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Paul Woo, Director of Career Services, Retires after 39 Years

By Becky Beaupre Gillespie

For years, Paul Woo had a sign outside his door in the Law School’s Office of Career Services: “Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, sometimes it rains.”

It was a baseball reference, of course, and Woo has long appreciated its wisdom. But he sees the phrase as more of a beginning, the practice swing for a bigger point.

“What really matters is: what do you do next?” Woo said one afternoon last spring, not long before he retired from the Law School as a director of career services, capping off a nearly four-decade career in which he counseled hundreds of job-seeking Chicago Law students. “What decisions do you make? What actions do you take?”

Woo’s voice was soft and reflective as he spoke. During his time at the Law School, he was known for his technological savvy—he led the charge in bringing new computer systems to career services—as well as his steady and gentle demeanor and ability to listen and to respond with compassion and insight.

“Through Paul’s many years at the Law School, his counseling served to increase his personal ‘following’ as more and more Law School students and alumni sought his wisdom and sensitivity [in considering] their career decisions,” said Abbie Willard, who recently retired as the associate dean for career services.

Woo’s “pastoral nature served as a wonderful complement to our team,” added new Associate Dean for Career Services Lois Casaleggi, a member of the department since 2004. “Students knew they could always find a ready ear and a calm presence in his office.”

Woo sought to connect with students as individuals, often emphasizing the personal nature of decision-making.

“Nobody’s decisions replicate anyone else’s,” Woo said. “Everybody makes their choices, and the point is to make a choice, to act. You don’t need to overthink, you just need to distill it down to the things that [matter] to you.”

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