10-1-2010

Building on Baldy's Success: Environmental Scholar to Head Interdisciplinary Center; Associate Professor Rick Su: Immigration Law Controversy Puts Arizona Cities in 'Legal Limbo'

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Building on Baldy’s success

Environmental scholar to head interdisciplinary center

Errol E. Meidinger, professor and vice dean for research and faculty development at the University at Buffalo Law School, has been named director of the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy.

His appointment was announced by UB Provost Satish K. Tripathi, who praised Meidinger for his scholarship and record of service.

The Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy is a nationally recognized focal point for interdisciplinary research and teaching at the UB Law School and UB.

“I am pleased to announce the appointment of Professor Errol Meidinger as director of the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, effective immediately,” Tripathi said. “Professor Meidinger is a nationally and internationally renowned scholar and widely respected expert in environmental and natural resources law. He writes and teaches in the fields of administrative law, environmental law, indigenous peoples’ law, international trade and the environment, legal theory, property and the sociology of law.

“Meidinger will lead the newly created Baldy Center into a new era of innovation and academic excellence.”

As director of the center, Meidinger will lead the Baldy Council in making recommendations on the center’s future, and its vision, mission and guidelines.

The Baldy Council is composed of Sharmistha Bagchi-Sen, professor of geography; Guyora Binder, UB Distinguished Professor of Law; Robert Granfield, professor and chair of sociology; Stephanie Phillips, professor of law; Kenneth Sharkley, associate professor of philosophy; Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, associate professor of law; and James Wooten, professor of law, director of the Law Library and vice dean for legal information services.

Formed as an oversight body, the council will also offer Meidinger advice on strategic matters, and will report to the provost, the dean of the Law School and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The director of the Baldy Center will report to the dean of the Law School.

Meidinger holds a Ph.D. and a J.D. from Northwestern University and a B.A. from the University of North Dakota. He is the co-editor of two books on environmental law and the author of more than 30 journal articles and book chapters.

Meidinger joined the faculty of UB Law in 1982.

Associate Professor Rick Su: Immigration law controversy puts Arizona cities in ‘legal limbo’

Given the controversy and the fact the U.S. government is a party challenging the law, it makes sense that a federal court would put the Arizona immigration law on hold so the legal and constitutional questions can be discussed and pondered in a measured way, according to Associate Professor Rick Su, an expert on immigration law.

But, Su says, what is more interesting about the court’s preliminary injunction is not what parts of the law were blocked, but rather the controversial provisions of Arizona’s immigration law that were left intact. “Most notably,” Su says, “cities and police departments in Arizona are still prohibited from taking any steps to restrict the full enforcement of immigration laws — irrespective of funding or its effect on community relations.”

In other words, while the court’s preliminary injunction specifically bars Arizona from requiring that local law enforcement officials check a person’s immigration status in the course of their duties, it left in place provisions that deprived local communities of the discretion not to participate in immigration enforcement, Su points out.

“The law also authorizes private lawsuits against cities if there is any evidence to suggest that they are discouraging immigration enforcement,” Su says. “All of which leaves Arizona cities in a legal limbo: neither required to enforce immigration laws, but also prohibited from instructing its officials not to.”

Su believes that these provisions will have as much of a negative effect on Arizona residents as those parts of the law that were specifically blocked, especially for those who reside in the state’s minority communities.

Su has written about how the proposed immigration law stifles local power and discretion in favor of state control in an earlier commentary.

“The preliminary injunction does a lot of things, but it specifically leaves many of those provisions that I questioned intact,” he says. “What this shows is that even when the first round of legal challenges against Arizona’s new immigration law are resolved, important questions about state and local relations will likely still remain.”