

Law Quadrangle (formerly Law Quad Notes)

Volume 40 | Number 3

Article 3

Fall 1997

Message from the Dean

University of Michigan Law School

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/lqnotes>

Recommended Citation

University of Michigan Law School, *Message from the Dean*, 40 *Law Quadrangle (formerly Law Quad Notes)* - (1997).

Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/lqnotes/vol40/iss3/3>

This Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Law Quadrangle (formerly Law Quad Notes)* by an authorized editor of University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact mlaw.repository@umich.edu.

In my last message I indicated that I have decided to select as my theme for this year the great lawyer's role as citizen — as member of a community that extends beyond family. I observed that one of the more important privileges of citizenship is the privilege of feeling personally responsible for other individual members of the community and for the community as a whole. And I considered how outstanding lawyers integrate that sense of community responsibility into their relationships with clients.

This issue of *Law Quadrangle Notes* gives us an opportunity to consider just how far the "community that extends beyond family" may reach. For here at the Law School, we are encouraged every day to see that community as worldwide.

When the University of Michigan was chartered in 1837, the authorizing legislation provided that the University should employ a professor with expertise in international law. Almost as soon as the Law School began to enroll students in the second half of the nineteenth century, it attracted some of them from outside the United States. By 1900, 80 students from outside the United States had received degrees from the Law School.

Today about one in twelve of our graduates lives abroad. Some are American expatriates whose professional and personal interests have led them far from their parents' homes. But most are foreign citizens who came to Michigan with the intention of returning home after they completed their studies. When, in my role as dean, I am called upon to travel outside the United States, I am invariably inspired to learn of the leadership roles that our graduates are playing in every corner of the world. (Ed. Note: See the story about Dean Lehman's visit to the Philippines, page 56.)

And within the Law Quadrangle, the affairs of the world play an ever-greater role in the studies of all our students. In the middle of the nineteenth century, our students listened to lectures on shipping and admiralty from Dean James Campbell and international law from Professor



Even while we respect the legal importance of state borders, a core part of us subscribes to a "community" that includes all human beings. We are excited whenever we recognize ourselves in people from different cultures. And because law is so central to almost every culture, the University of Michigan Law School is an especially good place to pursue that recognition and feel that excitement.

Levi Griffin. This year our students can take courses taught by ten distinguished professors who are visiting Ann Arbor from England, Belgium, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, and South Africa. They can spend a semester studying at universities in Freiburg, Leiden, Leuven, London, or Paris, or work on faculty-supervised projects in Johannesburg or Phnom Penh. Over the past decade, about thirty members of Michigan's core faculty have taught law overseas.

When we try to explain the continual internationalization of our community and our curriculum over the past one and one half centuries, I think we should

resist the simple account that subordinates law to business and a global legal profession to a global economic order. Falling transportation costs and rising technological capacity are important factors: they are what enable us to bring a professor from Kyoto to Ann Arbor for a three-day stay, and they are what enable us to conduct a joint seminar by videoconference with Oxford and Toronto. But I do not believe that profit maximization goes very far to illuminate the roots of the international imperative.

Why do so many of us want to study foreign laws and international institutions? Why do we want to understand the norms that shape the behavior of nations? Why do we care about how another country regulates marriage, or pollution, or the press?

No doubt one reason is comparativist. We believe, rightly, that we will gain new insight into ourselves and our own legal system by better understanding how other societies and cultures have taken different paths to resolve similar social questions.

Yet I think an even more significant reason is fundamentally humanist. Even while we respect the legal importance of state borders, a core part of us subscribes to a "community" that includes all human beings. We are excited whenever we recognize ourselves in people from different cultures. And because law is so central to almost every culture, the University of Michigan Law School is an especially good place to pursue that recognition and feel that excitement. Francis Allen described law as "a path to the world," and his words may be read literally as well as metaphorically. In their lives as lawyers, our graduates feel a sense of responsibility to a community that embraces the entire world.