

# Message from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Extraordinary people long have been a part of the Law School's history. Their excellence and intellectual grit are evident not just in the accolades and leadership positions they accumulate, but also in their willingness to confront complex problems, take up varied roles and responsibilities, rigorously challenge even firmly held beliefs, and push forward in the face of enormous challenge. This year, the Law School celebrates one such person, Earl B. Dickerson, who in 1920 became the first African



American to earn a JD from the University of Chicago—and whose decades-long career as a lawyer, businessman, and civil rights leader helped shape the city of Chicago.

Mr. Dickerson, who died in 1986 at age 95, argued successfully before the US Supreme Court in *Hansberry v. Lee*, the case that eliminated a racially restrictive covenant in part of Woodlawn and set the stage for the end of restrictive covenants nationwide. He helped build the Supreme Life Insurance Company of America as its general counsel and, later, as its president. He was the first African American president of the National Lawyers Guild, served on the NAACP's national board for three decades, and was a member of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practices Committee. In this issue of the *Record*, we explore Mr. Dickerson's impressive legacy and astonishingly varied career, which also will be the subject of a two-day conference at the Law

School on April 17 and 18. This spectacular event, planned by three members of our faculty, Richard McAdams, William Hubbard, and Sharon Fairley, will anchor a yearlong Dickerson Centennial that will include independent student research projects, exhibits, and other special events. You can find additional details on the Law School's website.

As I begin my second term as dean, our focus is on investing in our stellar faculty, supporting our outstanding students, and providing a transformative legal education. You can read about some of these efforts in the coming pages. We introduce Clinical Professor Nicole Hallett, who joined us in January to launch our new Immigrants' Rights Clinic, which is already off to tremendous start. We look at a fascinating new 1L orientation program that blends science and the lessons of improvisational comedy to help students communicate across differences—a skill essential to engaging in productive civil discourse. We also explore how the Bigelow Fellowship Program became a premier training ground for legal scholars and showcase the D'Angelo Law Library's delightful new collection of illustrated legal codes.

I am deeply proud of the many ways in which the Law School serves as a wellspring of extraordinary people and ideas. I look forward to continuing to see this excellence in action through the work of our students, faculty, and alumni in the years to come, just as we draw inspiration from the enduring contributions of those who came before us, especially Mr. Dickerson. I hope to see many of you at Reunion in May and at the Earl B. Dickerson Centennial Conference later this month.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Miles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas J. Miles