



## ACHIEVING GREATNESS GOING FORWARD

BY DEAN JOHN VALERY WHITE, BOYD SCHOOL OF LAW

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With the legislative session behind us, the William S. Boyd School of Law is now free to continue its project of building a top law school for Nevada and the region. While we will suffer double-digit budget cuts, we have put in place a substantial tuition increase that, with the hard work of our legislators, saved our fledgling law school from devastating and irreparable damage. We were fortunate in another way which proves significant as we move forward: the crippling economic downturn and consequent budget crisis occurred after we achieved several milestones. These achievements are markers of our strength as a law school, even as they create challenges for us going forward.

For several years now, the Boyd School of Law has been the school of choice for Nevadans. While some Nevadans still ultimately attend other law schools, nearly all Nevadans who apply to law school apply to Boyd. This significant milestone has a range of benefits to the law school. Nonetheless, it also means that admissions to the law school are substantially more competitive (even as, in the last few years, our proportion of Nevadans in our entering class has steadily risen).

We have also established an excellent placement record with Nevada-based firms (large and small), and with the Nevada offices of regional and national law firms. We take this to be a good indication that we are attracting strong law students to the school and preparing them to succeed in a wide variety of practice settings in the state. Simultaneously, this success in local placement has made us as vulnerable to the economy and to as-of-yet-unforeseen changes in the practice, as are our colleagues in the practicing bar throughout the state. Our placement success has also generated stiff competition for our best students between firms, and drawn many of our graduates away from the rural practices they once envisioned.

The law school has also created highly respected and important programs that provide direct services to our

community. Our Saltman Center for Conflict Resolution and Thomas and Mack Legal Clinic are not only highly regarded in the dispute resolution and clinical worlds, they are much appreciated for the direct services they are able to provide. Success of this sort has created an ever-increasing desire for the law school to participate in efforts to address the many social and legal service gaps that exist in the state, and which have also increased since the beginning of the economic downturn.

Having achieved these milestones, we have so far withstood the harsh winds of economic discontent. But the challenges that our success has created will make maintaining our success while going forward all the more difficult. The highly competitive admissions process that characterizes law schools today pits one school against another in a battle for the most attractive applicants, many of whom are no longer committed to any particular locale. And, with some law firms delaying start dates for graduates, other firms trimming the numbers of graduates they hire and public sector employers freezing hiring, providing career services for our graduates is increasingly challenging. Both of these functions are resource intensive, demanding direct expenditure and great staff. Addressing community needs, while maintaining the reputation and strength of our programs and the faculty that teach them, is similarly challenging. In all cases, though, we have weathered the storm and intend to build on these successes to achieve greatness.

We will continue to recruit the strongest faculty we can. We will seek to have ever-stronger classes and better training, all the while emphasizing the crucial skills and professional mores that will make our students and graduates assets to society, the profession and their clients. We expect no less than greatness and are committed to the hard work achieving it will demand. **NL**