

4-1-2015

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Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2015) "For New Vice Dean, A By-The-Numbers Approach," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 29 : No. 2 , Article 22.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol29/iss2/22

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For new vice dean, a by-the-numbers approach

As **BobbyJo LaDelfa** settles into her new role as the Law School's acting vice dean for administration, she's dealing with a lot of moving parts. Faculty and administrators are wrestling with how to implement the best ideas from an ongoing strategic planning process. The landscape of legal education, and the profession itself, is changing dramatically. The periodic ABA accreditation process is ramping up. There's always the budget to worry about.

Now Dr. LaDelfa's challenge is to make possibilities into reality. "My job is to have a handle on the big picture and to be the resource that [interim Dean] Jim Gardner needs," she says.

One strength she brings to that task is a head for numbers, befitting the data analytics that are the new norm for universities nationwide. She comes to her new post after serving for seven years as the Law School's registrar – officially the assistant dean for records, registration and financial aid – and in that role managed all data about students, as well as statistics for accrediting and ranking bodies, as well as the academic calendar and course scheduling.

"I'm a data person," says Dr. LaDelfa, who holds a doctorate in higher education administration from UB and calls herself a "self-taught technology junkie." "The whole campus has become very data-driven. That's the new environment of higher education. We want to decide what metrics are important to us as a law school, whether it's the number of our alumni who are engaged with the school, placement rates, the percentage of our graduates passing the bar, the number of faculty publications."

That by-the-numbers monitoring of the school's quality, she says, bears fruit as administrators and faculty look to bring the next good idea to life. "I'm the practical person," Dr. LaDelfa says. "I need to be able to look at the operations and ask, can this work? If the faculty want to do this or that with the curriculum, can we do it? I know a lot about the curriculum, how it's staffed and how it works, and that leads directly into, if we want do a new program, how can we do it and how can we afford it?"

Before coming to the Law School in 2008, Dr. LaDelfa worked in UB's School of Management as director of credit-bearing internships and projects. The two academic units have very different cultures, she says; because the Law School has its own registrar, for one thing, "that allows the faculty to have more freedom and flexibility."

The student experience is different, too; whereas management students do much of their work in teams, law students pursue their own interests in the mostly-elective second and third years. The quality of their experience as stu-

dents, she says, makes a difference in how engaged they are with the school when they become alumni.

"We have the highest level of alumni engagement of all University units," she says. "That is a testament to how well our programs connect with students, because if you don't have that connection when you leave, you won't be engaged later. The Law School in general is dedicated to our students, and that doesn't disappear when they walk out the door."

Dr. LaDelfa will have more opportunities to interact with alumni in her new role, including working with the Dean's Advisory Council.

In addition to her Ph.D., LaDelfa has a bachelor's degree in psychology from SUNY at Cortland and a master's in community counseling from the University at Albany. She currently teaches Finance of Higher Education as an adjunct in UB's graduate program in Educational Leadership and Policy and previously taught in the School of Education and Human Development at Binghamton University.



"My job is to have a handle on the big picture and to be the resource that [interim Dean] Jim Gardner needs."

– Dr. BobbyJo LaDelfa, acting vice dean for administration