

Message from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

This winter, we took some photographs inside the Law School, both to preserve this unique moment in our history and to offer you additional glimpses of activity inside our building. You can see these images on the cover and throughout the issue, particularly in Class Notes. The photographs capture our twin desires to connect and to protect—an essential pairing as we safely navigate the pandemic. Our hallways are quieter than they once were, but happily, the intellectual energy that powers our community has never been stronger.



During the past year, our faculty have produced cutting-edge scholarship and shared their expertise publicly on a wide range of issues, from elections and the transfer of power to financial markets and vaccine rollouts. Pandemic or not, the scholarly productivity of our faculty and the influence of their ideas bring them a variety of prizes and awards. Indeed, our faculty colleagues are honored so often that it is risky to mention particular accolades, lest other recognitions be left out. Still, some recognitions are so important that it is worth bearing the risk. Professor Martha C. Nussbaum was awarded the 2021 Holberg Prize, one of the largest international awards given to an outstanding researcher in the arts and humanities, the social sciences, law, or theology. Professor Douglas Baird became the first academic to be named the chair of the National Bankruptcy Conference, a nonpartisan organization of lawyers, law professors, and bankruptcy judges that advises Congress on issues related to bankruptcy law. Importantly, the University also recognizes the achievements of our faculty, and four of our faculty colleagues—Tony Casey, Herschella Conyers, Dhammika Dharmapala, and Sonja B. Starr—received named professorships, and thanks to the generosity and vision of two alumni, two of these “chairs” were newly established.

Our students remain engaged, too, pursuing their work with enthusiasm and energy, in both socially distant classrooms and on Zoom screens. This year, many of our most cherished traditions proceeded, albeit via Zoom: the Hinton Moot Court competition, the Coase Lecture, the Midway Celebration, Chicago’s Best Idea lectures (I even offered one, on “superstars and the law”), the Law School Musical, and more. Our students participated in these events in numbers as large as ever, and at times, the new technology allowed our alumni to join them.

During the past year, world events provided much that needed expert analysis and active discussion. Our panels and lectures reflected this wide range of topics. In the fall, our community gathered for lectures on issues related to voting, elections, and government service—including a virtual visit by former Attorney General John Ashcroft, ’67. When shares of GameStop stock skyrocketed, three of our esteemed faculty members—Professors Tony Casey, Todd Henderson, and Josh Macey—held a lively and well-attended virtual Q&A, sponsored by our new Center on Law and Finance, to explain the situation and discuss the future of securities regulation. Our student journals planned successful symposia as well, and you can read more about those and other colloquia in this issue.

As the vaccine rollout continues, we eagerly anticipate steps toward a return to “normal,” both at the University and across the country. This should make us optimistic for the future. Throughout this challenging time, the Law School community has remained vibrant, adaptable, and engaged, and for this, we should be deeply proud.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom J. Miles". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Thomas J. Miles

Dean and Clifton R. Musser Professor of Law and Economics