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Karen Cowart, Vice Dean for Records and Registration, retires

Karen Cowart, Vice Dean for Records and Registration, retired from the Law School on Jan. 1. A Law School administrator since 1989, she has provided exceptional, professional service to the Law School community during times of significant change and challenge, according to Dean Nils Olsen.

“Without her flexibility and ability to work outside of the box, the Law School’s New Curriculum would have remained a dusty and unimplemented plan,” he said.

“Karen and her staff have managed the academic functioning of the Law School and ensured that the trains arrive and depart on time. She also has kept abreast of and compliant with an ever-growing list of central University requirements and timetables that do not conform to traditional practices within the Law School. She has successfully performed these pressure-packed, deadline-laden tasks with competence, good will and professionalism.

“Please join me in wishing Karen the very best in her retirement and in thanking her for the often behind-the-scenes service that she has provided all of us,” he said.

Beginning in 1994, Cowart worked in an environment that required her to modify the Law School’s calendar from two 14-week semesters to two 12-week semesters, complicated by a four-week bridge period in January with 30 to 40 one-credit courses offered to a large subset of students. She adjusted to a change in the scheduling of courses as well, as three-credit courses morphed from three 50-minute classes per week to three one-hour sessions. She also was challenged by a significant increase in the number of courses offered, growing from approximately 100 to a high-water mark of 200.

In addition to implementing these significant changes in the scheduling of courses, she has worked tirelessly to ensure that the instructional policies of the school are



complied with. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, a broad range of responsibilities, such as: accommodating six dual-degree programs that operated under separate and distinct scheduling and graduation requirements; scheduling, seating and administration of Law School final examinations; employing, training and supervising outside examination proctors; respecting and complying with the specific demands of faculty for time and location of individual courses; identifying and monitoring enrollment in all course offerings; working to ensure appropriate access to courses for LL.M. students; ensuring that transfer students complied with our course requirements while maintaining access to popular upper-division offerings; monitoring our returning enrollment so that appropriate admissions decisions could be made to ensure meeting but not exceeding enrollment targets; assigning and registering new first-year students in their sections; administering the Law School’s drop/add policies; auditing third-year students’ grades from five semesters to determine who is qualified to graduate; keeping a separate listing of top academic performers to inform faculty assignment of honors and awards; identifying missing grades required for third-year students to graduate and sit for the Bar exam; receiving all examinations, to ensure timely submission; entering all grades in both University and Law School databases for 760 students; conducting a final audit of graduation requirements to ensure that every third-year student qualifies to graduate; processing official transcripts for students taking the New York State Bar examination; preparing the orientation schedule for new incoming students in cooperation with Dean Melinda Saran; scheduling summer session courses; compiling and publishing fall, spring and summer course files; and certifying students for admission to a broad range of state bars.

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— Dean Nils Olsen