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MITCHELL HAMLINE: TWO HISTORIES, A COMMON FUTURE

Mark Gordon[†]

It is a distinct pleasure and a true honor to help introduce the first-ever joint law review issue of the Mitchell Hamline School of Law. As readers should well know, Mitchell Hamline School of Law is the result of the combination of William Mitchell College of Law (with a history dating back to 1900) with the Hamline University School of Law (first founded in 1973).

As the first ever President and Dean of Mitchell Hamline, it is indeed a special honor to follow in the traditions of both of our wonderful predecessor law schools. In fact, it is to honor those traditions that this volume, even though it is the first issued by the combined law school, is denoted as Volume 42. The editors of both the Mitchell and the Hamline law reviews determined jointly that they would continue the numbering system of the longer-existing of the two law reviews, as a sign of respect and admiration for the student editors and faculty at both schools whose work over decades past has been so significant to legal scholarship and in whose footsteps today's student editors are so proud to walk.

While each of our predecessor schools has its own distinctive histories and stories, its own traditions and founding stories, both have shared a long-standing commitment to access to legal education, to service, to excellence, and, more recently, to providing an education that truly prepares students to be lawyers and leaders for the 21st century.

One of the things that has struck me most forcefully as I have met the alumni of both institutions has been the fervor with which they speak so fondly of their law school and the definitiveness with which they state the difference that their law school experience has made in their lives. Their recollections often relate back to specific faculty members who educated and trained them, but who also challenged, supported, pushed, mentored, and inspired them.

[†] President and Dean of Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

That list of legendary faculty is indeed a lengthy one, but it includes such luminaries as: Larry Bakken, Ed Butterfoss, Doug Heidenreich, Dan Kleinberger, Chris Kunz, Bobbi McAdoo, Douglas McFarland, Mary Jane Morrison, Dick Oakes, Deborah Schmedemann, Mike Steenson, Peter Thompson, Chris Ver Ploeg, and so many others who continue to engage and enrich the lives of today's students.

The beauty of the combination of these two schools is that it takes two luminous histories and puts them together to create an even brighter future. Mitchell Hamline School of Law can now boast of a wide range of nationally recognized and respected programs (in areas such as Health Law, Clinical Education, Dispute Resolution, and Indian Law, to name just a few), a path-breaking hybrid program which is fundamentally transforming the online legal education environment while expanding access to scores of students who could not have gained a legal education otherwise, and a forward-thinking faculty which is pioneering new approaches to legal education. Among these approaches are innovative steps to integrating practice and theory, using technologies to pipe experts into the classroom and to expose students to a range of legal cultures around the world, reconceptualizing ways for students to get hands-on training and experiences that can give them a distinctive advantage in "hitting the ground running" upon graduation, and offering distinctive tracks that can enable students to prepare for the myriad of job opportunities to which the Mitchell Hamline law degree can open doors – from the bench and the bar to leadership in business, service, and the community.

None of us today can predict how legal practice and legal education will change over coming generations. My own suspicion is that as law becomes even more pervasive throughout our society, the role of the lawyer will change as well, with the most effective legal educations training students not just in the theory and practice of law, but also in the myriad ways that the law interacts with our society on a larger scale. This might also mean introducing into legal education knowledge of a range of other disciplines as well.

Whatever the future may hold, there is one prediction in which I have supreme confidence, and that is that the faculty, students, and alumni of Mitchell Hamline School of Law will lead the way. And they will do it with the same commitment to access

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A COMMON FUTURE

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and to justice, to fairness and to opportunity that has been our common foundation from day one.