Michigan Access Program: Revamped and Revived

Christine Gregory, ’96, knows how important the Michigan Access Program (MAP) can be for students, because when she was a student, the program was a fundamental part of her success at Michigan Law.

“I really needed MAP as a student. It’s how I got support, it’s how I interacted with the Law School,” says Gregory, now assistant dean for student affairs.

The program had begun in the 1960s, founded by the Black Law Students Alliance (BLSA). Later, it developed into the Law School’s primary diversity program; when Gregory was a student, MAP included a weeklong pre-orientation program for students of color. During that week, the program focused on demystifying the law school experience, connecting with fellow minority students, and generally learning about diversity at Michigan Law.

Following the Supreme Court’s 2003 decision in Grutter v. Bollinger, the Law School made some changes to MAP, even though the decision upheld the Law School’s use of affirmative action, Gregory says. MAP was opened to all students beginning in 2004. When Proposal 2 became law in Michigan in 2006—banning all preferential programs based on race, nationality, or gender—“what we had done voluntarily now was required by law,” Gregory says.

MAP continued under the new setup for several years, with all students invited to participate. Through the course of the changes to the program, though, it “lost its purpose and its mission,” Gregory says. “I really tried to figure out how to reclaim that mission, to be more about social justice and leadership and not just about having an extra week to meet people at the start of law school.”

She began working with the Program on Intergroup Relations, a social justice education program at the University. The new MAP, which began in the 2010–11 year, was a massive overhaul. The program required applications, on which incoming students had to show that they were committed to social justice.

“I wanted to think about the program in a way that was compliant with Prop. 2, but also more useful to students,” Gregory says. “It was important to me that MAP help students raise issues of race and identity in the classroom, which can be a very intimidating space.” MAP continues to have a mix of students—and could be a model for other universities that need to change or eliminate race-based programs, but want to offer students an inclusive classroom experience, Gregory says.

One of the exercises is a mock criminal law class in which Mark West, Nippon Life Professor of Law and associate dean for academic affairs, teaches People v. Goetz—a case in which race was likely a factor but was never mentioned in the opinion. Students discuss the case, then engage in a critique with faculty. This, plus a conflict-resolution exercise, an arbitration simulation, and more, are designed for students to develop cultural competency skills and be empowered to raise issues of race and identity in class discussions. It works, say the participants.

“The program was useful in thinking about how issues of social justice often need to be forced to the front of conversations and how to look at cases and issues from multiple perspectives,” says 2L Perry Teicher. “Coming from different years, different backgrounds, and different experiences made the program and the friendships strong—we learned how to think about issues from each other’s perspectives and found a sense of empathy, wanting to understand where each other were coming from, learning, and growing from that.”

Adds 2L Betsy Fisher: “The biggest contribution that MAP made to me was to build a sense of community among the social justice–minded students, who without such an opportunity can be hard to find. After a week of intense and honest discussions about identity and the law school atmosphere, the 25 of us were fast friends, and we continued those friendships throughout the school year.”

Andrew Dalack, a 2L, found that his MAP training affected him throughout the school year. “Although I would have been willing to raise issues of race or identity during classroom discussions I had not participated in MAP, knowing that there were other MAP students in my section made me more comfortable to initiate these potentially divisive, yet important, conversations.” —KV
The European Alumni Reunion in Paris welcomed 160 guests from 18 countries in late June and early July. They included members of prominent global law firms and international organizations, university professors, and international judges, and represented class years from 1959 through 2011, says Lara Furar, director of alumni relations at the Law School.

The festive weekend featured a reception at the Hôtel de Talleyrand; a conference with discussions about China, India, gender discrimination in Europe, constitutional courts, and the global financial situation; a gala dinner at Cercle de l’Union Interalliée, which included a tribute to the late Hessel E. Yntema Professor Emeritus Eric Stein, ’42 (whose widow, Ginny, is pictured at the reunion, top left); and a farewell brunch. Pictured below left are Hwesu Murray, ’79, and Damali Murray. Bottom right: Dimosthenis (Dimo) Papakrivopoulos, LLM ’98, and his guest, Inga Papierska.
Bickner, Kearse, and White Named Distinguished Alumni for 2012

By Rebecca Freligh

The three recipients of Michigan Law’s 2012 Distinguished Alumni Award have achieved eminent careers in business, the judiciary, and academia. The awardees are Bruce P. Bickner, ’68; the Honorable Amalya L. Kearse, ’62; and James J. White, ’62, Michigan’s Robert A. Sullivan Professor of Law.

“We are delighted to honor such remarkable alumni as the 2012 recipients of this prestigious award,” says Dean Evan Caminker. “All have made an important difference in their fields and to the Law School. All represent the best of Michigan Law.”

The dean presented the awards at a ceremony on September 7 during the South Hall dedication weekend.

Bickner, of Sycamore, Illinois, held various executive positions at DeKalb Corporation from 1975 to 1998. He became chair and chief executive officer of DeKalb Genetics Corporation in 1985, oversaw the sale of the company to Monsanto Corporation in 1998, and served as executive vice president of Monsanto from 1998 to 2002. He currently is an independent business consultant and director of several companies. Following a federal clerkship, Bickner practiced from 1970 to 1975 with Sidley & Austin, where he was a partner. Bickner serves on President Mary Sue Coleman’s Advisory Group and Dean Caminker’s Advisory Council. He chairs the Law School’s Development and Alumni Relations Committee and is the former chair of the Law School’s Campaign Steering Committee during its successful Michigan Difference campaign.

Kearse, of New York City, was named to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in 1979, the first woman and second African American judge (after Justice Thurgood Marshall) to be appointed to the Second Circuit bench. She has served the appeals court on senior status since 2002. Kearse began her career as an associate attorney with Hughes Hubbard & Reid in New York in 1962. In 1969, the firm named her a partner, the first woman and the first African American lawyer to achieve that status. She continued in practice with Hughes Hubbard until 1979, when President Jimmy Carter named her to the federal bench. Kearse was the first woman to be elected to the American College of Trial Lawyers.

White, of Ann Arbor, is one of the most highly regarded teachers and scholars in the Law School’s history. He has written on many aspects of commercial law. His book *Uniform Commercial Code* (written with Summers and Hillman) is the most frequently cited and widely used treatise on the subject. White also is the author of several casebooks on commercial, bankruptcy, and contracts law. He has served as the reporter for the Revision of Article 5 of the *Uniform Commercial Code* and is a commissioner on uniform laws from Michigan. He practiced privately in Los Angeles before coming to the Michigan faculty in 1964. White served as the Law School’s associate dean from 1978 to 1981. He received the Law School’s L. Hart Wright Award for Teaching, and the Homer Kripke Achievement Award given by the American College of Commercial Finance Lawyers.

To submit a nomination for the 2013 Distinguished Alumni Award, please visit www.law.umich.edu/alumniandfriends/Pages/DistinguishedAlumniAward.aspx.
Exoneree Adjusting to Life Outside the Walls

By John Masson

Starting life from scratch after being wrongly imprisoned for more than a quarter of a century for murder and arson is no easy task, as David Lee Gavitt can attest.

“There have been some challenges, but I’m trying to tackle them and deal with them,” says Gavitt, who was exonerated thanks to the efforts of Michigan Law’s Innocence Clinic.

Consider some of those challenges. When Gavitt walked out a prison door in Carson City, Michigan, on June 6, he had two heavy steamer trunks and a typewriter. And that was everything he owned.

The unseen burden he carried with him was heavier: his loss, to wrongful convictions, of fully half of his life. And even that wasn’t the worst of it. He had never been able to properly mourn the deaths of his wife and two small daughters, killed in the 1985 house fire that set him on a collision course with bad science and the criminal justice system.

When his family was buried, Gavitt was still hospitalized with injuries he had sustained trying to rescue them and was well on his way to being falsely charged with their murders.

“The 26 years I did in prison doesn’t even come close to the hell of losing my wife and daughters,” Gavitt says. “That was the ultimate hell. That, and the humiliation I felt just being accused of it.”

His lawyers from the Innocence Clinic—Imran Syed and Caitlin Plummer and professors Bridget McCormack and David Moran, ’91 (all pictured above with Gavitt)—worked to end that humiliation. They had been pushing for his release since September 2010, when then second-year law students Plummer, Syed, and Max Kosman, all 2011 grads, read Gavitt’s application and argued forcefully for the clinic to take his case.

“As the prison door opened, and I saw the expression on David’s face, I was completely overcome with emotion,” Plummer says. “Both immense joy that David finally had this freedom, but also a deep sadness that it took this long. Everyone was at a loss for words; all we could do was hug him and wipe our eyes. It is a moment that I will never forget and one that will continue to inspire me as a lawyer.”

When Gavitt was released, the first thing he wanted was to be driven straight to the cemetery where his family is buried. He wept at the graveside of his wife and two daughters, finally having the chance to grieve their loss.

An arson expert consulted by the Innocence Clinic said there was “no evidence whatsoever of a crime” in Gavitt’s case. “We knew right away that this case happened during the Dark Ages of arson science,” says Moran, who cofounded the clinic with McCormack. Gavitt is the sixth person freed during the clinic’s three-year history.

“This was during a time when poorly trained experts classified countless natural fires as arsons,” Moran says. (Read more at www.law.umich.edu/quadrangle about the now-debunked theories that convinced jurors that gasoline had been poured on the house fire, and the botched test by a state police crime lab.)

To be sure, challenges remain for Gavitt. If he had been an inmate being paroled, or being released after serving his full sentence, the State of Michigan would have helped him transition to freedom both before and after his release.

As someone whose innocence has been demonstrated in court, however, he receives no such help. The bitter irony is not lost on him: The people who lose large swaths of their lives serving time for crimes they didn’t commit get no help from the very institutions that wronged them in the first place.

“People who are paroled or ‘maxing out,’ they do get assistance from the state,” such as housing assistance and employment counseling. “But exonerees like me and others, they’re just basically shoved out into the world, and good luck,” he says.

Fortunately, Gavitt says, he’s always been a hard worker. Over the course of decades in prison, he managed to work to the top of the inmate job ladder. When he was released, he was a food service clerk, ordering supplies and handling inmate payroll. His pay: 32 cents an hour.

During his incarceration, he was able to amass about $1,000, which he brought out of prison with him. His girlfriend allowed him to move in with her. He’d had solid job offers, but was forced to delay accepting because of transportation issues. Things began looking up when a kind stranger donated an old, high-mileage car while Gavitt was working on getting a new license—his first since the 1980s.

“As far as financial-wise, it’s still rough,” Gavitt says. Still, he adds, “being confined in prison walls for so long, and then all of a sudden the walls open up and it’s like being reborn.”
Il-Won Kang, LLM ‘93, appointed to Korea’s Constitutional Court

Il-Won Kang was appointed in September to Korea’s Constitutional Court, marking the third time since 2010 that a Michigan Law LLM graduate from the class of ’93 has been named to his or her country’s highest courts.

Kang’s appointment as one of nine Constitutional Court justices was approved during a meeting of the National Assembly. Lawmakers appointed other new justices to the court at the same time, according to news reports.

Hwa-Jin Kim, a William W. Cook Global Law Professor at Michigan Law, said the appointment is in keeping with the quality of the cadre of Michigan Law graduates in Korea. “In general, the Korean Michigan Law alumni club is relatively small,” he said, adding that it does include other senior judges. “The quality of our graduates is well known to the legal community in Korea.”

Mark West, associate dean for academic affairs and the Nippon Life Professor of Law, said the relatively small size of the international program helps account for the collegiality that is its hallmark, and for the tight-knit nature of the international alumni group.

“Michigan Law’s history of international legal scholarship stretches back almost to our founding more than 150 years ago,” he said. “Justice Kang’s appointment to his country’s highest court is another example of the strength of that history, and we’re delighted to hear about it.”

Kang’s appointment caps his long list of judicial accomplishments, including sitting as a judge on several lower courts, including the Seoul High Court. He also held a number of appointments to important judicial policy posts, including chief judicial policy coordinator at the National Court Administration for the Korean Supreme Court, and he studied American courts in the National Center for State Courts in 1997. Kang also served internationally as rapporteur for Working Group II (Arbitration and Conciliation) with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law in Vienna in 2004.

Kang joins 1993 classmates Susanne Baer and Maria Lourdes Punzalan Aranal-Sereno in serving on their countries’ high courts; Baer was elected to the German Federal Constitutional Court in 2011, and Sereno was named to the Supreme Court of the Philippines in 2010, recently becoming chief justice (see story at right).—JM

Dean Search Begins

As Dean Caminker enters the final year of his 10-year appointment, an advisory committee assisting the provost in the search for a new dean of the Law School has received input from faculty, administrators, and students, and plans to make its recommendations by the end of fall term 2012.

The committee is chaired by Professor Ellen Katz. Other law faculty on the committee are Alicia Davis, Bruce Frier, Monica Hakimi, Don Herzog, Kyle Logue, Richard Primus, and Kim Thomas, as well as Senior Assistant Dean Sarah Zeafoss, ’92; Alison Davis-Blake, the Edward J. Frey Dean of the Ross School of Business at U-M; Robert B. Fiske Jr., ’55, HLLD ’97, senior counsel in the Litigation Department at Davis Polk & Wardwell; and 3L Kate Gilbert.

The committee will make its recommendations to Provost Philip Hanlon, who, together with President Mary Sue Coleman, will make a recommendation to the Regents for approval.

Sereno, LLM ‘93, Named Chief Justice of Supreme Court of the Philippines

Maria Lourdes Punzalan Aranal-Sereno, LLM ’93, has been named the 24th chief justice of the Republic of the Philippines. Named an associate justice on the country’s Supreme Court in 2010, Sereno is the first woman to serve as chief justice.

Appointed at age 52, she could serve as long as 18 years, until the mandatory retirement age of 70. President Benigno S. Aquino III (pictured here with Sereno) appointed her to the court and to the role of chief justice.

“The president is confident that Chief Justice Sereno will lead the judiciary in undertaking much-needed reforms. We believe the judicial branch of government has a historic opportunity to restore our people’s confidence in the judicial system,” Edwin Lacierda, the president’s spokesman, said in a statement.

Sereno previously served as executive director of the Asian Institute of Management Policy Center; taught civil law, negotiable instruments law, and international trade law as a faculty member of the Philippine Judicial Academy; and was on the faculty at the Hague Academy of International Law, Cambodia.
Lawyers Club Renovation Progresses

Construction is under way on the renovation of the Lawyers Club, which has not been altered substantially since it was built in 1924. The project includes the addition of horizontal corridors, primarily private bathrooms, and restoration of the building exterior.

The project is funded in significant part by a $20 million gift from Berkshire Hathaway Vice Chairman Charles T. Munger, HLLD LAW ’10. The remaining amount is coming from central university proceeds and the Lawyers Club, which is run by a separately incorporated, self-sustaining nonprofit organization.

The Lawyers Club is expected to reopen in time for the 2013–14 school year. For the current year, the Law School has worked with four nearby apartment complexes to secure exclusive leasing by law students.