Dear Alumni and Friends,

I first arrived at the University of Chicago Law School almost (but not quite) half a century ago as a first-year law student. At that time, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. In fact, I came here by accident. My girlfriend at the time had transferred to Northwestern, and I chose Chicago over the other law schools to which I’d been admitted so I could be near her. The night before I left New York to drive to Chicago for the beginning of classes, she broke up with me. It was not an auspicious beginning.

But here I am, almost half a century later, sitting once again in the Dean’s office, counting my blessings. For me, the privilege of being at this Law School for lo these many years has been just that . . . a privilege, and a joy! As I discovered soon after arriving as a very unhappy camper, this is a remarkable institution.

I found in my fellow students and my extraordinary teachers a community in which ideas and arguments and the unyielding search for the truth were at the center of everything. It was eye-opening, and it was exhilarating.

And, happily, it is still that way today. Let me offer just four examples.

First, there is faculty scholarship. Our faculty today is the most energetic, most creative, and most productive in the nation. Although we have by far the youngest faculty of any of the nation’s leading law schools, our professors are consistently among the nation’s most influential legal scholars. Moreover, thirty percent of the most-cited professors at Harvard and Yale got their start at Chicago. That is a powerful reflection of our extraordinary culture.

Second, there is teaching. Here, I daresay, we have improved over the years. Although there were always great teachers at Chicago, over the past half-century we have paid ever-more attention to the importance of excellence in the classroom. Here is a simple example: We have a student-teacher evaluation process in which students rate their teachers in each course on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Last year, the median evaluation for all first-year courses was an extraordinary 4.72. That speaks volumes.

Third, there is the curriculum. When I arrived at Chicago, we offered a total of 83 courses. Today, we offer more than 250. Of course, we remain committed to teaching our students such foundational subjects as contracts, torts, corporate law, administrative law, and evidence. But we now also offer our students a broad array of more specialized courses in such areas as corporate governance, juvenile justice, entrepreneurship and the law, global inequality, feminist philosophy, and litigating financial disputes.

Fourth, there are, of course, our students themselves. They are spectacular. The median student today has an LSAT of 170 and an undergraduate GPA of 3.9. But that is only part of the picture, because they also bring a wide diversity of experiences and backgrounds to the Law School. The members of our new entering class, for example, have lived or worked in 37 different nations, had 46 different undergraduate majors, and attended 102 different undergraduate institutions. They are an absolute joy to teach, because they are smart, they are curious, and they are determined to make their mark in the world. What a privilege it is to teach them!

At graduation these days, the comment I hear most often from our departing students is “thank you.” We demand a lot of our students. We ask hard questions. We put them on the spot. We make them understand that they need to know how to deal confidently with uncertainty, confusion, and chaos. It is hard. But when all the dust has settled, they say “thank you.”

And with that, I say thank you, for helping to make this very special place possible. We couldn’t do it without you.

With warm best wishes and much appreciation,

Geoffrey R. Stone, ’71
Interim Dean
Edward H. Levi Distinguished Service Professor of Law