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Dean's Annual Letter 2010

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July 22, 2010

Dear Graduates and Friends,

One year ago, it was my great honor to take office as the new Dean of Golden Gate University School of Law. This spring, as I handed out the diplomas to our distinguished 2010 graduates in majestic Davies Hall, I reveled in both the spirit of the day and the enormous accomplishments and moving stories of our students, faculty and alumni. Regardless of which areas of practice these graduates choose in the public or the private arena, I know they will join their fellow alumni in richly contributing to their respective fields and to our profession, and in carrying with them the special gifts of Golden Gate Law.

This has been an extraordinarily action-packed year for the Law School, from the appointment of four new tenure-track faculty members and the decision to infuse intensive skills training into the first year curriculum, to the establishment of an International Women Judges Graduate Fellowship Program, the hosting of an extraordinary series of cutting-edge conferences and other events featuring national leaders of the bench and bar, and the first steps to launch our new Litigation Center. At the same time, our trial advocacy teams scored a number of terrific wins over formidable opposition, and we were ranked third in the nation for percentage of eligible students participating in externship programs, fifth in the country in public interest job placements, and among the 30 most diverse ABA-accredited law schools.

Emblematic of the many stand-out events this year was our Fall 2009 inauguration of the **Golden Gate School of Law Chief Justice Ronald M. George Distinguished Lectureship**, an annual Lecture Series created to shine a public spotlight on the important work of our nation's state courts. As our founding speaker, Chief Justice George spoke before a packed room of lawyers, judges, law students and members of the public, addressing his chosen topic of "Access to Justice in Times of Fiscal Crisis," inclusive of a stinging critique of California's voter initiative process. Our 2010 Lecture promises to be a worthy successor, featuring an outstanding group of Chief Justices from across the country. Following an introduction by Chief Justice George, Justice Dana Fabe, two-time Chief Justice of Alaska and President of the National Association of Women Judges, will deliver a welcoming address. Both jurists will then participate on a panel, moderated by California Court of Appeal Justice Joan Dempsey Klein (co-founder of both NAWJ and California Women Lawyers), which will include Utah Chief Justice Christine Durham, President of the Conference of Chief Justices; Washington Chief Justice Barbara Madsen; the Hon. Leah Sears, who recently stepped down as Georgia's first (and at that time the nation's only) African American woman Chief Justice; Tennessee Chief Justice Janice Holder; and Chief Justice George.

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In February 2010, more than 200 students, lawyers, judges, non-profit legal advocates and other legal leaders gathered here for a screening of director Abby Ginzberg's documentary, *Cruz Reynoso: Sowing the Seeds of Justice*, followed by a unique conversation among former California Supreme Court Justices Reynoso and Joseph Grodin, nationally acclaimed Morrison & Foerster litigator Jim Brosnahan and California Rural Legal Assistance Executive Director José Padilla.

A month later the School was host to a national **Poverty Law Conference**, co-sponsored by the Society of American Law Teachers, entitled "Vulnerable Populations and Economic Realities: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Law Teaching." Following moving introductory remarks by former GGU faculty member U.S. Judge Thelton Henderson, several of our own faculty's presentations were accompanied by keynote speakers including John Payton, President of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and attorney for the University of Michigan in its landmark affirmative action win in the Supreme Court, and two other national champions of justice, George Washington University Law School Professor Paul Butler and Seattle School of Law Professor Richard Delgado.

Other highly successful conferences included our annual Environmental Law Conference, entitled this year "Farming and Food: How We Grow What We Eat," the Twentieth Anniversary Fulbright Symposium, and two impressive Intellectual Property conferences. We encourage you to visit our new IP Law Center site, which includes the IP Law Book Review, at <http://gguiplc.com/>.

As a fitting close to the academic year, this year's Commencement was highlighted by Jim Brosnahan's eloquent address focusing squarely on the moral imperatives of membership in a profession committed to achieving equal justice in a nation of laws. In fact, I have found that this emphasis on public responsibility and the ethical obligations of attorneys is threaded throughout our curriculum and teaching, and in our faculty's scholarship, ranging from Professor Eric Christiansen's recent article "Using Constitutional Adjudication to Remedy Socio-Economic Injustice: Comparative Lessons from South Africa," which appeared in the *UCLA Journal of International Law Foreign Affairs*, to Professor Leslie Rose's already nationally recognized article, "The Supreme Court and Gender-Neutral Language" soon to be published in the *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy* and Professor Michele Benedetto Neitz's "A Unique Bench, A common Code: Judicial Ethics in Juvenile Court," to be published in the *Georgetown Law Review*.

This past year I have stood in awe of the ways in which Golden Gate Law's students, faculty and staff infuse their quest for equal justice into their pedagogy, their coursework and their work beyond the classroom—whether by countless pro bono hours, clinic victories on behalf of underserved communities, on-campus efforts to help the people of Haiti, or simply and perhaps most eloquently by the ways in which our students support each other's public service work in a law school that is a uniquely supportive community.

One area in which our professors' passion for justice most clearly translated into inspired student achievement this year was in our students' outstanding performance in regional and national competitions. Under the expert tutelage of legendary litigation guru

Professor Bernie Segal (recently heralded by *The Recorder* as a model Mentor) GGU's teams scored victories including first place at the 2009 ABA Section of Labor and Employment Law San Francisco Regional Trial Advocacy Competition (against Boalt and Stanford, among others) and at the 2009 San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association Mock Trial Competition (against Boalt, Hastings and USF) and third place at 2010 ABA Criminal Justice Section National Mock Trial Competition (against Harvard, Georgetown and others). We also finished among the top ten at the State Bar's 10th Annual Student Environmental Negotiations Competition, held on our campus in March.

This passion was further manifested in our Clinics' key wins, including our Women Employment Rights Clinic's victory in securing preliminary court approval of a class action settlement for over \$2 million in unpaid wages (for which Clinic students provided advice, counseling and representation to over 200 low wage workers), as well as in several landmark victories by our Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, winner of the 2009 Environmental Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. We are deeply proud of the School's national leadership in experiential learning, including our unique and highly successful Honors Lawyering Program, and by our faculty's ability to seamlessly integrate practice, critical analysis and profound purpose into legal education.

Golden Gate Law's profound commitment to ensuring access to justice can be felt well beyond the walls of the University. Among the new programs in which we take great pride is our **Pro Bono Program at Golden Gate**, which was created in partnership with the Public Interest Clearinghouse. This past year, this program enabled more than 100 of our students to contribute well over 1,900 hours to assist nearly 1,000 clients at 52 legal clinics, including the Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach and BASF's Volunteer Legal Services Program clinics. In the upcoming year, we look forward to repeating and expanding our pro bono program to include additional Rural Education and Access to the Law (REAL) trips with the Public Interest Clearinghouse, bringing desperately needed legal services to those in rural populations.

Beyond strengthening our existing curricula and programs, this year we also established the **International Women Judges Graduate Fellowship Program**. This Program was launched to advance issues involving international women's rights and the role of women in justice systems around the world. Each year, the Program will bring a woman jurist from a developing country to the Law School to pursue an individualized course of study and earn a graduate law degree. Our first fellow is **Justice Gertrude Torkornoo**, from Accra, Ghana. She will be enrolled in the Intellectual Property LLM program and will engage with and educate the law school community as well as the local legal community through programs and activities designed to raise awareness of issues affecting women and women judges in her home country. We are partnering with the International Association of Women Judges for this Program.

As a law school, we are also profoundly concerned about the increasingly urgent problem of diminishing rate of minority admissions to law schools and their diminishing participation in the profession, particularly at the partnership level. We know that traditional law school admissions criteria, and ratings systems such as those employed by *U.S. News and World Report*, rely disproportionately on GPA and LSAT scores which have a disparate impact on most racial minorities. To address this, we are embarking on an ambitious pilot study to measure alternative criteria indicative of future success as an

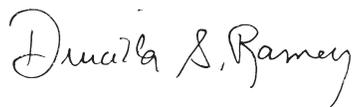
attorney. The criteria are based on almost 10 years of study by retired Berkeley Law Professor Marjorie Shultz and her colleagues. This longitudinal study will seek to track whether these alternative criteria, which do not have a disparate impact on minorities, more accurately predict short- and long-term scholastic and professional success.

Lastly, a word about curriculum and pedagogy. We are thrilled to be welcoming four extraordinary new faculty members this year, who will bring to us their wide range of expertise and experience in teaching, scholarship and community service. **Professor Benedetta Faedi** joins us from Stanford where she is completing her JSD and where she has been the recipient of numerous awards for her extensive research and scholarship on domestic violence in Haiti. Formerly, she was a researcher for the Child Protection Unit of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. **Professor Laura Cisneros**, who comes to us from Thurgood Marshall School of Law, is a young Constitutional Law scholar whose earlier law review article won the Outstanding Scholarly Paper Award for new scholars from the American Association of Law Schools. **Professor Wes Porter**, in addition to teaching and continuing in his tradition of high quality legal scholarship, will work with Bernie Segal to launch the Litigation Center and lead increasing numbers of student litigation teams in national competitions. Professor Porter served in the United States Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission before joining the faculty. **Professor Karen Gebbia** is a nationally recognized bankruptcy practitioner and scholar formerly tenured at the University of Hawaii Law School.

With the active participation of these new faculty members, this fall we are launching a vanguard change in our curriculum. In response to several recent studies urging curricular reform in law schools, we are adding a new first-year elective option in the spring semester, whereby students will participate in a small group, skills-infused class in one of an array of substantive areas, including IP, environmental law and criminal litigation.

I wish to express my personal gratitude to all of you, our friends and alumni, who support Golden Gate Law in myriad ways. I urge you to visit the School and get to know and re-acquaint yourselves with our faculty, programs, and our wonderful students. We are already preparing for this spring's alumni reunion, so if you are in a class ending in "1" or "6" I hope you're planning to join us.

Sincerely,



Drucilla Stender Ramey
Dean