# **Driving Forward**

Dean Nicholas W. Allard | January 2014



"Much accomplished, much left to do." That's a take on what Churchill said, as the story goes, when the Temperance League accused him of having consumed enough alcohol to half-fill the local church hall. The same can be said of our Law School, under circumstances less naughty and a lot nicer.

In my **last message**, I looked back at our accomplishments over a year's span, outlined challenges in legal education as a whole, and set forth five specific goals to help strengthen the Law School in the year ahead.

Now I write to report on a few key indicators—and there are many to choose from—that demonstrate how our Law School is driving forward as a leader in legal education for

the 21st century. These strides are powered by the collective talents and hard work of our students, faculty, alumni, administrators, staff, and through the dedication of our Board of Trustees. The progress underway toward our goals is nothing short of remarkable.

#### **GOAL 1**

# Building on Our Reputation in the Legal and Academic Community

Some of our recent achievements have already been highlighted in the fall issue of **BLS LawNotes**. By every measure, we are surpassing expectations:

- Brooklyn Law School is increasingly leading educational changes to address the new world of law. In
  September, we hosted a panel discussion in response to President Obama's support of the 2-year J.D. concept.
  BLS was well-poised to lead the debate, given our announcement months earlier about our own accelerated
  2-year J.D. program. The event drew a number of distinguished speakers such as ABA President James
  Silkenat and former NYC Corporate Counsel Michael Cardozo. Since then, other schools have announced
  their own 2-year programs.
- BLS boasts one of the **top 50 best law faculties**, according to a comprehensive study by the well-respected Leiter Reports, and placed in the **top 25 list for leadership in the corporate boardroom**, based on a Pepperdine University School of Law study.
- We began accepting applications for the **Public Interest/Public Service Fellowship ("PipS")**, a new two-year program in partnership with 13 (and counting) governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations. PipS encompasses the third year of law school and first post-graduate year, enabling students to transition to law practice and have a guaranteed job after graduation. Students who applied to the program have secured Fellowships in both public interest and government offices to work in areas such as immigration, family law, housing, and torts. Under the leadership of Associate Dean Stacy Caplow, Brooklyn Law School is the first institution on the East Coast to offer the Fellowships. Both the ABA Task Force and the New York City Bar Association have highlighted this innovation.
- Our presence in regional, national, and online media has rocketed, thanks in large part to the achievements
  of our faculty and alumni. Heightened visibility has broad ramifications: Having more than doubled our press
  coverage over the last year, we have seen a marked increase in BLS website views. Not only are people interested, but positive coverage is also drawing them in.

#### **GOAL 2**

### Significantly Improving Job Prospects for Our Students and Recent Alumni

Jobs for graduates remain the most pressing issue, as I made clear in my last message and during **Commencement**. Without a doubt, the economy has presented a difficult job market over the past few years, but we are encouraged by measurable improvements. Our focus now is on helping students find where jobs will be, rather than where they once were. A concerted effort is well underway, and we are resolute and optimistic:

- All signs for the Class of 2013 point upwards: At the six-month mark, our most recent graduates are landing jobs at a significantly higher rate than did the previous two classes. I expect that over 90 percent of Brooklyn Law School's most recent graduates will be employed full time by the end of the winter, up from about 75 percent last year at the same time. We can do even better, and we will.
- Karen Eisen joined the Law School as our **new Assistant Dean of Career Development**, bringing a wealth of experience in the public sector as a prosecutor and in private practice as a legal recruiter and director of professional development at several global law firms. Karen has a profound understanding of today's job market and is just the energetic expert to lead our campaign to help BLS students find jobs and begin meaningful, worthwhile careers.
- I am pleased to announce the establishment of the **Public Service Office**, a significant augmentation of services, leadership, and support capabilities. Encompassing the former Office of Public Service Programs, the enhanced Office will offer extensive career counseling; training for students involved in pro bono work; programs on pressing topics; and assistance to those seeking post-graduate public service grants and public interest fellowships. Danielle Sorken, the newly named Director, has been with the Law School for nearly five years. Her extensive connections and experience have already established the Public Service Office as a vital student resource.
- Two new clinics—the **Labaton Sucharow Pro Bono Securities Arbitration Clinic** and the **Elder Rights Clinic**—grew out of previous BLS programs. In their new incarnations, both clinics partner with experts in the field, giving students an exceptional opportunity to work with highly respected lawyers. An Elder Law course will also follow in the spring to meet this growing area of practice.
- We have added several courses that address emerging areas of law, such as compliance ("Introduction to Compliance and Risk"), technology ("Drafting Technology Agreements"), the environment ("Environmental Justice Law"), and regulation ("Investment Management Regulation").
- This week, we are holding our second annual **Business Boot Camp**, taught by Deloitte Financial Advisory Services professionals in collaboration with BLS faculty and alumni. This intense "mini-MBA," offered free-of-charge and for course credit, has attracted more than 160 students over winter break, just as it did last year. Its popularity is simple: The course not only helps students stand out to potential employers, but also be ready to succeed as soon as they are hired.

We are rounding a corner in the legal marketplace. There is simply no question that lawyers are needed now more than ever, especially in areas such as financial services, compliance and risk management, Internet privacy, health-care, real estate, online business, banking, investments, and energy, among others. As the legendary legal scholar (and my beloved professor) Grant Gilmore wrote: "In Heaven there will be no law, and the lion will lie down with the lamb. In Hell there will be nothing but law, and due process will be meticulously observed!" Here on earth we need lawyers.

#### GOAL 3

## Assuring that Students are Prepared to Pass the Bar

We proudly announced last month that **94 percent of BLS first-time test takers passed the July bar exam**. This is the Law School's highest rate in more than a quarter-century. The number far surpassed the 86 percent statewide average for first-time test takers from ABA-approved institutions.

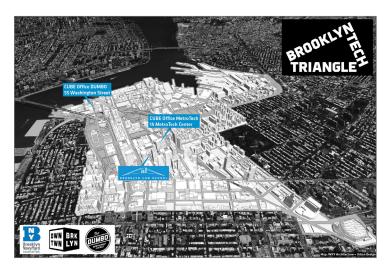
Many factors contributed to this achievement including the hands-on approach of our faculty, whose coursework and one-on-one counseling helped prepare students; the strength of our writing program; and of course, our students' hard work. Since the time I first arrived at BLS, our trustees' and faculty's laser-like focus on assuring that our students graduate, pass the bar, and find jobs has been a constant, with excellent results to show for it. We can be enormously proud of what our Law School is accomplishing.

#### **GOAL 4**

# Launching the Most Comprehensive Program for Training Students to Become Lawyers for New Businesses

On November 14, we officially opened our extraordinary **Center for Urban Business Entrepreneurship (CUBE)**, which will provide the legal tools to support and help build the start-up successes of tomorrow and beyond. In addition to its base at the Law School, the Center will be headquartered at two locations: 55 Washington Street in the heart of DUMBO and 15 MetroTech Center.

CUBE reinforces and capitalizes on Brooklyn's role as a haven for business, media, energy, technology, creative arts, and social enterprise innovators, opening up tremendous opportunities to our students. Among them will be one-year CUBE Fellowships, as well as a CUBE Legal Project Competition, with seed money available to help jumpstart winning proposals.



Marking the launch was our **Entrepreneur Lawyers Showcase**, which drew a standingroom-only audience of alumni, students, and
business and civic leaders to discuss new paths
for the entrepreneurial lawyer. Moderated by
Professor Jonathan Askin, the event was the
perfect opportunity to spotlight the work of Law
School alumni—from successful trailblazers like
Larry Feldman '74, CEO of Subway Development
Corp., to emerging entrepreneurs.

I am also proud to report that **Paul A. Gangsei** has been named Executive Director of CUBE. Over the course of his career, Paul has built a reputation representing not-for-profit educational, healthcare, social service and cultural institu-

tions, and public entities in real estate and development transactions. Now, he will oversee a new model for putting Brooklyn Law students on the front lines of entrepreneurship. We are fortunate to welcome a leader of his caliber.

#### **GOAL 5**

# Increasing Alumni Participation by Objective Metrics

It is essential that we continue to cultivate meaningful alumni involvement with our Law School, and especially with our students. This is necessary to increase job opportunities, strengthen professional development, enhance teaching, and generate the revenue necessary to ensure our margin of excellence. To that end, the last few months have seen alumni engagement invigorated on several fronts:

- ACES, or Alumni Committed to Employing Students—our new program designed for those who help current students succeed—has attracted considerable interest among BLS graduates. ACES encourages and recognizes alumni who take an active role through teaching, mentoring, recommending, or hiring BLS students, for example.
- During the fall, our graduates have attended BLS gatherings in record numbers, from social functions
  (Long Island reception, Recent Grad event, Brooklyn Brewery tour) to major academic events that focused
  on religious freedom and equal treatment, bankruptcy, and corporate governance, to note just a few topics.

- Our **Alumni Mentor Program**, which celebrated its 21st anniversary this year, matched over 120 students with lawyers practicing in a broad range of areas. We kicked off with a stellar reception hosted by Fred Cohen '67 and Michael Grohman '83 at the offices of Duane Morris LLP, where mentors met their mentees. These relationships offer unparalleled learning opportunities and advantages in the job market, and we are profoundly grateful to our mentors for their time.
- Fifty-three percent of the BLS Class of 2013 made a gift to our Law School this past fiscal year, shattering all previous BLS records for participation by any class. Our youngest alumni class is leading the way to the future through an unprecedented investment in the Law School, which is an inspiration to us all—including the Class of 2014, which has mobilized for its own campaign.

While Brooklyn Law School has always boasted a close-knit community, we are excited to see a spike in interest and involvement among alumni. We expect this trend to rise, given our full slate of programming and events planned for the year ahead.

# **Next Steps**

The impressive progress toward our goals demonstrates what can be achieved with collaborative effort and consensus about priorities. If you think it's been quite a year—and you're right—just wait for what's ahead in 2014. As we continue to measure progress and build on our goals, we simply cannot sustain momentum without your input, imagination, involvement, and support.

As I promised when I began this Road Ahead series, I will continue to provide you with regular updates. Until then, I look forward to an exciting year of innovations ahead. It will take time, but I predict that 2014 will eventually be seen as the start of the "up" market for law. With apologies to Churchill, after several dark years, 2014 will not be the end, nor the beginning of the end, but rather the end of the beginning.

Thank you for your support, and best wishes for a happy and healthy new year.