

## ***The Advantages of Being Junior***

***Joseph F. Morrissey, Assistant Professor, Stetson University College of Law***

One of the articles that was selected from the New Law Professors Call for Papers this year was Greg Bowman's "The Comparative and Absolute Advantages of Junior Law Faculty: Implications for Teaching and the Future of American Law Schools." As a reader in the call for papers, Professor Bowman's work sparked my interest. Among other points, he stresses the notion that as junior faculty there are certain roles that we fill better than our more senior colleagues. In short, there actually are advantages to being junior.

In his work Professor Bowman identifies many of the qualities that he perceives as advantages of junior faculty. Among those advantages are generational proximity, recency of practice experience, and the ability to make material accessible to students. Professor Bowman then confronts the challenge of how to harness those advantages to enhance the role of junior faculty in the life of our law schools, and also to improve the quality of the educational experience that our institutions deliver to our students. Among the ideas presented are inter-faculty dialogues, team teaching, and junior faculty "mentoring" more senior faculty regarding their advantages.

We thought these ideas were worth exploring further at Florida State - Miami - Stetson Junior Faculty Forum for junior faculty at Florida law schools held at Stetson University College of Law this past fall. Professor Bowman was kind enough to allow us to distribute his article and use it as a launch pad for discussion among the junior law professors attending the Florida Junior Faculty Forum.

Professor Kirsten Davis and I led the session and asked the group what they perceived as their comparative advantages. The group was confident and enthusiastic about what new law professors bring to the classroom and to scholarship. Here is a sample of the responses:

- willingness to take risks;
- experimentation;
- affinity for technology;
- awareness of student's different learning styles;
- flexibility of teaching styles;
- interest in collaboration with other junior faculty;
- willingness to change approach (teaching or scholarship);
- accessibility for mentoring students;
- approachability;
- support of extra-curriculars;
- "hunger" for student feedback and interaction
- ideal mix of enthusiasm, proximity and sufficient base of knowledge; and
- new voices and new views.

We then took the discussion to the next step: the challenge of harnessing those advantages to the benefit of the junior faculty themselves, and their law schools. Here are some of the suggestions that were made.

- tap into and use the energy of new faculty;
- share new law faculty insights into current generation of students with colleagues;
- have small faculty group discussions where insights of juniors are shared;
- take responsibility to mentor other more junior faculty;

- volunteer for committees and share views;
- use informal relationships with senior faculty to express opinions;
- express opinions through a “group” document that does not implicate any one professor (less fear of any retaliation);
- take opportunities to build trust and community “outside the walls” of the law school;
- have a concrete plan for contribution and change;
- use norms from other law schools to make your arguments for change; and

- do not play meek and mild.

By the end of the session there was an excitement in the room. While we may not have decades of doctrinal expertise under our belts, we as junior faculty really do have unique qualities that can immediately improve the life of our law schools and the educational experiences of our students. The resounding message at the conclusion of the session was that we, as junior faculty, simply need to step up and be advocates for change and for ourselves.

### *New Law Professors Co-Sponsor New Voices in International Human Rights*

The New Law Professors Section is co-sponsoring a presentation with the AALS Section on Human Rights entitled “New Voices in International Human Rights.” The larger program includes three panels and will introduce the work of 34 scholars who will be presenting papers either for the first time at an AALS Conference, or for the first time in the area of human rights. Speakers were selected from a call for papers, and the panels include new law professors and promising future academic stars. The first part of the program will be on Friday, January 4, 2008. The second and third parts will be in two concurrent panels on Sunday, January 6, 2008, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The AALS Section on New Law Professors is specifically co-sponsoring the third part of this program.

### *Conferences and Calls for Papers for New Law Professors*

#### **JUNIOR FEDERAL COURTS FACULTY WORKSHOP**

American University Washington College of Law, April 3-4, 2008.

A workshop for all junior faculty whose teaching and scholarship focus on the federal courts. The purpose of the workshop is to discuss the challenges of teaching and writing in this area, to debate where the field is headed, and for junior faculty to share their scholarship with each other. For more information, contact: Amanda Frost ([afrost@wcl.american.edu](mailto:afrost@wcl.american.edu)) or Steve Vladeck ([svladeck@wcl.american.edu](mailto:svladeck@wcl.american.edu)).

#### **LAW & HUMANITIES JUNIOR SCHOLAR WORKSHOP**

UCLA Law School, June 8-9, 2008.

UCLA School of Law, Columbia Law School, University of Southern California Center for Law, History & Culture, and Georgetown University Law Center invite submissions for the sixth meeting of the Law & Humanities Junior Scholar Workshop. Submissions (in either Word or Wordperfect, no pdf files) will be accepted until January 8, 2008, and should be sent by e-mail to: Center for the Study of Law and Culture; [culture@law.columbia.edu](mailto:culture@law.columbia.edu).