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Dean's Update to the Northeastern University School of Law Community - Volume 3 Number 2 - May 2007: The 2007 Commencement Issue

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Dean's Update to the Northeastern University School of Law Community
Volume 3, Number 2 —May 2007
The 2007 Commencement Issue

Although a bit of time has passed, this Update continues the periodic tradition of trying to keep everyone informed — faculty, staff, students and graduates — about what is happening at NUSL and to provide information on matters that may not always be sufficiently transparent without additional communication. The update is initially sent via e-mail but is also available on the law school's website, the internal WEBoard, and through our monthly e-newsletter to graduates.

The last few Updates grew to be much too long, and so this time I am directing you to the website for information about events, speakers, and administrative updates. See the box below. I have also divided this Update into two parts. In Part I, I give you an overview of what is happening currently at the school. Part II, which has already been distributed to faculty and administrative staff, provides a progress report on the strategic planning process. Since we prepared our strategic plan for the ABA site visit in April 2006, it seemed to be an appropriate time to review and assess our implementation efforts. This report is available for internal review on the WEBoard in the Office of the Dean section under [Strategic Planning Update – April, 2007](#).

Commencement 2007

Congratulations to the members of the Class of 2007!

At commencement on Friday, May 25, honorary degrees will be awarded to Commissioner Nonnie Burnes, NUSL '78, Judge Sonia Sotomayor, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and Michael Greco, former President of the American Bar Association, who led the ABA to endorse the right to representation in civil cases under the banner of "Civil Gideon" rights. Commissioner Burnes will be the honorary speaker. In addition, the Class of 2007 has elected Professor Dan Williams as the faculty speaker and Yael Shy and Andrew DeVoogd as the student speakers.

This graduating class leaves a strong legacy. Advocates for a stronger international focus for the school, members of this class have done co-ops on five continents in 14 countries -- Taiwan, UK, Liberia, Lebanon, Sudan, South Africa, Mexico, Italy, India, Belgium, New Zealand, Japan, Nicaragua, Liberia. They made the Student Bar Association a robust component of our community governance. They helped us work through difficult community conversations about our grading system and the first year Legal Practice program, both discussed later in this Update. They introduced the School to the pleasures and the dangers of blogs and MySpace. They are currently working on the development of an on-line student-edited journal, and students in the first and second year classes are ready to pick up this work and move ahead with it. In sum, in addition to each individual's own work, the collective work of the Class of 2007 has helped us face the future while maintaining the values of our past.

And, after a bit of late organizing, at students' request, we have made tams, instead of mortarboards, available to all graduating students. This effort reflected the joint work of students and staff – a reflection, as always, of the Northeastern approach to getting things done!

Here's where to find information about what is happening at NUSL that is not included in the text of this update (hold down the ctrl key and click to get to the link):

[Faculty honors and accomplishments](#)

Speakers at the School of Law this past academic year:

[Faculty colloquia](#)

[Northeastern Law Forum](#)

[Daynard Public Interest Fellows](#)

[Intellectual Property \(IP\) Speaker Series](#)

Conferences at NUSL this past year:

[Solving the Crimes of the Civil Rights Era](#)

[Domestic Violence Institute Annual Conference](#)

[PHAI fourth annual conference on legal approaches to the obesity epidemic](#)

[NUSL Alumni Labor and Employment Law Conference](#)

New Northeastern University School of Law on-line journals:

[Human Rights and the Global Economy](#), edited by Rashmi Dyal-Chand, Hope Lewis, Wendy Parmet

[Northeastern University School of Law Public Law & Legal Theory](#), edited by James Hackney:

Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy events and developments: There is quite a lot to report on [PHRGE](#); please visit their web page!

[Public Health Advocacy Institute](#)

[Domestic Violence Institute \(DVI\)](#)

[Administrative updates](#)

And here is the Update information:

ABA/AALS Accreditation Update

In sum, the accreditation process went very well. The members of the site team were nothing short of enthusiastic about NUSL after their visit. The ABA and AALS followed up on their site evaluation visit of April 2006 with letters last August and September. The final February 2007 report of the ABA Accreditation Committee was very positive regarding the law school's preparation for the visit, the program of legal education that we offer to students, the support that we provide to faculty and students, the academic strength of the faculty, the library and

information resources, and financial management. For the first time, the Committee found that the law school does not need a variance or waiver for our academic calendar. The only concern expressed by the Committee: they found the law school facilities to be inadequate and asked for a report in November 2007 regarding how we will address deficiencies in classrooms, library, and student space.

And thus:

Plans for Building Renovations

On March 1, 2007, the Northeastern University Board of Trustees approved a \$20 million bond issue to fund renovation of Dockser Hall, down the street on Forsyth, as well as some work in Knowles and Cargill. Plans are currently out to bid, with work scheduled to begin sometime in early summer, and a move-in for the law school (hopefully) in the fall of 2008. The renovated Dockser will house the clinics from Columbus Ave., a new moot courtroom, several tiered classrooms, seminar rooms, and student lounge and study space. Dockser will be fully wireless with technology and electrical outlets for laptops in the classrooms. The renovation will also include some improvements in Knowles, particularly for the library. The current second floor classrooms will be converted to library or other use.

The discussions that led to this solution recognized that this is not a permanent solution for housing the School of Law at Northeastern. The University is currently in a strategic planning process that will be followed by an implementation phase and a master planning process for the physical plant. We anticipate that a final solution for the law school building is likely to emerge during these discussions.

Technology Upgrades

Wireless: There is a University initiative to make every academic building fully wireless by the end of the summer of 2007. We anticipate this work to be scheduled shortly for Cargill and Knowles. Dockser Hall will be fully wireless when it becomes part of the law school complex in 2008-09.

On-line services: We are engaged in major efforts to upgrade technology and make more services available to students on-line:

Co-op and Career Services: This year the co-op office has migrated many of the co-op application functions from the actual wall to a virtual space on the WEBoard. This will continue next year as we begin implementation of a full employment system which will eventually support both co-op and career service placements. This new system will allow students to search jobs on-line; store evaluations, cover letters, and resumes in electronic folders; and at some point submit applications electronically (either directly or through the co-op office, depending on the employer). First use will be later summer for students applying for summer associate positions for 2008.

Evaluations: We have also developed an electronic student evaluation template which will allow us to process evaluations electronically and help get them out faster to students – this year we took the first step of sending evaluations through email. This template will also provide more consistent formatting and improve the professionalism of the narrative evaluation packet. More on evaluations below.

NUSL Website: We are embarking on a project to revamp our website. Stay tuned through the coming year.

Curriculum: (see separate section for an update on international law)

Two year upper level curriculum: For some time, we have aspired to have a two year rolling curriculum to aid students (and faculty) in planning. Given the number of courses which are only taught once per year, and therefore are only available to students one time during their three-year course of study, this is particularly important here at NUSL. Thanks to Associate Dean James Hackney for getting this done! Although we may always need to tweak the schedule, we are now in a much better position to know what to anticipate from year to year. The 2007-08 and 2008-09 schedules are available on the WEBoard, and we anticipate working on 2009-10 this coming fall.

First year classroom courses: This year, we were forced for reasons that we did not anticipate to have only two sections in Constitutional Law, one taught by an experienced professor who has not taught regularly at Northeastern in the past. Next year, we anticipate that all first year courses will be divided into three sections and will be taught by long-time full- or part-time Northeastern faculty. This accomplishes the goal that we set several years ago of dividing all 1L courses into three sections.

Legal Skills in Social Context: We made it through the first year of the new LSSC program, with an entirely new research and writing program and a group of wonderful adjunct writing teachers. Joan Neisser, who has led the effort in writing, will leave at the end of this year, and Susan Sloane, one of the adjunct teachers this past year, will take over the reins of directing the research and writing component of the program for its second year. Overall, student evaluations of all aspects of the program were very positive. Several issues that arose during the past year are being addressed in the planning for next year, as we move ahead with this challenging and innovative program.

Student Evaluations

Over the past year, the entire law school community has engaged in a conversation about our evaluation system. This was sparked by several factors, including the increasing pervasiveness of employers (including federal judges) who require one page electronic submissions. In our community discussions, there was consensus on goals if not on method: externally, we want to maximize placement (on co-op and post-graduate) for all students; internally we want to maximize both individualized and useful feedback to students as well as the level of collegiality within the community. At the faculty meeting on March 6, 2007, the faculty voted to resolve the issue of grading and transcripts for future classes as follows:

- We will retain (and work on improving) the narrative evaluation system.

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- All first year courses will be graded as credit (Cr), marginal, fail.
- Upper level courses will be graded as follows: High Honors (HH), Honors (H), Pass, Marginal Pass, Fail.
- When a one page transcript is needed, it will consist of the first page with these designations.
- The official NUSL transcript will consist of a first page that includes the designations indicated above, plus the narrative evaluations and the co-op evaluations.
- When applying for co-op and post-graduate positions, the Co-op and Career Services offices will determine, based on the specifics of the situation, when students can use each of the following: the official transcript; the first page summary sheet only; or course and co-op evaluations only.

Remaining issues: We need to work on including a portion of the co-op evaluations on the one page transcript; we need to improve the appearance of the narrative evaluations; we need to work on improving the quality and consistency of the narrative evaluations.

Implementation: After further community discussion, we decided that this new system will not apply to any current students.

Experiential learning at NUSL, going forward

The clearest charge that emerged from our strategic planning process was that we want to be the very best at experiential education in law schools in the U.S. We have begun to explore what this means for us, as we imagine better integration of the experiential components of NUSL (co-ops, clinics, first year projects) and as well as building links between our classroom teaching and the broader experiences that intersect with the world outside. This year, Jim Rowan and I spent many hours talking with leading law school clinicians around the country about our program. Next year, we will be inviting several people to campus to help us think about our own next steps. We were very excited by the feedback we got from the people we spoke with, but we were also surprised at how little they really understood about the NUSL program. We are determined to beat the drum more loudly and to think creatively about the future next year.

Improving international law and programs at NUSL

A second core area that emerged in our strategic planning focused on globalization and building a global community. Our [winter magazine](#) described our growing efforts in this area, including the expansion of courses: this year we added International Tax; next year we will add International Criminal Law. Students are already pursuing rich co-op experiences around the world (see the map highlighted in our winter magazine noted above), and we are looking at ways to increase these opportunities, including setting up a travel fund for this purpose. Next year we will have several new co-ops sponsored by the Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy that will focus on human rights work in international organizations, establishing an on-going relationship through co-op with the host organizations. The faculty continues to think about how to integrate international issues into core courses. We will be establishing a committee to focus on international work this coming year, and we will begin to explore relationships with schools in other countries. We have also begun discussions with other colleges at Northeastern and other Boston institutions in hopes of expanding our international curriculum, bringing more international students to NUSL, and perhaps building an LLM program.

Faculty comings & goings for 2007-08

Welcome back to Libby Adler, Wendy Parmet, Steve Subrin, Mary O'Connell, as they return from 2006-07 sabbaticals during this spring, summer and coming fall. Next year Dick Daynard and Jim Rowan will both be on sabbatical in the spring. Stacey Dogan, Debbie Ramirez, and Clare Dalton will be on leave for the full year. Joan Neisser, who has provided terrific leadership in developing the writing component of the LSSC program, as well as mentoring students on writing skills, will be leaving us.

For 2007-08, we will welcome the following visiting faculty:

Susan Sloane, who will be joining us to head the writing and research component of LSSC. She was an adjunct this year, is an experienced writing teacher, and will bring both an understanding of Northeastern and experience in law school writing programs to us. She will be at the law school full time, on a one-year visiting appointment. We will be doing a national search to fill the position vacated by Joan Neisser in the fall.

Wendy Seltzer will teach IP and antitrust, taking over most of Stacey's load. Professor Seltzer is a Harvard College, Harvard Law School graduate. Her scholarship focuses on the intersections of law and technology,

particularly new technologies of self expression. She comes to us having been a Visiting Assistant Professor at Brooklyn Law School since 2005. She will be here in the Fall-Winter-Spring quarters.

Keith Fisher will teach courses in corporate finance and banking, to make up for the loss of James' upper level courses due to his appointment as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. He comes to us from Michigan State, where he was Acting Director of the Institute for Trade in the Americas and Visiting Professor of Law. Before starting to teach, Professor Fisher was a partner at Mintz, Levin. He is a graduate of Princeton and Georgetown Law School. He will be here during the Fall-Winter-Spring quarters.

Finally, **Hillary Farber** NUSL '92 will be joining the full-time faculty in the College of Criminal Justice. She will also serve as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the School of Law, teaching two criminal law courses on an adjunct basis for the next three years.

During the 2006-07 academic year, the faculty have had many discussions to focus our faculty recruiting effort to fill the two positions previously vacated by John Flym and Taylor Flynn. We will be proceeding to fill these positions, as well as hire a new permanent legal writing director, in the fall. Margaret Burnham has agreed to chair our Appointments Committee.

Critical staff turnover There will be some new people in the building by the fall quarter. We will keep you posted as we fill open positions in Admissions, Co-op, and Development and Alumni/ae Relations.

University Academic Planning: The University has entered into an academic planning process under the leadership of President Aoun. He is encouraging community involvement through a series of open forums and through the planning website at <http://www.northeastern.edu/planning> where reports from the working groups are

well as the current version of the full strategic plan are posted for comment. I participated as co-chair for one of the four working groups, Urban and Global dimensions and as a member of the Steering Committee; the law school was also represented by Jim Rowan on the Experiential Learning team. The overall NU plan is highly consistent with the law school plan that was developed over the past couple of years, although it encourages to think more deeply about the possibilities of interdisciplinary teaching and research. For further information, check the website.

And have a great summer!