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Dean’s Column

BY GUEST AUTHOR PROF. STEVE JOHNSON, William S. Boyd School of Law

AWARD-WINNING FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVICE AT THE BOYD SCHOOL OF LAW

When the William S. Boyd School of Law was founded over a decade ago, we understood that building the kind of law school Nevada needs and deserves required strength in many dimensions. A key dimension is the strength of the faculty. Simply put, the faculty is at the core of any law school.

Many previous installments of this dean’s column have reported on the outstanding scholarly productivity of the faculty of the Boyd School of Law and on honors they have garnered. This installment updates that happy news by noting some of the recent honors accorded to the scholarship and service of our faculty.

At the outset, a few remarks about the centrality of legal scholarship to the mission of the Boyd School of Law are appropriate. Good legal scholarship directly helps the bench and the bar by clarifying difficult issues and developing perspectives that might otherwise have not been fully appreciated. Good legal scholarship can also help legislatures and agencies to effect sound reforms – or to eschew unwise changes. Moreover, good legal scholarship is inextricably intertwined with good teaching and the training of the next generation of Nevada’s lawyers. The cutting-edge issues our faculty members explore in their scholarship enrich what they bring to the classroom.

Recognition of our faculty’s scholarship and service has come in many forms. Its work has been cited in decisions by the United States Supreme Court, the Nevada Supreme Court, numerous other federal and state courts, legislatures, agencies,

and articles and books by legal experts from the practicing bar and academia. Its work has propelled many of our faculty members to leadership positions in judicial, bar, community and educational law reform organizations. And our faculty members’ work has earned them prestigious awards.

Let me mention some of the awards recently received by members of the faculty of the Boyd School of Law, focusing on three such awards in 2009 and one in 2010. In 2009, Christopher Blakesley, the Cobeaga Professor of Law at the Boyd School of Law, received a Barrick Distinguished Scholars Award from UNLV. The award recognizes faculty members who have established a record of distinguished research, a profile that well describes Blakesley, a scholar of national and international prominence and the author of nine books, dozens of book chapters and approximately 100 articles on international law, criminal law and other practice areas.

Professor Linda Edwards is one of the nation’s leaders in the teaching and scholarship of legal research and writing, as well as in rhetoric. For her work and her positive influence on countless members of the profession, in 2009, Edwards received the prestigious Thomas F. Blackwell Memorial Award, conferred by the Legal Writing Institute and the Association of Legal Writing Directors.

Professor Nancy Rapoport, the Gordon Silver Professor at the Boyd School of Law, has a thick portfolio, both as a teacher and as a scholar of bankruptcy law, business law and entertainment law. In 2009, she received the Public Service Counsel



Award at the annual Media and Entertainment Counsel of the Year Awards. This award was created by the Association of Entertainment Counsel to recognize those who have achieved the highest levels of success in their areas of expertise and to honor the top media and entertainment counsel as selected by their peers.

Our most recent recipient of a major national honor is Jeffrey Stempel, the Doris and Theodore B. Lee Professor at the Boyd School of Law. In March 2010, Stempel was chosen to receive the Liberty Mutual Prize. The prize recognizes legal scholarship in the area of property and casualty insurance, its regulation and corporate governance. Entries are evaluated by a panel of attorneys, judges and professors having particular expertise in the field of insurance law, based on criteria such as quality of analysis, originality, thoroughness of research, creativity and clarity of thought and expression.

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The panel selected Stempel’s article “The Insurance Policy as Social Instrument and Social Institution” as “the clear and unanimous choice” for this year’s award. Stempel’s article will be published this year in the William & Mary Law Review, and he has been invited to present the article this fall at the Boston College Law School.

Dean John White has stated: “We aspire for our faculty members to be both important scholars and influential public intellectuals.” As the prestigious awards earned by our faculty demonstrate, this aspiration is being realized at the Boyd School of Law. ■

STEVE JOHNSON is the E.L. Wiegand Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Research at the William S. Boyd School of Law. He is a frequent speaker at law conferences throughout the United States and has authored numerous books and articles. His work has been cited by the United States Supreme Court and many other courts, administrative agencies and commentators.