High numbers, higher hopes

The fall semester is always a time of new beginnings. As we open the 2010-11 academic year, UB Law welcomes within its ranks one of the most accomplished and exciting first-year classes in its history.

On the faculty front, we are joined by three new faculty members. And, of course, we welcome you — our alumni — back to the school for what promises to be an exciting year. Together, these three pillars — students, faculty and alumni — form the foundation on which academic greatness is possible.

First, a few words about our entering class. For the first time in the school’s history, the median LSAT of our 1L class hit 158. In this respect, it is our most competitive class ever. When I became dean in 2008, I pledged to raise the LSAT scores of our students and am proud to report that we have gone from a median LSAT of 156 to 158 in just two years. This accomplishment is quite remarkable given that we faced budget cuts exceeding 10 percent during this period. I am determined to raise these numbers even higher because they are a proxy for better bar pass rates and factor greatly into our rankings. My goal remains putting UB Law among the top 50 law schools in the country. I will not retreat from that pledge.

I could not be more excited about the three new teachers and scholars who will join us this year. As I have said before, the currency for respect in the academy is the excellence of scholarship. And, as we all know, great teachers change students’ lives. For these reasons, we must have faculty who are either stars already or have star potential.

The faculty we have hired this year, and the last, meet these criteria. Professors Kim Diana Connolly, Jessica Lippmann and Sagit Leviner are as good as they come. Professor Connolly, the nation’s foremost expert on wetlands law, will direct our clinics.

Professor Lippmann will teach environmental law and Professor Leviner will teach tax law. Professor Angela Harris, a nationally renowned academic from Berkeley Law School, will teach criminal law and serve as the acting vice dean for research and faculty development. Together with our accomplished faculty, these new hires will change the face of UB Law.

I could not ask for a better foundation on the journey to academic excellence.

Finally, our alumni — you — continue to be the inspiration on which our success revolves. You continue to show us great affection and love, and I must confess that my deanship would not have been where it is today without your engagement, kindness and generosity. I know you will do whatever is necessary for us to succeed, and I most sincerely thank you for it. There is nothing we cannot accomplish together.

And so, as we enter the fall, I want to us to raise our hopes and aspirations even higher. Our drive toward excellence continues at a breakneck pace!

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