen.

But move over a bar! Under the government’s IBR plan, you’ll only spend $541 per month on your loans, which will bring your fixed expenses down to 68% of your net monthly income and leave you with $1,113 for everything else. That might be doable. Now move over to the next bar. Under MLaw’s LRAP, you’ll spend $0 per month on your loans, your fixed expenses will only take 53% of your net monthly income, and you’ll have $1,654 left over. That could really work.

Students don’t know what $60K in take-home pay really means. Or $80K or $140K. We don’t know if it’ll pay the rent, put food on the table, buy a home in five years, or satisfy our lenders. For all us dilettantes, the Wizard illustrates how student debt can haunt our adulthood. It speaks in dollars and cents, a language that even lawyers can understand, and paints scenarios where we won’t actually have enough money at the end of the month. We like to believe that we’ll beat the odds, that the recurring student debt horror story might happen to other people but not to us. The Wizard tells us otherwise. It translates the algorithms so simply that, for perhaps the first time, we may actually understand. We can do everything right – go to a good school, earn good grades, get a good job – and still end up in the red. So now we’ll know (and hopefully plan).

Kudos to the Wizard’s brainchild Dean Z and to the Financial Aid Office for amassing these 11,000 nuggets of data.
Dinner, Law School Frat Style

By Sally Larsen

An invitation to a frat house dinner party is usually a proposition to accept with caution, if at all, and not generally something you’d want to pay for the privilege to attend. But on October 19th the Phid House, Michigan Law’s fraternity residence, shattered all preconceived notions of what frat cuisine can be. For six lucky students, Phid put on a multi-course meal, complete with mood music, a special guest, and a good faith effort at five-piece flatware place settings.

It all began at the Student Funded Fellowship (SFF) Auction in March, where Phid offered up a unique opportunity: A dinner party prepared and hosted by the frat brothers and sisters, with good wine and conversation provided by popular Michigan Law professor Timothy Pinto. Jessica Morton and several other students, then 2Ls, won the silent auction for the dinner. As Jessica explained, “we seized the opportunity to have dinner with Tim Pinto, who is both our 1L Legal Practice Professor and a wonderful person who always goes above and beyond for his students.”

Due to final exams and other exigencies that accompany the closing weeks of a law school semester, the dinner was scheduled for this fall. The upshot of waiting? Phid got a whole new crop of 1Ls who were eager to jump on board for dinner party prep. Madi Sharko, a 1L who Morton “suspect[s] was professionally trained,” served as head chef. Other Phiddies jumped on board as sous chefs, bakers, menu calligraphers, servers and pianists.

The group effort paid off. “Dinner was lovely,” Morton attested. The guests arrived to the strains of soft jazz piano from the skilled hands of 1L Daniel Dena. The menus, hand-crafted by 2L Christina Castedo, advertised a fine dining feast: A caesar salad variation with roasted red peppers, pan-fried risotto balls stuffed with mozzarella, and pumpkin-ricotta ravioli - all concocted from scratch. The pièce de résistance? An almost-fudge gateau with berries, constructed by 3L Nick Mueller.

Professor Pinto had “a lot of fun,” and was especially impressed by the culinary skills of head chef Sharko, a student of his whose Legal Practice grade, it is probably safe to say, is not in jeopardy. Pinto found the event particularly fitting because he is a Phiddie himself, having lived in the frat house for all three of his law school years. The Phid House is a residential community at Michigan Law for members of Phi Delta Phi, a legal fraternity with more than 130 chapters nationwide. Phid is home to 24 law students of all years, and is well-known for its semi-annual themed house parties.

The dinner was also notable for another reason: Its ultimate goal was not to feed hungry law students or to prove that frat houses can be classy, but to support SFF grants for 1Ls working in public interest summer internships. SFF grants are the main source of funding for Michigan Law students who take summer jobs at non-profits, government agencies and other eligible public interest employers after their 1L year. And the SFF Auction, held every spring, is one of the main sources of funding for the grants. Every year, hundreds of students, faculty and alumni donate their services, timeshares and products ranging from homemade salsas to iPads, to be auctioned off to other students and faculty. The amount of money brought in from the Auction and other SFF fundraisers determines the number of students to whom the SFF Board can distribute grants each year. As Phid House treasurer Priya Bhanu commented, “we had a ton of fun putting the dinner on, but more importantly, it couldn’t have gone to a better cause.”

While the jury is out on whether Phid will be donating a dinner party to the SFF Auction again next year, there certainly will be no shortage of great items on offer. The event may not be till March, but it’s never too early to start practicing your bidding arm.
New LSSS Lunch Series:
How to be Exactly Like Me!

By Emily Brown

One of the great things about Michigan Law is its collegial and supportive atmosphere. Students here are always very eager to help each other out and offer advice. In fact, USNews ranks Michigan Law #1 in the category of “Students’ Willingness to Participate in Panels.”

Each week, MLaw students choose from countless opportunities to learn about OCI, public interest jobs, classes, journals, clerkships, and other similar topics from peers who have up to nine months more experience than them. While you might think students would be fulfilled by all of this valuable information, they are only left wanting more. Well, MLaw, ask and you shall receive.

LSSS has announced a new lunch series called: “How to Be Exactly Like Me.” The series will feature weekly panels of 2Ls and 3Ls who have generously offered to talk about themselves. Panelists interested in devoting their time should respond quickly. An anonymous source has reported that, since yesterday when LSSS President Liz Och solicited volunteers through lawopen, the waiting list already has 450 students.

Topics will include tooth-brushing technique, the development of an effective Facebook persona, and making successful choices in the areas of romance, fashion, and breakfast cereal. Rumor has it that for the final panel of the semester, every 3L who landed a federal clerkship will be invited to discuss where he or she gets a haircut. Jerusalem Garden will be served.

In a show of support from the school, Dean Z will reward the student who most transparently uses the guise of advising others for shameless self-promotion. Bonus points will be awarded for false modesty and laughing at your own jokes. The lucky winner will receive a staged candid photo having coffee or playing squash with any member of the faculty who has served in a presidential administration. The photo will also be posted on the school’s website in photo slot number four. May the best winner win!

About the author: Emily Brown is a 2L from New Jersey. She is interested in civil rights, criminal defense, cooking, yoga, participating on panels, casually mentioning her life achievements in conversation, and laughing at her own jokes (particularly this one).

More information at www.howtobeexactlylikeemilybrown.net.

“Yeah, sometimes one of those litigators will crawl out of the canal and eat one or two of the neighborhood pets...”
Mr. Wolverine, a.k.a. The Best Three Hours of Second Semester

Letters from Your Hosts

Dear Law School,

It seems every time I stand on the Mendelssohn Theater stage, whether for last year’s Mr. Wolv or a culture show, I’m wearing short-shorts and/or spandex. I hoped to break that tradition when hosting Mr. Wolverine this year. Needless to say, I failed.

Hosting Mr. Wolverine with dearest Marky Mark this year allowed us to view the event from a new perspective and presented its own set of challenges. In retrospect, last year’s Mr. Wolv contestants only had to worry about which looked best on stage: leopard print or zebra print spandex. The gentlemen (and L’arenzo) of 2013 had to navigate the treacherous pitfalls of leotards and the ever-present threat of a wardrobe malfunction. Let it be known they passed with flying colors . . . and nothing else flying, if you catch my drift.

As for Mark and me, it was incredibly nerve-racking wondering whether the audience would laugh at our videos and our jokes. We had a solid 60% laugh-to-joke ratio, which is to say a D-. Fortunately, Mark picked up the English language faster than expected and is almost fluent, which helped significantly in the writing process. Yet his lack of mastery of the foreign tongue allowed us to exploit that for a few quick laughs as well, which was a win-win. Without the language barrier, we would have descended to a sub-60% laugh-to-joke ratio, and really, who wants that?

In any case, Mr. Wolv is one of those events that makes Michigan Law such an amazing place to go to school. From onstage synchronized swimming to the winner of Campbell Moot Court showing us he could also rival Lil Wayne in a rap battle, and everything else in-between, maybe we really do have to believe Dean Z’s assertion that Mr. Wolv characteristics truly are the first and foremost quality that she seeks in Michigan Law applicants.

Until next year,
Jake Perkowski

P.S. Thanks to LLSA, Nick Herrr... errr...era, Keith Diggory, Sarah Dada, DJ Hill, Ben Halbig, and of course, Mark “Israeli” Garibyan.

Dear Law School,

Hosting Mr. Wolverine turned out to be a great opportunity to work on my English. I would recommend it better than Rosetta Stone.

Mark Garibyan
TEACHING GONE WRONG, from FRONT PAGE

for the first time, asked, "Where have all the Smiths and Joneses gone?" Other (white) professors (yes, more than one) had trouble telling students of color apart. Maybe they’re just well-meaning “oblivious Old White Guy[s],” but it’s 2013, as another student noted. On the sexism front, more than one professor ogled women, creating hostile classrooms. One male professor told a female student she was “nice to look at.”

A few students complained about exams, with some grumbles about an accidentally released spreadsheet. Some criticized a video final (but maybe our new dean will change that...).

Does it have to be this way?

Make no mistake: Michigan Law has great professors – teaching, mentoring, elucidating doctrines from Miranda to Thompkins, Erie Railroad to Grable. They rewrite their lectures each time, comment on our papers, welcome us in office hours, respond to emails after midnight, supervise student research, and whisper in our ears in clinic court appearances. Our great professors don’t just refrain from racist and sexist remarks but call it out in the classroom and in the courts. Many bring experience as litigators and regulators. And professors at Michigan Law, perhaps more so than at other schools, engage in the life of our community – inviting us into their homes, entertaining at lunch panels, judging Mr. Wolverine, hosting LSRJ sex trivia, etc.

So what’s a few terrible professors, really? We’ve had many terrific ones? Ask the students who have had to sit through their classes: “I actually needed to learn [redacted]; it’s a shame he never got around to teaching it.” “I’m at a disadvantage professionally due to this class and have been struggling to make up for it ever since.” “I know it is the Top Ten way to make us drop an extra $4,000 to pass the bar, but I don’t think I know enough to even follow a Barbri lecture.”

Should we imagine that our great professors somehow cancel out our terrible ones? Or overlook their bad teaching because they’ve donated to SFF? Maybe it is too much to ask that all of our teachers care about teaching. The top vote-getters, as it turns out, were prolific, nationally known scholars. Enduring their classes is, perhaps, the price we pay for the prestige of their association.

Does it have to be this way? That’s the question that this award, in its clumsy way, sought to ask. At least it got attention. People rallied. I received over 30 emails from classmates asking the RG to pull the award. Most people were gracious, but others, well, let’s just say that I am a mean-spirited idiot who doesn’t understand that we don’t insult people here at Michigan Law.

Recognizing the worst teachers would be “unnecessarily humiliating and cruel,” “vindictive and petty,” and “akin to public bullying.” It would be “deeply hurtful,” said one student, because “even if we think our professors are sometimes inhumane, they’re still human.” Another: “If we had John Yoo on the faculty then I wouldn’t feel bad, but we don’t.”

Besides being “mean spirited,” recognizing a poor teacher was “anti-community-building, anti-Michigan,” “not in the spirit of Michigan,” “a little outside Michigan’s usual collegial atmosphere,” “an anti-Michigan thing to do.” I could go on. “We’re Michigan - Not Chicago.” I get it! Our collegiality is not just a marketing tool of the admissions office. It runs deep.

Speaking Up

Yes, we’re a collegial place – keeping the Lower Commons microwaves clean and embarrassing ourselves at Mendelssohn Theater. When fellow students lost their home to a fire this year, students and professors rushed to their aid with furniture and cash. But that collegiality should not prevent us from speaking up, somehow, about how we’re learning.

But maybe recognizing poor teaching “sends the wrong message from students to professors.” That student-professor relationship is among “our community’s great strengths.” “Why foster a teacher vs. student mentality?” I’m not, or hope not. Recognizing poor teaching would bite, no doubt, even if it were just reporting the numerical scores from course evaluations. But it’d also communicate that we value teaching – a job duty too often neglected in academe’s research-centric universe. For the majority of MLaw’s professors who care about students, it could validate their efforts.

Students were protective not just of professors’ emotions, but of their careers: “What if someone is up for tenure, and they’ve received this ‘award’?” “Wait, ain’t that the point? Shouldn’t teaching ability count in the tenure process? Our professors are not idiots; they don’t need our benevolent pity. They could pursue careers that they’re good at or at least care about.

Others claimed that poor teachers “already get slammed in course evaluations.” So what more could we want? I too have dutifully filled out those evaluations, joining generations of students in telling professors that I actually wanted to learn that subject; or that you should open your office door once a week. Still no change. Our course evaluations matter for the teachers who care. But for that tenured, perennially apathetic teacher, you wonder why
you bothered at all.

This contest pushed for accountability and it may have pushed too far. The fear of humiliation might keep the cold-call system churning, but it does not mean that we, as students, should turn it on professors. And as one student observed, “[a] public declaration about a professor speaks on everyone’s behalf, even if many of us do not participate or share the same attitude.” So, can we recognize poor teaching, or otherwise discourage it, without singling out a specific person?

And can we do it without “inviting ridicule on Above the Law,” or impugning the reputation of our law school or the value of our degrees? I don’t trivialize that concern. So the RG thought deeply whether to publish this piece, deciding ultimately that our apparent fear of ATL should not falsely pit the value of our degrees against the quality of our learning. That can’t be the choice. Or to paraphrase Mark Twain: Never let your schooling interfere with your education.

RG: The MLaw homepage? Really?
Liz: I read it every day.

RG: Many politicians seem prone to illicit affairs; tell us about yours.
Liz: One time I invited the entire school to be my prom date on Lawopen—does that count?

RG: Probably not, but let’s move on. Who is your favorite administrator and why?
Liz: I think I have to go with Dean Z., just because she admitted me. But limiting the question to the past two years? ...honestly, it’s impossible to choose. The administration has been great—so willing to work with us, and so willing to listen to what we have to say. I still can’t believe it sometimes when I walk into a meeting with a high-level administrator, and they actually listen to me. It blows my mind. A little part of me is always like “...you realize I’m 24 years old, right? I know nothing.”

RG: Well clearly you know a thing or two, which relates to my next question. Everyone’s pretty focused on the upcoming election. What are the three traits that you’ll be looking for when casting your ballot for the next LSSS president?
Liz: Sound judgment, a strong vision, and a level head.

RG: That’s a tall order…
Liz: It is. You know, there are some things that can be taught, and there are some things that can’t. But playing nice and not taking things personally can get you a long way in this role.

RG: On a related note, what advice would you give to the incoming LSSS President?

RG: We’ve talked a lot about your accomplishments. What haven’t you been able to get done that you would like to see the next LSSS accomplish?
Liz: Guaranteed 1L summer funding would be huge. That’s an issue that’s really important to me, and that I would have loved to accomplish. And it’s something that everyone has been working towards, including the administration—we just haven’t been able to make it happen. Yet. I have high hopes, though.

...Oh, and the clocks. It would be really great if the clocks in Hutchins worked.

RG: What are you going to miss most about being on LSSS?
Liz: I’m really going to miss the advocacy role. I know a lot of people have the perception that LSSS just plans parties...and yeah, we plan good parties. But for me, our first and foremost responsibility is advocating on behalf of students. That’s the part that’s kept me in this for so long—I love Michigan Law, and I love Michigan Law students.

RG: That brings us to the question everyone’s been dying to ask. How many articles of Michigan Law clothing do you own? Be honest.
Liz [laughing]: 22.

RG: Seriously?

Liz: Eleven t-shirts, three long-sleeved tees, four sweatshirts, two hats, sweatpants, and the Midway Madness MLaw scarf. And trust me when I say, if we had MLaw socks, I’d own those too.
RG MAILBAG, from PAGE 6

phone numbers from admit students. Even having sex in the middle of the dance floor will not garner more than a few glances. We have all been to Rick’s and seen that many times before. What you have to do is perform the Jello Rain stunt, which has not been successfully pulled off since John Belushi on the set of Animal House in 1977.

Here’s how it works. First, pound about 15 or 20 jello shots. Yeah, some people might get mad that you are eating all of them. But your legacy is on the line, so do it. Next, drink half a handle of Old Crow, or whatever rot gut whiskey you can get your hands on. Then, just as you start to feel really whoozy, have your friends boost you up to the ceiling fan in the main room of Phid House. As you dangle over the crowd and start spinning, you will become very sick, very quickly. Once you reach the appropriate spinning velocity, allow yourself to vomit. The centrifugal force will shoot those jello shots throughout the room. Voila, jello rain.

You are now a legend, my friend. Just don’t blame me for the repercussions.

I am having a tough time motivating myself for finals. Do 1L grades really matter that much, or is that something they say to scare us?

Law school is full of people trying to scare you about things that are not true. Professors want you to think that bombing a cold call will affect your grade, the deans want you to think that class attendance is mandatory, and your gunner friends will make you think you need to be studying during ALL WAKING HOURS lest you get left behind. But there are some horror stories that have validity to them. The importance of grades, particularly 1L grades, is one of them. It is unfair and cruel and in many ways nonsensical (since exam performance requires a different skill set than actual legal work), but this is how the world is constructed. The good news is that after you land your first job out of law school, grades will not matter anymore and actual work performance will. Just as many high school stars fade to obscurity and obesity by their mid-20s, many students who are crushing the curve will be pwned by below median students in the real world.

Now, as far as your lack of motivation. WTF. You are a 1L, you do not have a job yet, the legal economy is in shambles, and you have already committed yourself to $150,000 in tuition alone. How does that not motivate you??? Unless your family is rich or you have an inside connection for a job, you should take finals seriously. Exams are easier than sending out resumes to dozens of employers in search of a job, trust me.

My section has one gunner who never shuts up! The professors put up with his “contributions” even though he is a non-sequitur machine. It’s driving me crazy! What can I do about it?

You sound mad. Look, every class has a gunner or two. That’s life. Instead of being angry, you should be glad that the gunner is there to help fill the time. Do you want to be the one talking in class? No way! Plus, you never know when the gunner might bail you out of a nightmarish cold call with one of his non-sequiturs.

That said, there is one surefire way to silence a gunner. First, start dating him. Yeah yeah, I don’t care if you are not attracted to him, just do it. Next, insist that he be on gchat with you during class. Proceed to flood him with gchats constantly, and throw a fit when he does not respond immediately. Between answering your gchats and scrambling to take class notes, he should be too preoccupied to raise his hand. Unfortunately, by dating him you will have to deal with his dull blather outside of class, so I don’t think this counts as a win. But your classmates will thank you!

I like having a private place to study at the law school, but the study rooms are always booked up. Any suggestions on a private place to study where I won’t be bothered?

Great question. Some people live far from campus and need a quiet place to work. While the stacks are generally pretty empty, there are not many tables or chairs up there. The law library also has some secretive nooks and crannies, but you will inevitably be interrupted. Fortunately, there are lots of very private study spaces in the law school that most students do not even think of. Toilet stalls! Think about it -- you get a small space to yourself, a “chair” to sit on, and a lockable door to ensure you will not be interrupted. I’m sure many of you have heard people clicking and clacking on their keyboards in the stall next to you. One thing you know about law students – they will not engage in socially unacceptable practices. So it’s totally cool! Just bring a set of earplugs, don’t set your casebooks on the floor, and make sure your laptop battery is fully charged. This is a surefire way to have many hours of private study time to yourself, without having to reserve a space. Good luck!

That’s it for this issue’s mailbag. Keep the letters coming, and have a wonderful spring!
were boy scouts in uniform, UVA law students curiously wearing UVA gear, and lots of lawyers. Clerks were coming in and setting up coffee and papers at the justices’ seats. One justice had a simple white mug, another had a tall glass, and another had a Contigo thermos. There were so many details to take in that I barely noticed when the justices entered through the velvet curtains. It was very sudden. They stood motionless in a line facing the audience for a few seconds—just posing. It was so grand that I almost remember a small wind ruffling at their robes, and I got shivers—it was like when the Jedi appeared out of the mist at the end of Episode 6. Then, not two minutes after they had entered, oral arguments began.

Professor Moran got three sentences into his prepared opening before Justice Sotomayor interrupted. We very quickly saw how unnerving it is to argue at the Supreme Court. For one thing, you are standing literally two feet away from the justices. They fire questions, but generally don’t look at you. One thing I didn’t expect was that the justices all seem to be having the time of their lives. Thomas and Breyer were whispering to each other and giggling; at one point Thomas even passed Breyer a note. Surprisingly, Justice Scalia, who almost constantly rocked back and forth in his chair through the entire argument, sounded like he could voice a Mark Twain audio book—his voice is so soothing and grandfatherly. His questions, though, were like being hit with a brick wrapped in velvet. I understood the case as well as I’ve understood anything, but my mind went absolutely blank from the second Justice Sotomayor started talking. Professor Moran somehow stayed cool and collected, even when Justice Sotomayor said that he was “sinking [his] hole deeper.” I personally almost passed out at this point. We left the court thinking that Dave had done a good job, but unsure of what the result would be. “I think he’ll be okay,” one student murmured as we exited the courtroom, “I was standing behind the prosecutor’s family in line before the argument, and they said that he was ‘concerned about the merits of his case.’”

We met for the last time this past week at Dominick’s. Dave had won his case 8-1, with Justice Alito dissenting alone, and we relaxed over pizza and beers. We had met twice in the months in between, and each meeting was tinged with anxiety. The professors had argued about the probabilities of a win based on which justices had already issued opinions, like normal people would argue about their basketball brackets.

In closing, the professors asked us whether we would ever want to take a case to the Supreme Court. The answer was, unanimously: “Yes.” In an academic fashion, the professors then asked, “What would be the first thing you’d do once you get granted cert?” The answer, again unanimously, was: “Call Dave Moran.”

And Now, Some Comic Relief

By Surya Kundu

"Assaulted Battery"
Photos of Stuff that Happened This Year!

Lots of Stuff Happened!

The Culture Show Happened!

Mr. Wolverine Happened!
Valograms Happened!

SFF Happened!

Halloween Happened!
Space Prom Happened!