Mark West Named 17th Dean of Law School

Mark D. West, currently the associate dean for academic affairs at the U-M Law School and a highly regarded scholar whose research focuses on the Japanese legal system, will be the 17th dean of the Law School beginning September 1, 2013. The appointment of West, the Nippon Life Professor of Law, was announced in January by Provost Philip Hanlon.

“This is an exciting time to be at Michigan Law,” said West, who joined the Law School as an assistant professor in 1998. “We have spectacular new facilities. No law school has a finer faculty or a more outstanding student body. I am inspired by the dedicated community of alumni, faculty, administrators, and staff who are committed to facing the continuing challenges of legal education together. It is a tremendous honor to have been chosen as dean.”

West said one of the strengths of the Law School is its collegiality, which has shaped his scholarship and teaching.

“I came to Michigan in part because faculty here care deeply about teaching students and producing first-rate scholarship. People are interested in each other’s work, collaborate generously, and collectively create an atmosphere that is both intellectually rigorous and supportive,” he said. “I appreciate our unique culture, and I look forward to helping to foster the spirit of collegiality for all of us who share a connection to this special place and to its history and traditions.”

The Law School has built a reputation not only as collegiate, but also interdisciplinary, diverse, and globally engaged. University leaders said West is the right person to build on that history and shape the School’s future.

“Mark West brings to the deanship the valued strengths of brilliant scholarship and strong academic administration,” said U-M President Mary Sue Coleman. “His global knowledge and experiences will be of great benefit to the future direction of Michigan Law. His overall expertise and insight make Mark an exceptional choice to lead one of the nation’s premier legal education programs.”

West will succeed Dean Evan Caminker, whose 10-year tenure will end on August 31. During Caminker’s time as dean, the Law School has expanded its physical space, as well as the depth and breadth of its academic offerings. The Law School has grown to include the new South Hall academic building, as well as the Robert B. Aikens Commons and Kirkland & Ellis Café. Caminker has been widely praised for the completion of the structures, not just because of their architectural grandeur but also because he was responsible for getting them built during an economic downturn.

Caminker predicted that West, with whom he has worked closely, will do a superb job at taking the School forward. “Mark West will be an outstanding new dean for the Law School. I’m confident he has the leadership skills and vision necessary to maintain and enhance the School’s greatness and reputation in the years ahead,” Caminker said.

West earned his JD from Columbia University School of Law, where he was notes and comments editor of the Columbia Law Review, and his BA from Rhodes College. Prior to West’s career in academia, he practiced in the firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP in New York and Tokyo. He also clerked for the Hon. Eugene H. Nickerson of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

In the past decade, West has authored or coauthored five books, including Law in Everyday Japan and the casebook The Japanese Legal System. In books and articles he has explored such diverse topics as shareholder derivative suits, the evolution of corporate law, the education and career development of Japanese lawyers, and the ways in which Japanese court opinions frame love, sex, and marriage. In addition to teaching Japanese Law, he regularly teaches Criminal Law to first-year students. He also teaches Enterprise Organization, a course that draws on his background as a transactional lawyer.

West has organized major conferences, presented research widely around the world, and has been a consultant to the World Bank and to various government offices in the United States and Japan. He has been an Abe Fellow at the University of Tokyo Faculty of Law, and has studied and taught at Kyoto University, where he was a Fulbright Scholar and Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. From 2003 to 2008 he was director of the University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, and from 2003 to 2007 the director of the Law School’s Center for International and Comparative Law.

Colleagues say West’s range of experiences as a scholar and administrator will serve him and the School well. “I am delighted that Mark West will be the next dean of the Law School. He is a first-rate scholar, widely acclaimed for his creative, interdisciplinary, and comparative scholarship, and an accomplished administrator with energy, enthusiasm, and a comprehensive and far-reaching vision for the future of our School,” said Ellen Katz, the Ralph Aigler Professor of Law, who chaired the search committee for the new dean.

West has two children: a son who is a sophomore at the U-M School of Music, Theatre & Dance, and a daughter who is a first-year student in the U-M College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.—KV
Prof. McCormack Elected State Supreme Court Justice

Bridget McCormack campaigned hard, fought back against an expensive ad campaign against her, and got a little help from The West Wing on her way to becoming the state's newest Supreme Court justice.

McCormack was the cofounder and codirector of the Michigan Innocence Clinic, as well as the associate dean for clinical affairs, at Michigan Law. Last year, she became one of the nominees for state Supreme Court nominated by the Democratic Party.

It was an exhausting campaign for the mother of four teenagers; she still had to get the kids to school and to swim practice, even while trying to win a statewide office. Now that she is on the court, her biggest job, she says, remains “being CEO of my household.”

She also is making the transition from being an advocate to a jurist. “I’m definitely not going in with guns blazing, with some big agenda. I believe a constitutional democracy works best when it is following the rule of law.

“Sometimes the rule of law might not be exactly the law you would have wished for, but the court’s job is to uphold it anyway,” McCormack says.

While she hadn’t served as a judge prior to running for the Supreme Court, she points out that, historically, law schools have been feeders to judgeships. Both jobs, she says, involve the deciphering and understanding of appellate decision-making.

On the path to winning the eight-year seat, McCormack was the only candidate to receive 10 out of 10 newspaper endorsements. Her profile grew even more when she enlisted the help of cast members from The West Wing to create a video in support of her candidacy and as a public service announcement to remind people to vote the nonpartisan section of the ballot.

Martin Sheen’s President Bartlet character says on the video: “If people fail to realize that a straight ticket doesn’t count in nonpartisan races, if they just casually vote the party line, then their interests will continue to go unrepresented.”

The video came about with the help of McCormack’s sister, actress Mary McCormack, who portrayed Deputy National Security Adviser Kate Harper on The West Wing. More than a million people have watched the video on YouTube.

McCormack also drew unwanted attention. A D.C.–based organization, The Judicial Crisis Network, spent $1 million on an ad against McCormack just in the final week leading up to the election. The ad said McCormack “volunteered to help free a terrorist.” In reality, McCormack and her clinic students were among a group of hundreds of volunteer lawyers enlisted by the Center for Constitutional Rights to provide legal representation to Guantanamo detainees so the government could proceed with their cases. The prisoner assigned to her clinic was released from Guantanamo by the Bush administration without McCormack ever having met with or spoken to him.

Because of Michigan’s campaign finance laws, the group does not have to reveal the identities of its funding sources. The anonymity troubles McCormack. “Opaque campaign finance rules are particularly troublesome in judicial elections—the public confidence in the court’s independence takes a big hit,” she says.

McCormack, who is married to Michigan Law Professor Steven Croley—currently on leave from the Law School while he serves as deputy White House counsel—will continue to be a lecturer at the Law School, as time permits. This term, she is teaching a course on a topic she understands very well: judicial elections.—KV
Bruce A. Courtade, ‘88, has been sworn in as the 78th president of the State Bar of Michigan. Courtade is a shareholder with Rhoades McKee PC, in Grand Rapids, where he practices in the areas of commercial litigation and construction law.

For 2012–2013, Courtade leads an organization of more than 42,000 members. He said he hopes to stress the importance of educating the public regarding the rule of law and our justice system.

“Unless people understand the importance of our courts and justice system, they will not understand the threat posed to our way of life by the underfunding of our third branch of government, or the serious damage to our society when ‘equal access to justice’ is not a reality, and not even an aspiration, but simply something that sounds good in a speech or looks good on a bumper sticker,” said Courtade, who resides in Grand Rapids with his wife, Jenny, and his daughter, Jessica.

A frequent guest lecturer to law school classes on ethics and professionalism, Courtade has been active in advancing the legal profession and community. He has been involved in State Bar work for more than a decade and has served on many of its committees and groups, and received the State Bar’s John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award in 1991. Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert P. Young Jr. officiated at the September 2012 swearing-in ceremony for the presidency.

The past few months at the Law School have been a busy time, with events that included (clockwise from bottom left) the winter Senior Day celebration at the Michigan Theater; Kids’ Day at the Proclaiming Emancipation exhibit, which was co-curated by Professor Martha Jones, a member of the Law School’s Affiliated LSA Faculty; mini-golf on the greens of the Law Library; and a Michigan Journal of Race & Law symposium about solitary confinement, featuring speaker Robert Hillary King, an exoneree who spent 29 years in solitary confinement as part of the Angola Three.
For the Good of the People
Michigan Law students well prepared for new pro bono rules

By Lori Atherton

Michigan Law 2L Megan Sanders enjoys pro bono work because it reminds her of why she came to law school in the first place. "I get a little lost in the day-to-day grind of being a law student," says Sanders, the president of Michigan Law's Pro Bono Advisory Board. “But when I’m in the field, helping underserved communities in whatever way I can or working on a project that feels truly important, I regain my motivation and focus.”

Sanders wants to pursue a career in public interest law—providing legal assistance to the underserved at a legal aid or other direct-service organization—so her impressive resume of public-interest work also is helping to prepare her for her post-law school life.

She is one of many students at Michigan Law who has a strong focus on pro bono work, a foundation that will serve these students well as they enter a workforce that increasingly puts an emphasis on real-world experience and pro bono activities.

Under a new rule adopted by the New York Court of Appeals, for instance, lawyers who seek admission to the New York State Bar after January 1, 2015, must first complete 50 hours of qualifying pro bono work, which is defined as law-related work performed under the supervision of a faculty member, licensed attorney, or judge. The requirement, which does not have to be fulfilled in New York, is aimed at addressing the legal needs of those who couldn’t otherwise afford an attorney. Current 3Ls are not affected by the rule, but 1Ls and 2Ls, like Sanders, could be impacted if they choose to practice in New York.

Amy Sankaran, ’01, director of externship and pro bono programs at Michigan Law, said the New York ruling is “broadly drawn,” so the impact on Michigan Law JD students likely will be minimal. “New York is very expansive and generous in what they count as pro bono work,” she says. “It could have been much more onerous.”

While Michigan does not count work for which students receive academic credit or compensation as pro bono service—such as clinics, externships, judicial internships, or pro bono work completed as a summer associate at a law firm—these types of work qualify as pro bono service according to the New York Bar. This is good news for Michigan Law students, Sankaran says, “because there are very few students who don’t complete a qualifying summer job, externship, or clinic by the time they graduate.”

Sanders has made a point of getting as much experience as possible through her pro bono work. She is, for instance, a volunteer with the Mississippi Center for Justice, where she assists Whitney Barkley, ’09, the Center’s pro bono counsel, in drafting legislation and conducting legal research.

As a 1L, Sanders had an internship with the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, where she also did legal research and aided Spanish-speaking clients with their VAWA (Violence Against Women Act), U visa (for victims of crimes), and asylum claims.

Last summer she was a law clerk with Bay Area Legal Aid, working in San Francisco’s housing law unit and Oakland’s consumer law unit. She also is cofounder and co-president of MLaw’s Poverty Law Society, the sponsoring student organization for the Mississippi Center for Justice pro bono project.

Pro bono opportunities abound at Michigan Law, many of which are sponsored by student groups and could fulfill the New York Bar requirement. Among the offerings are the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Project, the Family Law Project, the Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse, and the Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project. Ineligible toward the requirement are programs such as FAIT (Future Advocates in Training), a popular project in which students coach mock-trial teams at a local high school.

“Michigan provides excellent opportunities for students to become pro bono advocates,” Sanders says. “Pro bono work is for everyone, and many of my classmates, public interest-oriented and otherwise, take advantage of these valuable opportunities.”

Since fall 2009, Michigan Law students have been encouraged to participate in pro bono activities through the Pro Bono Pledge, a voluntary program in which they commit to performing 50 hours or more of qualifying pro bono work during their three years at the Law School. Graduating students who have fulfilled the pledge receive a certificate of pro bono service from the dean, recognition at an annual pro bono banquet, and recognition at the Honors Convocation.

“It’s voluntary, but we certainly encourage students to participate in the program,” says Alyson Robbins, public interest director in the Law School’s Office of Career Planning. “As a law school, we generally encourage students not to graduate without having done some type of public interest work. The point is to train students that pro bono work should be part of their career, no matter what they do.”

For more information on Michigan Law’s Pro Bono Program, visit www.law.umich.edu/careers/probono. For information on the 2L Megan Sanders and 1L Kate FitzGerald work on a project for the Mississippi Center for Justice.
International Affairs Dean Gordan to Retire

The end of the current academic year will mark a change for Michigan Law’s international programming with the retirement of longtime Assistant Dean for International Affairs Virginia Gordan.

But things that won’t change—because they are practically woven into the Law School’s DNA—are the School’s globally recognized commitment to international law and the depth and breadth of its international programming.

“Michigan Law’s expanding global engagement and soaring international reputation are due in large part to Virginia’s efforts as our first assistant dean of international affairs,” said Dean Evan Caminker. “She has been an invaluable adviser to me, with respect to efforts to create high-quality programming that is intellectually, academically, and professionally meaningful.”

Gordan expanded the School’s long-standing strengths in international programming, building on a foundation of internationalism almost as old as the Law School itself.

In the fall issue of the Law Quadrangle, we will have more about Gordan.—JM

Bickner’s ‘Leadership by Generous Example’

Top fundraising volunteer prepares to step down

By Rebecca Freligh

By nightfall on September 7, 2012, Bruce Bickner, ’68, was exhausted. He had hosted the ceremony dedicating South Hall under a blazing late-summer sun. He had emceed the program for a festive dinner in the Robert B. Aikens Commons. He had talked with dozens of elated alumni and friends.

Through it all, the Law School’s top fundraising volunteer grinned like the happiest guy on the planet.

“Everyone was excited about the building,” he says. “Their enthusiasm is real; they recognize how these facilities will expand the opportunities for our students and faculty for decades to come.”

That more than 500 donors have embraced the building project is due in no small part to Bickner’s leadership. He chaired the Law School’s campaign steering committee from 2002–2008 and has since chaired its Development and Alumni Relations Committee, which finished the building fundraising and will transition back to a new campaign steering committee this fall.

Dean Caminker says Bickner has put in countless hours on behalf of Michigan Law and as an adviser to President Mary Sue Coleman, calling the alumnus a great partner and friend.

“Bruce is an effective leader for many reasons,” says Dean Caminker, “but foremost are leadership by generous example, an unflappable demeanor, and tireless devotion to Michigan Law.”

Named campaign chair by former dean Jeffrey S. Lehman, ’81, Bickner began to work with Caminker when Lehman departed for the Cornell presidency in 2003. In the early days with the new dean, Bickner soon saw that Caminker needed only experience to be a great fundraiser. In 2007, when Caminker opted for a new architect, Hartman-Cox, and a new location for the proposed academic building, across Monroe Street, Bickner says, “It was a relief for everybody.”

Bickner, a lead building donor, always touted the project as a vehicle for teaching and learning, not just bricks and mortar. But even that successful appeal threatened to run aground in the economic storms of 2008. Did he ever think the campaign would fail?

A long pause, then measured words. “Certainly you consider that as a possible outcome. You just have to double your efforts and say this is going to be tougher and take more time.”

A retired DEKALB and Monsanto executive, Bickner learned about giving back from his parents, educators who put in a combined 83 years of service to the Chicago Public Schools. He shares that core value with his wife, Joan, who saw the same generosity modeled in her Iowa farm family and who is a dedicated fundraising volunteer for and donor to the School of Kinesiology.

When Caminker exits the dean’s office on August 31, Bickner also will step down, convinced that the Law School is well poised for the next campaign. Lest alumni forget the value of giving during one’s lifetime, he reminds them, “The joy of giving really comes from seeing people benefit from your gift.”

Joan and Bruce Bickner
Roopal Shah, ’95, Named New Assistant Dean for International Affairs

By Katie Vloet

Roopal Shah—a 1995 graduate of the Law School who has a background practicing law for the government and in the private sector, as well as starting a nongovernmental organization in India—has been named the Law School’s assistant dean for international affairs.

“One reason I was drawn to Michigan as a law student was that Michigan was well regarded in the international community,” Shah said. “Since then, the Law School has done even more to increase international coursework, added the International Transactions Clinic, and helped students find work abroad for the summers. It’s exciting to me that Michigan is heading in the right direction, and that we have an opportunity to impact broad international happenings—not just in the law, but in treaties, global leadership, and other areas as well.”

Shah will replace Virginia Gordan, the longtime assistant dean for international affairs, who is retiring, and who helped to build Michigan Law’s global engagement and international reputation.

“Virginia has been at the very center of the strengthening of our international and comparative law programs and activities,” said Steven Ratner, the Bruno Simma Collegiate Professor of Law and a leader in the field of global law. “Finding a worthy successor was a challenge, and it required a worldwide search. The level of interest in the job and the extraordinary candidates who applied show how well Michigan is regarded in international law.”

Shah, he said, “has everything we want in this position, from her varied work experience to her strategic vision for where we need to go in the future. She really wants our students to be leaders around the world, and she wants to help get them there.”

After graduating from Michigan Law, Shah clerked for the Hon. David Alan Ezra of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii, then worked as an associate at Shearman & Sterling in Washington, D.C. She followed that with a job as an assistant U.S. Attorney in the border crimes, major narcotics, and terrorism divisions in San Diego; there, she conducted 24 criminal trials from jury selection to verdict, attaining convictions in 22 of them.

In 2001, she cofounded and served as executive director (2007–2010) of Indicorps in Ahmedabad, India. The nonprofit works to provide Indians from all over the world with a channel to reconnect with the country of their heritage and with the means to contribute to its development, while fostering a new generation of socially conscious global leaders. Among its accomplishments was the successful partnership with community-based organizations to create sustainable rural initiatives, such as a clean drinking water project that reaches more than 70,000 people in 120 villages. She remains on the board of directors.

She also served in 2012 as a consultant to Ashoka, a nonprofit that supports social entrepreneurship, and in 2007 as a member of the professional staff at the University of Michigan Provost’s Office, where she provided strategic guidance on efforts such as the “Expect Respect” campaign.

As a student at Michigan Law, she was a two-term president of the Law School Student Senate. One of her legacies is the institution of a “Day of Service” as part of every new Law School student’s orientation. She also advocated for grading reform, a new approach to the mandatory 1L legal writing program, and other innovations. Then-Dean Jeffrey Lehman, ’81, created the Dean’s Exceptional Service Award and awarded it to her in 1995.

“Roopal was a distinguished student when she attended the Law School, and she has been a highly accomplished alumna since her time here, making her mark in important ways around the world,” Dean Evan Caminker said. “I have no doubt that she will continue to build Michigan Law’s global reputation, and that she will do so with the great energy and verve she has brought to the earlier chapters in her career.”

In addition to Shah’s professional achievements, she also is a fearless adventurer. She has run the Marine Corps marathon twice and, when she lived in San Diego, surfed every day for more than 400 days, “even when the rain was terrible, when the waves were over six feet tall, and when we really shouldn’t have been out there,” she said.

Shah said she looks forward to returning to Ann Arbor. “One of the things I have loved from a lot of the places I’ve been is the idea of building and being in community. Ann Arbor is exciting because there already is a strong sense of community.”

True to her community-building instincts, she also is excited about helping the Law School “continue to build on and extend its global networks, and ensure that it is just as engaged, connected, and energized as our community in Ann Arbor.”

BRIEFS