Message from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends:

It has always been important to have smart, principled people serve in government: people who are well-versed in the values of open inquiry and reasoned discourse, people committed to thoughtful analysis. The entire country benefits when its leaders engage in respectful debate, tackle difficult issues, and consider multiple perspectives in pursuit of the truth. This is why we are not only proud but grateful when our graduates are chosen for, and choose to pursue, government service. We know they will infuse their work with these values, which are so a part of our culture at the University of Chicago Law School. We know that the institutions they serve will be better as a result.

In this issue of the Record, we examine the Law School’s long history with a US Department of Justice office that has long embraced this ethos—and continues to espouse it through the leadership of two of our esteemed alumni: the office of the US Solicitor General. Noel J. Francisco, ’96, was sworn in to that office last September, and Jeffrey B. Wall, ’03, serves as the office’s Principal Deputy Solicitor General. Noel is the fourth US Solicitor General with ties to the Law School; he follows Robert Bork, ’53, who served in the mid-1970s; Rex Lee, ’63, who served in the early 1980s; and Elena Kagan, a former professor at the Law School, who served for a year before being nominated to the Court in 2010. Jeff, who has worked as both an Assistant to the Solicitor General and as the Acting US Solicitor General, is one of more than a dozen Law School graduates who has served the office as an Assistant, Deputy, or in one of the prestigious one-year Bristow Fellowships. As you will read, Noel and Jeff offer a model of what Law School culture looks like in practice: they regularly engage in vigorous debate, maintaining a sharp focus on “articulating the right principles for the right reasons.” Both speak of their duty to the office and of their desire to serve the public.

This underscores another key feature of Law School culture. Our community has also long valued a broad definition of public service. In this issue, we also explore the Law School’s growing commitment to pro bono service, which has soared since we launched the Pro Bono Service Initiative in 2010. The program challenges students to complete 50 hours of pro bono service by graduation. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of pro bono hours Law School students had worked by graduation almost tripled. In this issue, we also meet some of the students and recent alumni who are part of a growing wave of JD entrepreneurs, some of whom have focused their innovation on social entrepreneurship. In the past two years, Law School students have placed among the top finishers in the John Edwardson, ’72, Social New Venture Challenge, a campus-wide competition organized by the Rustandy Center in partnership with the Polsky Center.

I continue to be proud of the ways in which our students and alumni draw on their Law School education to make a difference in the world, and I know you share that pride. I look forward to seeing many of you at Reunion, and hope you will join me in celebrating our community’s many achievements.

Warmly,

Thomas J. Miles