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## IN THE BEGINNING: FOUNDATIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL DEANSHIP

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Seeking a law school leadership role is a daunting undertaking. Deep discernment is appropriate before entering a search,<sup>1</sup> particularly for those who have not previously been in an academic leadership position.<sup>2</sup> It is crucial to check the water before jumping in.

As daunting as the process of discernment and participation in a search is, even more so is taking on the job if that search succeeds. Even with careful preparation and thought about taking on a law school leadership position, anyone stepping into a such new role must suddenly wrestle with the reality of the job. The multitude of often competing

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Robert H. Jerry, *A Primer for the First-Time Law Dean Candidate*, 49 J. LEGAL EDUC. 564, 565-93 (1999) (outlining fourteen important ideas to research and consider before becoming a dean candidate); R. Lawrence Dessem, *Knowing Which Deanship is the Right One*, 31 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 783, 783-85 (2008) (outlining the need, among other things, to carefully plan participation in the search and research the institution being considered); Neil Fulton, *Ten Questions for Unconventional Dean Candidates*, 46 OHIO N.U. L. REV. 71, 72-81 (2020) (outlining ten questions particularly important to candidates from outside the typical law faculty decanal candidate pool).

<sup>2</sup> Jerry, *supra* note 1, at 564-65; Peter Keane, *Interloper in the Fields of Academe*, 35 U. TOL. L. REV. 119, 119-20 (2003).

demands on a law school dean requires advance thought and planning to avoid having them simply overtake and dominate service in the role.

Thought and planning are particularly important at the outset of service. This is so for a couple of reasons. First, decanal terms are often short.<sup>3</sup> Time is therefore especially dear, and the earliest days of a dean's tenure often carry the most potential. Second, early days set the tone and habits that will likely define a dean's term. It is important to build the system, culture, and habits that will endure throughout the time spent as dean. Third, absent a plan for how to manage events, events can manage the dean. It is easy to suddenly look up to realize that rather than leading, a dean is simply responding to events. Such a reactionary posture, while inevitable at times, is not a recipe for real success. To thrive, a new dean should instead formulate their own approach to the job early and commit to that plan. Simple as that sounds, it is not easy to do in practice. Beyond the mere discipline of planning and execution is the substance of that plan. A new dean must also have a sense of what is important and how to advance those priorities to thrive.

This essay lays out some key ideas about how to approach the first year as dean. These ideas are inspired by the deep well of literature on decanal leadership and grounded in personal, sometimes painful, experiences. No list can address every circumstance or be foolproof, but it can provide a place to begin to formulate a plan for success.

## I. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

The job of law school dean is demanding.<sup>4</sup> It can promote unhealthy lifestyles. The calorie and cholesterol content of catered dinners, reception hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, and meals heavy on processed foods while traveling are hard on the waistline and arteries of a dean. Long hours at work, most of them sitting at a desk or

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy J. Heinsz, *Deaning Today: A Worthwhile Endeavor—If You Have the Time*, 31 U. TOL. L. REV. 615, 615-16 (2000); Norman Lefstein, *Reflections of a Long-Serving Dean*, 34 U. TOL. L. REV. 109, 109-10 (2002).

<sup>4</sup> See generally, George W. Prigge, *Just What Does a Dean Do? The Collective Wisdom of Many Law Deans*, 39 U. TOL. L. REV. 361 (2008) (cataloguing decanal duties as described in a series of articles on the topic).

conference room table, are hard on the body of a dean.<sup>5</sup> An inbox consistently full of complicated problems nobody else could solve can be hard on the mind and emotions of a dean.<sup>6</sup> The pressure imposed by law school constituencies and by deans themselves can be corrosive to the personal relationships and job satisfaction of a dean.<sup>7</sup> In short, being a dean is hard and it can be hard on the dean.<sup>8</sup>

In no small part because of these challenges, the tenure of a modern law school dean is often short.<sup>9</sup> Decanal tenures can readily end on unfavorable terms.<sup>10</sup> It need not be so.<sup>11</sup> Real success as a dean is facilitated by longevity.<sup>12</sup> Longevity is impossible if a dean does not maintain their physical, mental, and emotional health, however. Being a healthy dean alone may not result in being a successful dean, but it is highly unlikely that an unhealthy dean will be a successful dean. At least not in the long term.

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<sup>5</sup> See e.g., Edward R. Laskowski, M.D., *What are the Risks of Sitting too Much?*, MAYO CLINIC: EXPERT ANSWERS (Aug. 21, 2020), <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/sitting/faq-20058005> (suggesting tools to ameliorate negative health impacts of sitting for long periods); Harvard Health Publishing, *The Dangers of Sitting*, HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL BLOG: PLAIN (May 23, 2019), <https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/the-dangers-of-sitting> (describing research on health impacts of excessive sitting).

<sup>6</sup> Paul D. Carrington, *Afterword: Why Deans Quit*, 1987 DUKE L. J. 342, 356-57 (1987).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 358-59.

<sup>8</sup> Being dean is, in this respect, much like the life of many in the practice of law who face significant time pressures and the potential of unhealthy lifestyles. Jeena Cho, *Balancing Your Body Budget*, 107 A.B.A. J. 13, 13-14 (2021). Much of life in and around the law imposes time pressure, stress, and an impulse to place the wellbeing of a client or issue over the wellbeing of the lawyer themselves. *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Carrington, *supra* note 6, at 342 (describing the average decanal tenure as less than four years). Literature about decanal leadership often suggests that the typical decanal tenure is frequently solitary, poor, nasty, and brutish in addition to short. *Id.*; see also Kent Syverud, *Three Principles of Effective Deaning*, 31 U. TOL. L. REV. 751, 752-53 (2000).

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., Kent Syverud, *How Deans (and Presidents) Should Quit*, 56 J. LEGAL EDUC. 3, 3-5 (2006) (describing ways in which deanships can end unhappily).

<sup>11</sup> Glen Weissenberger, *Letter to a New Dean*, 39 U. TOL. L. REV. 399, 399-400 (2008).

<sup>12</sup> R. Lawrence Dessem, *Maybe Deaning is Not for You*, 39 U. TOL. L. REV. 261, 265 (2008).

It is therefore necessary that deans take care of themselves.<sup>13</sup> This means doing certain things.

A successful dean must keep time for physical activity. Without a healthy physical platform, no dean will have the energy or capacity to carry out their many duties.<sup>14</sup> Whether that is running, swimming, yoga, or whatever physical activity sustains the dean, it must be a scheduled commitment on par with other necessary activities. Some savvy deans conduct walking meetings or find similar ways to combine physical activity and their duties.<sup>15</sup> When thinking about how to combine physical activity and decanal duties, it is important not to simply let the job take over another part of your life. But making required tasks healthier by organizing them around a walk, not just another half-hour sitting at a conference table, can be a good thing. However an individual dean does it, they must find time for physical activity. A productive and healthy dean's mind must be housed in an active, healthy body.

A new dean must also develop the habit of tending to their mental and emotional health. For many, this will come from time with prayer, meditation, or other mindfulness practices.<sup>16</sup> Just like regular physical activity builds stores of energy, mindfulness practices need to become routine in the easy times so that the dean can reliably draw on them in difficult times.<sup>17</sup> Deans are presented with the hardest problems, often involving strong emotions from those they are dealing with; it is necessary to have a deep personal store

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<sup>13</sup> A new dean should recognize and accept the idea of a "body budget" with positive and healthy activities making deposits and stressful activities making withdrawals. Cho, *supra* note 8, at 14. Much as with the financial budget of the law school, no dean can sustainably be in debt. *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Leaders who fall into poor physical condition readily fall into bad judgment. JOHN WOODEN & STEVE JAMISON, WOODEN ON LEADERSHIP 44-45 (2005).

<sup>15</sup> I have personally done this by purchasing a digital voice recorder and voice recognition software. This allows a long walk to be a writing session as well. The devoted block of time and mental clarity of a walk in the country with my dog, or early morning round of golf on the weekend, provides a good space to write speeches, columns for the state bar newsletter, and even initial outlines of academic articles.

<sup>16</sup> BILL GEORGE, TRUE NORTH 144-45 (2019).

<sup>17</sup> These practices are effectively deposits into the dean's "body budget," that allow forced withdrawals in more stressful times. Cho, *supra* note 8, at 13.

of mental and emotional strength to draw on in those settings. Building that store takes time and practice. A new dean must begin the work of developing a regular and reliable practice of mindfulness that works for them on day one.

A new dean must also preserve time for their personal relationships.<sup>18</sup> Spouses, significant others, children, and friends can get left behind in the time pressures facing the dean.<sup>19</sup> Destruction of personal relationships can lead to the destruction of a deanship.<sup>20</sup> If a new dean does not have the stability and support of strong personal relationships, a cascade of personal and professional collapse can ensue. Make time for personal relationships and make personal relationships outside the law school. As wonderful as it is to have a law school community that is “like family,” the law school community is not family.<sup>21</sup> Family provides a fundamental grounding and source of support that transcends the role as dean.<sup>22</sup> It is vital to have healthy and vibrant relationships outside your role as dean.

To succeed, a dean must also build the habit of rest. It is tempting to simply run with the throttle open because “that’s what the job requires.” There are certainly enough

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<sup>18</sup> Syverud, *supra* note 9, at 754.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Aynes, *Stone Soup: Thoughts on Balancing a Deanship and Family Life After Twelve Years as Dean*, 39 U. TOL. L. REV. 221, 222-23 (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Conversely the wise dean develops a practice of incorporating family into the “fun” part of being dean. *Id.* at 225-27. Athletics, alumni events, guest lectures, and other events where family can participate can become enjoyable and rewarding family time. My children have gotten to see appellate arguments, professional receptions, athletic events, and other “cool” opportunities that have expanded their horizons. Family is a “force multiplier” for the law school when alumni and friends interact with my family, seeing them as extension of me. It is important to have family consider and agree about their likely role when considering a deanship. Fulton, *supra* note 1, at 77-78.

<sup>21</sup> The same must inevitably be said of professional relationships with students, alumni, bench and bar contacts, and other professional relationships. Inevitably a dean will develop some true and enduring friendships from among these groups. But no dean should mistake professional relationships of necessity with true connections of friendship and family that are independent of their role as dean. The former pass and the latter endure. The latter also have the capacity to speak truth to a dean in a way that the former never will. Although both are necessary and important, it is equally necessary and important never to mistake the two.

<sup>22</sup> GEORGE, *supra* note 16, at 142.

activities to which deans can devote time to consume all their time. This is a short-sighted and unsustainable view, however. Rest is a necessary part of any healthy and productive life. Particularly a professional life.<sup>23</sup> Time given over to the restorative work of rest—real, quieting, recuperative rest—is transformative. All deans must, at the outset of their tenures, get command of how they need to rest and preserve the time and space to do so.<sup>24</sup> Without rest, the dean will be a star that will not burn long, even if it does appear to burn brightly.

Preserving physical and mental health, personal relationships, and time for rest are non-negotiable tools of success for a dean. Immediately upon taking the job they must be developed and made habits.

It is equally important to model this behavior as a leader within the particular law school community.<sup>25</sup> Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends notice what the dean does and how the dean acts. As important as self-maintenance is to be successful as a dean, it is also imperative as a leader. While an unhealthy workaholic dean sets a destructive culture for those around them, a dean who successfully incorporates balance and healthy practices shows the entire law school community that it is possible to do the same.<sup>26</sup> It is crucial to see the dean taking time to be healthy. For better or worse, the law school community will see and often emulate the dean. A truly successful deanship begins by offering an example of a balanced, healthy, sustainable lifestyle. It will build a healthy dean and a healthy community in which to serve.

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<sup>23</sup> Rest includes creating the time and mental space for personal solitude. Mental solitude provides the separation necessary to sustain healthy relationships and a space for self-discovery and creativity necessary to real leadership. ANTHONY STORR, *SOLITUDE: A RETURN TO THE SELF* 21 (2001).

<sup>24</sup> Deans must create “restorative niches” that allow them to engage their dominant personality traits and recharge from those many aspects of the job that require them to pursue actions or act in manners that may make them uncomfortable. SUSAN CAIN, *QUIET: THE POWER OF INTROVERTS IN A WORLD THAT CAN’T STOP TALKING* 219-22 (2013).

<sup>25</sup> This modeling is important for alumni as well. An absence of work life balance is widespread in the practice of law. Cho, *supra* note 8, at 13. Seeing a healthy but busy dean can demonstrate to alumni in practice both the possibility and necessity of being healthy while being productive.

<sup>26</sup> WOODEN, *supra* note 14, at 44.

A healthy dean may not be a successful dean in the end, but being a successful dean requires being a healthy one. From their first days on the job, deans must build healthy habits for themselves, their loved ones, and their school community.

## II. DO WHAT YOU MUST DO

Facing a consistently overflowing inbox, one of the most important decisions for any dean, particularly a new dean, is what tasks to undertake, when, and in what order. A related decision is what tasks the dean will not undertake, either by delegating them or declining them.<sup>27</sup> As a new dean learns to budget their time to the tasks available, setting priorities and deciding which tasks belong to the dean and which to others is vital.<sup>28</sup> A new dean must focus on those things they must do and avoid the others that inevitably try to force their way onto the dean's agenda. New deans must build the personal and systemic discipline to do those things that the dean, not someone else, must do.

Any dean will have a combination of strategic, tactical, and ministerial tasks before them.<sup>29</sup> To say that they must do what they must do is not to say that they work only at the strategic level or that they take on the details of every important issue. Instead, it is to say that at any law school, and for any dean, there is a proper balance of where their attention and energy provide the greatest return or cannot tolerate the substitution of another. This will vary based on the institution and individual. It is crucial not just that the dean strike a balance of their duties and allocate their time and energy in a particular way, but that they do so as the result of deliberation and in light of their skills, the skills of

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<sup>27</sup> See Dessem, *supra* note 12, at 265 (describing the need to set aside a belief that any dean can “do it all”).

<sup>28</sup> See Syverud, *supra* note 9, at 754 (describing the importance of focus on key initiatives to succeed as dean as illustrated by the achievements of John Sexton at New York University). It also requires the dean to address the “faulty thinking” that any dean is irreplaceable or that they must sacrifice themselves to their job. Cho, *supra* note 8, at 14. In deciding what they must do, new deans need to start with the premises that they cannot and should not do everything for a variety of reasons, including competence, sustainability, and effective work allocations.

<sup>29</sup> Howard A. Glickstein, *A Dean's Survival Guide*, 34 U. TOL. L. REV. 75, 76-77 (2002).

those around them, and the resources and needs of their institution. Once the balance is struck, it is crucial to maintain it with those items requiring decanal attention at the front of the queue and other items delegated or disregarded.

How to thoughtfully strike this balance? New deans need to identify the balance particular to themselves and their school before they can answer. Leadership is highly contextual.<sup>30</sup> As a result, the tasks that require decanal attention can only be identified in light of the context of the school where that dean serves.<sup>31</sup> At a larger school, larger faculty and staff may require more focus on systems and structures; at a small school, personal relationships and action by the dean may be necessary and proper. A growing school may require greater attention to facilities expansion and fundraising.<sup>32</sup> A school somewhat stagnated may need a dean to focus on a new initiative to jolt the school to life. Operation within a public or private school will present different priorities of external relationships and governance. These and other characteristics of the school must be evaluated in light of the dean's strengths and weaknesses as well as those of other law school personnel and how each can be deployed. The balance is particular to each dean and school, but uniformly it is the task of the dean to identify and articulate that balance, to do so early in their tenure, and to constantly monitor and maintain the balance going forward.

Perhaps the most important thing a dean can do is set the agenda for himself or herself and the law school; failure to stick to those tasks that the dean is best suited to do is to lose control of both. A dean without control of the agenda does not control their time and effort. A dean who does not control their time and effort does not effectively control the

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<sup>30</sup> JOHN W. GARDNER, ON LEADERSHIP 38-39 (1990); JAMES MACGREGOR BURNS, LEADERSHIP 33 (2010).

<sup>31</sup> Successful leadership is based in significant part of identifying and adhering to core values in all actions. See John L. Carroll, *Value Based Deaning*, 40 U. TOL. L. REV. 327, 328 (2009). Individual law schools will, ideally, have their own well-defined group of values to guide the dean and the entire institution. *Id.* at 329-30. These values will be at least in addition to and potentially contrary to values of the legal academy more generally. *Id.* at 328-29.

<sup>32</sup> Fundraising is a crucial part of every dean's professional life. See Kenneth C. Randall, *The Dean as Fundraiser*, 33 U. TOL. L. REV. 149, 150-52 (2001).

most precious resources he or she possesses. The operational result will be a failure to properly advance priority initiatives, capitalize on key opportunities, or respond to key threats. Maintaining a clear sense of priorities and division of responsibility keeps the focus of the dean, and the entire law school community, on the tasks that best advance the law school.<sup>33</sup> Obvious as it may seem to have appropriate priorities and divisions of labor, it is all too easy, particularly at the start of a dean's tenure as they get to know the organization, not to do so.

New deans must identify what their school needs them to do. They must then have the discipline to focus on doing that. No dean can do it all, nor should he or she.<sup>34</sup> Every successful dean needs to decide what they do best to help their school thrive. Great deans figure that out early in their tenure.

### III. FIND A PASSION PROJECT

The tasks demanded of any law dean are legion.<sup>35</sup> Oppressive as that can be, it also provides tremendous opportunity for personal fulfillment. Within the broad headings of leadership, operational management, development, scholarship, and teaching there is some activity that makes each dean's soul sing. New deans must find their passion and make it a signature focus early in their tenure. There are both personal and institutional reasons for this.

From a personal perspective, a passion project is imperative as fuel and balm for the dean's store of energy and emotion.<sup>36</sup> A person who becomes a dean, or even

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<sup>33</sup> RAYMOND M. KETHLEDGE AND MICHAEL S. ERWIN, *LEAD YOURSELF FIRST: INSPIRING LEADERSHIP THROUGH SOLITUDE* xvii (2017) (citing Dwight Eisenhower's maxim that leadership to describe leadership as persuading others to embrace values the leader articulates as their own).

<sup>34</sup> Dessem, *supra* note 12, at 265.

<sup>35</sup> See *e.g.*, Prigge, *supra* note 4, at 367-68 (describing the various constituencies deans must serve and how as described in a series of articles analyzing decanal service).

<sup>36</sup> It is another potential source of deposits into the dean's body budget. Cho, *supra* note 8, at 13. Failure to identify and make deposits in the body budget early and often can deplete that budget to the point where making emergency deposits is not feasible. *Id.* The dean can become "body bankrupt" not simply "body overdrawn." This must be avoided.

considers it, is almost certainly a person energized by action, ideas, challenges, and engagement. Deans are not typically the relaxing and retiring type (much to the discomfort of their loved ones and themselves quite often).<sup>37</sup> While deans are commonly oriented to action and engagement, that common orientation manifests itself in a variety of ways. Some deans are profound introverts, energized by time in their library with research and scholarship or deep thought about the development of planning and management documents.<sup>38</sup> Some extrovert deans need regular personal contact with students, alumni, faculty and staff, external stakeholders, and others to come alive.<sup>39</sup> Some deans love focus on projects internal to their schools, while some find fulfillment in work on initiatives with their larger university, bar, or other external groups. While it varies, each dean will have one thing (the fortunate will have a couple) and one mode of working that truly invigorates him or her, that brings him or her joy, fulfillment, and reinvigoration.

It is a personal necessity for each dean to find his or her “thing” and build it into his or her allotment of time. Deans are forced to do many rotating tasks, sometimes at the same time: the scholarly dean must also work on development, the fundraising wizard must attend to internal operations.<sup>40</sup> Deans will need to use their different personality traits in different settings: the extroverted dean sometimes needs to lock themselves in his or her office, the introverted dean cannot entirely forego public events.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Aynes, *supra* note 19, at 222-23; Fulton, *supra* note 1, at 77-78. Which is not to say that one must be an extrovert to be a successful dean. See e.g., CAIN, *supra* note 24, at 2-7 (discussing the misperception that great leaders and innovators must possess extroverted personalities).

<sup>38</sup> Jane Byeff Korn, *The Dean as Introvert*, 48 U. TOL. L. REV. 297, 301-02 (2017).

<sup>39</sup> Whichever personality trait a dean possesses, they must build awareness of how they are most comfortable, the capacity to work outside their normal style of engagement, and practices to restore themselves through time in their preferred style to offsettime required in forms of engagement that may not come as naturally. Cain, *supra* note 24, at 208-15, 219-22.

<sup>40</sup> See Prigge, *supra* note 4, at 363-64 (summarizing the observations of many deans about the competing obligations all deans face).

<sup>41</sup> See Korn, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, at 301-02 (describing the ways in which introverted deans engage in “extrovert” activity and then find ways to recharge).

Truly, deans are asked to do it all along the way. Making time for the one or two things they love to do sustains deans in all the things they must do. It is necessary to sustain energy, enthusiasm, and perspective. If the solitude of scholarship invigorates them, a dean needs to block regular time to isolate away from his or her office for reading and writing. If teaching fills the dean's heart, he or she must keep himself or herself in the teaching rotation with the subject he or she is passionate about. If personal contact brings joy, the dean needs to build regular time for alumni relations, student engagement, or service on external committees. Whatever their passion is, a successful dean must recognize it, dedicate time to it, and let those around him or her know that this commitment is inviolable.

As important as it is personally, the passion project of a dean also advances institutional interests. What deans do gets noticed, both inside and outside the school.<sup>42</sup> Time spent teaching builds an institutional commitment to teaching and helps form the school's students.<sup>43</sup> Development work secures the financial future of an institution and maintains connections with alumni and friends of the school. Service on committees in the bar and university can improve the profession and demonstrate a commitment to service beyond the law school itself.<sup>44</sup> Scholarship can shape the fabric of law and demonstrate its importance to younger faculty and to external stakeholders who may give greater notice to the scholarship of a dean. What the dean does generally gets noticed; every dean needs to identify a passion project that those around them notice to the benefit of their school.

A passion project sustains the dean and advances the institution. To support themselves and their school, new deans need to find their passion early and build a system to engage it.

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<sup>42</sup> See Peter C. Alexander, *Law School Deans and The New Normal*, 46 U. TOL. L. REV. 251, 266 (2015) (describing the need for deans to lead by example on many fronts).

<sup>43</sup> Deans can find ways to support teaching and innovation in teaching through their engagement and support of teaching if not teaching classes themselves. *Id.* at 263-64.

<sup>44</sup> Janice C. Griffith, *The Dean's Role as a Member of the University's Central Administration*, 35 U. TOL. L. REV. 79, 83-87 (2003).

#### IV. EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Life as a law school dean is filled with variety.<sup>45</sup> In the most positive sense, “variety” manifests as engagement with a wide variety of people and issues in ways the use all the dean’s intellectual and emotional tools. In a more challenging sense, “variety” will present in the form of myriad unexpected disruptions and disasters. Whether members of the faculty or staff depart unexpectedly, facilities or infrastructure suffer damage from natural or human causes, or current events send shocks through the law school community that require a response, any number of unforeseen events will force their way onto the dean’s desk.<sup>46</sup>

Even the most prepared deans will encounter disruptions that they did not see coming. It is important to recognize this reality and make those preparations that can be made.<sup>47</sup> New deans can prepare for the unexpected in several important ways. First, a dean can implement the plans and systems necessary to meet most disruptions. Having current and clear continuity of operations plans, phone trees, remote work resources, and other protocols in place and understood prepares a law school community for disruption.<sup>48</sup> Even if it is impossible to know how disruption will come, it is possible to know that it likely will and to take steps to be ready. What is done in normal times can lay the

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<sup>45</sup> R. Lawrence Dessem, *Top Ten Reasons to Be a Law School Dean*, 33 U. TOL. L. REV. 19, 19 (2001).

<sup>46</sup> Certainly, any dean serving in 2020 felt the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic turning law school life, and life in general, upside down. ABA Young Lawyers Division, *Coronavirus Resources and Information for Law Students*, ABA YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION: CAREER TOOLS (2020), [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/young\\_lawyers/career-tools/coronavirus-resources-for-law-students/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/career-tools/coronavirus-resources-for-law-students/); Gabriel Kuris, *The Impact of the Coronavirus on Legal Education*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (June 14, 2021, 9:01 AM), <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/articles/the-impact-of-the-coronavirus-on-legal-education>.

<sup>47</sup> See, John D. Hutson, *From Admiral to Dean*, 35 U. TOL. L. REV. 101, 104-05 (2003) (describing how mission clarity and planning can produce better responses to unexpected circumstances); Chris Clearfield & Andras Tilcsik, *How to Prepare for a Crisis You Couldn’t Possibly Predict*, SUMMER 2020 SPECIAL ISSUE HARVARD BUS. REV., 128, 128-29 (2020).

<sup>48</sup> Marshall Goldsmith, *Preparing Your Company for a Crisis*, SUMMER 2020 SPECIAL ISSUE HARVARD BUS. REV. 44, 44-45 (2020).

groundwork to minimize the impacts of extraordinary events.<sup>49</sup>

Second, new deans should evaluate their crisis management skills and proclivities. Leadership response is critical during any crisis. Deans will set the tone, communicate key information, and organize an institutional response when their law school faces an emergency or unexpected challenge. Knowing personal proclivities, particularly under stress, is helpful to be ready to do these things. It is easier to be calm, clear, and confident if the dean knows their own mind and emotions.

Third, take the time to think and ask for help when the unexpected happens. Even the most extreme circumstances typically allow time to stop and think before responding. It is important to pause and think before acting, although the amount of time available may vary based on the nature of the event encountered. It is not necessary to delay just to delay, and it is important not to become paralyzed or indecisive.<sup>50</sup> In any crisis, taking time to gather oneself, think to the degree possible, and make a deliberate not simply reactionary response will make that response better.

Along with taking the time to think, it is important to take the opportunity to ask for help.<sup>51</sup> Most problems have been encountered before by someone else. As a new dean, connecting with other deans, especially those more experienced, is a practice that pays dividends in challenging

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<sup>49</sup> Preparation and cultivation of personal values and habits can produce necessary poise during critical moments of pressure. WOODEN, *supra* note 14, at 50-51; *see also* Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, & Marty Linsky, *Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis*, SUMMER 2020 SPECIAL ISSUE HARVARD BUS. REV., 11, 17 (2020).

<sup>50</sup> One of the best descriptions of this balancing of being thoughtful and decisive comes from legendary basketball coach John Wooden. He implored players to be “[i]nitiate quickly but not carelessly or in a hurried manner” on the court. WOODEN, *supra* note 14, at 36. That phrase captures the somewhat conflicting impulses necessary for thoughtful initiative. Wooden notes that failing to act, or acting passively from fear of a mistake, is itself destructive. *Id.* It is the proper balance that is key.

<sup>51</sup> As with most aspects of what the dean does, setting the example of asking for help is itself important. Strong leaders demonstrate that asking for help and advice is not only permissible, it is advisable. BRENE BROWN, *DARE TO LEAD* 229 (2018).

times.<sup>52</sup> Taking the time to ask questions can produce invaluable insight from other law deans, as well as members of the larger university community and other mentors.<sup>53</sup> Take advantage of these resources and connections, particularly when responding to unexpected challenges. Two heads, or more, are better than one; especially in the face of a crisis.

To be sure, full preparation for the unexpected is impossible. It is the unexpected, after all. For example, who had just refreshed their pandemic response plan in early 2020?<sup>54</sup> Unexpected events are all but certain even if their exact nature and full impacts are not, however. The key is for new deans to invest the time in those preparations that can be made in good times. They will provide the foundation of a stable and successful response when the predictably unpredictable occurs.

## V. TAKE A STEP BACK

Law school deans must see the entire picture and take the long view. This may make them unique within their law school community. Others will have tremendous knowledge and passion within their areas of specialty but may fail to look beyond that specialty. Some may draw connections among a few areas or issues, but many will think more about immediate issues than the entirety of the law school's future. Deans do not have this luxury and safety.

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<sup>52</sup> See Blake D. Morant, *Reflections of a Novice: Four Tenants for a New Dean*, 40 U. TOL. L. REV. 385, 390-91 (2009) (describing the benefits derived from establishing relationships with other, more experienced deans).

<sup>53</sup> See JOHN WOODEN & DON YEAGER, *A GAME PLAN FOR LIFE: THE POWER OF MENTORING* 4-6, (2011) (describing the impact of personal and professional mentorship on leaders); see also MIKE MATHENY WITH JERRY B. JENKINS, *THE MATHENY MANIFESTO* 206-11, (2017) (describing the use of more experienced mentors when entering new fields).

Using silence and active listening techniques is also helpful to meet any difficult situation. James H. Fierberg, *Strength in Silence*, 107 A.B.A. J. 28, 28-29 (2021). Lawyers often do not excel at those techniques naturally and must be purposeful and persistent in their cultivation and application. *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> N.F. Mendoza, *Future-Ready Businesses Were Better Prepared for a Crisis Before the Pandemic, New Study Shows*, TECHREPUBLIC (July 23, 2020, 6:00 AM), [www.techrepublic.com/article/future-ready-businesses-were-better-prepared-for-a-crisis-before-the-pandemic-new-study-shows/](http://www.techrepublic.com/article/future-ready-businesses-were-better-prepared-for-a-crisis-before-the-pandemic-new-study-shows/).

Nobody else needs to consider the full scope and interconnection of law school issues that the dean does.<sup>55</sup>

As a result, one of the most important things any dean can do is develop an awareness of how everything fits together. Adjusting a faculty teaching schedule to facilitate scholarship may interfere with student electives and participation in extracurricular activities or complicate room scheduling. Taking a large gift from a corporate partner may address significant financial needs but may also disincentivize other donors, impact the perceived need for state support of a public school, or trigger backlash.<sup>56</sup> Adjusting office or classroom assignments to resolve a space issue today may interfere with expansion down the road. No issue stands entirely alone; deans must have the ability to see issues for what they are but also as they fit into the larger picture of the law school. From day one, new deans should build the habit of looking for connections and considering how any issue fits into the larger fabric of law school life and operations. It is a habit of great deans.<sup>57</sup>

To see the “big picture,” deans must also develop the discipline of thinking about immediate issues not only in connection with other issues of the day but the long-term

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<sup>55</sup> This is not to say that no other members of the law school community think about the big picture. See e.g., Lynne F. Maxwell, *The View from Above: How Appreciation for the Big Picture Can Benefit (Academic) Law Library Leaders*, 107 *LAW LIBR. J.* 477, 477-78 (2015) (describing how having a better understanding of the concerns of the dean can make law librarians more effective stewards of their libraries and the law school as a whole). Deans can build effective leadership deans who think about connections and act accordingly. *Id.* at 479. The point is that thinking holistically about the law school community, “seeing the big picture,” and making difficult decisions accordingly is uniquely the dean’s responsibility. No other law school community member is as pressed to think about everything in every decision as the dean. This provides opportunity to be sure, but challenge at the same time.

<sup>56</sup> See e.g., Ashley Ahn, *Hundreds Sign Petition Calling to Change New ‘Carey Law’ Name back to ‘Penn Law,’* *THE DAILY PENNSYLVANIAN* (Nov. 11, 2019, 1:49 PM), <https://www.thedp.com/article/2019/11/penn-carey-law-school-ruger-donation-renaming> (describing objection to name change honoring donor); Bill Chappell, *Univ. of Alabama Returns \$21.5 Million Gift; Donor Urged Boycott Over Abortion Law*, *NPR: EDUC.* (June 7, 2019, 1:24 PM), [www.npr.org/2019/06/07/730671823/univ-of-alabama-rejects-21-5-million-gift-donor-urged-boycott-over-abortion-law](http://www.npr.org/2019/06/07/730671823/univ-of-alabama-rejects-21-5-million-gift-donor-urged-boycott-over-abortion-law) (describing return of gift following political backlash).

<sup>57</sup> Don LeDuc, *Leadership*, 35 *U. TOL. L. REV.* 125, 128 (2003) (describing the importance of perspective for great leaders).

implications of any issue or resolution. Stated another way, deans must think not only in space but in time.<sup>58</sup> Every dean lives with the decisions of their predecessors; the decisions of every dean will affect their successors.<sup>59</sup> As a result, deans need to think about issues not only from the perspective of the current moment but also in terms of how that issue fits within the history and future of the law school. A truly visionary dean will make decisions that inure to the benefit of future deans and the law school in decades to come, not just in the here and now. This too requires a discipline of thinking that deans should seek to cultivate from day one.

To build enduring success a new dean must find the time and inclination to step back and consider the big picture and the long term. Deans must, in short, engage in strategic not only tactical thinking.<sup>60</sup> This necessity stands in the face of a host of daily challenges that encourage tactical thinking. Many issues can be resolved with nothing more than that. But uniquely within their law school community, the dean must recognize and focus energy on the issues and decisions that matter.<sup>61</sup> That requires stepping back from the immediate issue and moment to take a different view.

Leadership scholars Ronald Heifetz and Mary Linsky describe this stepping back as “getting up on the balcony.”<sup>62</sup> Their metaphor describes the process of removing oneself from the tumult of daily events to look at the picture holistically.<sup>63</sup> This requires a mental separation to not focus

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<sup>58</sup> *Id.* at 128-29 (describing the value of judgment and particularly timing in making decisions as a leader).

<sup>59</sup> See e.g., Kenneth C. Randall, *Longevity*, 37 U. TOL. L. REV. 127, 129 (2005) (describing the disruption of decanal turnover and the opportunity to implement lasting change by deans who achieve longevity in their role).

<sup>60</sup> LeDuc, *supra* note 57, at 127-28.

<sup>61</sup> See Dessem, *supra* note 12, at 265 (describing the need for deans to be patient and cooperative in advancing significant change).

<sup>62</sup> RONALD A. HEIFETZ & MARTY LINSKY, *LEADERSHIP ON THE LINE* 51-53 (2002). They contrast the holistic view of the balcony with the granular view of the “dance floor.” *Id.* at 51.

<sup>63</sup> Deans benefit in doing this from forced separation from the group to create the space for mental quiet that is necessary to avoid groupthink or lack of creative thinking that can fail to solve problems or even make them worse. CAIN, *supra* note 24, at 49-55. Introverted deans, or deans who take the time for solitude in their thinking, can help shake their institution out of fixed or false thinking. *Id.*

on any one detail so much as the aggregate situation.<sup>64</sup> It requires a mental separation from current events and established (or entrenched) ways of doing things to consider the entirety of possibilities. Perhaps more importantly, it requires an emotional separation to achieve a truly dispassionate assessment. The mentally and emotionally detached view from the balcony gives a dean a better picture of how to engage with the details of the moment. An exceptional dean must be able to move from this detached perspective to the engaged perspective regularly and purposefully.<sup>65</sup> Just as it is impossible to have a complete picture only from ground level, it is impossible to have the level of engagement necessary to make changes and drive action in the fashion a dean wants from above.

The dean is consistently challenged to see events from the dancefloor and the balcony. Others may not do so and may resist the dean's impulse to do so. As a result, it is important to develop the habit and techniques necessary to take a different view. From the start of their tenures, deans must develop the inclination and capacity to change their lenses and frames of reference to look at problems from a variety of perspectives, particularly with a long-term and holistic view.

## VI. PLANT TREES NOT FLOWERS

Transformative work takes time, patience, and the effort of an entire community, not just the dean.<sup>66</sup> Initiatives of the day come readily but have limited lasting impact. One of the key questions facing any new law school dean is whether their actions will have an enduring impact. It is easy to devote time to quotidian and ephemeral things.

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<sup>64</sup> Truly effective leaders move between the dance floor perspective of the moment and the holistic balcony perspective. HEIFETZ & LINSKY, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, at 53-54.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> See Dessem, *supra* note 12, at 265 (describing the need for deans to be patient and cooperative in advancing significant change). It is therefore also critical that any new dean hone their vision and their ability to communicate it in a relatable and inspiring way to their constituencies. See LeDuc, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, at 126 (describing the importance of vision for any effective leader).

Enduring impact is what every dean should seek. It requires a distinct mindset, however.

A helpful metaphor is to focus on planting trees, not flowers. Flowers are lovely, bloom quickly, but die in the fall; trees grow slowly, require steady cultivation, but provide shade and sustenance for generations.<sup>67</sup> The most transformative work involves planting trees, not flowers.<sup>68</sup>

This metaphor is an instructive guide to decanal life in several ways. First, deans must be thoughtful in selecting and pursuing a limited number of transformative projects. Trees cannot be planted everywhere, they must be spaced carefully, aligned with soil and climate, and of sufficiently hearty stock. Just so, the transformative initiatives deans undertake must comport with the culture of the community, align with available resources and interests, and be sustainable within the mission of the law school and parent university.

Second, planting trees requires an ongoing investment of adequate time and resources. Trees must be watered, staked, pruned, and protected against animals. Transformative initiatives likewise require a dean to commit to the steady, ongoing application of resources and attention necessary to nurture an important initiative, even absent immediate and obvious results. Developing a broad and committed donor base requires cultivating many alumni and friends through a variety of means over an extended period.<sup>68</sup> Developing a steady flow of diverse and talented student applicants requires the commitment of time and scholarship dollars, it will only be realized through a succession of incoming classes, and it must be protected against failure

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<sup>67</sup> As Thomas Gray reminds us in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*: “full many a flower is born to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air.” The flowers of near-term initiatives are not unimportant, but they are more readily missed by the observers of a law school community than the enduring nature of more significant efforts. Thomas Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* 19 (Artist’s ed. 1883).

<sup>68</sup> It also takes a dean who lasts long enough to tend the arbor for a sustained period. See Randall, *supra* note 59, at 127-128.

<sup>69</sup> See Randall, *supra* note 32, at 153-55 (describing the work of aligning school initiatives with fundraising plans and the time commitment of implementing those plans for advancement). See also, Prigge, *supra* note 4, at 365 (describing the need for extended and thoughtful cultivation of key alumni and friends over time to achieve real advancement).

even after implementation. Building and sustaining a productive, collegial, and diverse faculty requires time and resources for recruiting, professional development, and community building.<sup>70</sup> Enduring work takes time, energy, and commitment.

Third, a new dean must accept the reality that they may not see the fruits of their most important work.<sup>71</sup> If a new dean commits to planting trees, not flowers, it may be future deans who sit in their shade. The most significant development work requires cultivating relationships over decades.<sup>72</sup> Often the dean who realizes the gift is the one with the good fortune to be in office when the gift matures. A dean may devote time to recruiting and developing faculty whose greatest teaching and scholarly accomplishments come years later. Necessary restructuring of personnel or programs may earn the dean who implements them only scorn while setting the law school on a new trajectory for success over many coming years. Deans must define success at the outset of their tenure as advancing the best long-term interests of the law school and accept that their work may not always be recognized and rewarded in the moment.

This commitment to the long term requires tremendous discipline and patience. But it will produce work of enduring, transformative impact.

## VII. PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE

One of the most important things new deans must determine is how to get themselves effectively out into the

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<sup>70</sup> See e.g., Kevin Washburn, *Elana Kagan and the Miracle of Harvard*, 61 J. LEGAL EDUC. 67, 74-75 (2011) (describing then Dean Kagan's initiatives to build an engaged and collegial faculty environment at Harvard Law).

<sup>71</sup> ANN M. GARRIDO, REDEEMING ADMINISTRATION: 12 SPIRITUAL HABITS FOR CATHOLIC LEADERS IN PARISHES, SCHOOLS, RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS 44 (2013). Garrido describes a "poverty" in administrative work of measurable results and visible outcomes. *Id.* The academic leader must have faith in their vision, their process, and the certitude if the eventual outcome if not their opportunity to see it. Like Moses, the dean may often see the wilderness, not the promised land. *Deuteronomy* 31:1-2.

<sup>72</sup> Randall, *supra* note 59, at 128.

world. Putting yourself out there as dean is important.<sup>73</sup> Being visible and engaged consistently pays dividends for deans.<sup>74</sup> Visibility and engagement include many audiences.<sup>75</sup>

It is hard to place too much weight on time invested with students.<sup>76</sup> Students are indisputably the lifeblood of any law school and engagement with them is engagement with the school's present and future. Even if time demands do not allow a dean to teach regularly, a dean can teach students in a variety of ways.<sup>77</sup> Coffee chats, meetings with student groups, guidance about professional development and placement, and even passing conversations in the hallway are opportunities for deans to teach.<sup>78</sup> New deans should plan to invest time in regular, if not always regularly scheduled, student engagement. It will pay dividends for the students, for the school, and for the dean.

On the other end of the spectrum, engagement with alumni pays different dividends. Alumni are important allies for any law school.<sup>79</sup> Alumni are important messengers for the law school. They can talk to legislatures for public law schools. They communicate with boards of governors for private law schools. They inevitably talk to other influential members of the bench, bar, and business community for the law school. Although their voices are powerful, alumni are inherently somewhat disconnected from the law school in time and space. It is therefore critical for new deans to build the habit of getting in front of alumni to exchange information and ideas about the law school. Alumni provide

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<sup>73</sup> Stated another way, good things happen when deans get out of their offices and into the world. Rodney A. Smolla, *Nineteen Rules to Dean By*, 36 U. TOL. L. REV. 183, 188 (2004).

<sup>74</sup> Melissa A. Essary, *Confessions of a Dean: Barriers and Breakthroughs to Communication*, 40 U. TOL. L. REV. 333, 333-34 (2009).

<sup>75</sup> *See Id.*

<sup>76</sup> *See e.g.*, Sarah Copley, *John D. Feerick, A Student's Perspective*, 70 FORDHAM L. REV. 2153, 2153-54 (2002) (describing the deep impact of Dean Feerick's regular and supportive engagement with students).

<sup>77</sup> *See* R. Lawrence Dessem, *Ten Things Deans Can Do with Students*, 35 U. TOL. L. REV. 45, 45-48 (2003) (cataloguing informal ways in which deans can educate and mentor law students).

<sup>78</sup> Essary, *supra* note 74, at 340.

<sup>79</sup> Lawrence Ponoroff, *From Water Closets to Alumni Relations: A Few Reflections on Where the Dean's Time is Most Productively Deployed*, 36 U. TOL. L. REV. 137, 139 (2004).

a crucial focus group to help take the school's story into the world, provide insight into the needs and concerns of the legal community, share input on areas to expand or refine the law school curriculum, boost placement efforts, assist with recruiting, and provide necessary philanthropy.<sup>80</sup> The new dean must establish good alumni relations practices from day one.

More than other individuals, the dean can be a manifestation of the law school in the world. To see the dean is to see the law school for many.<sup>81</sup> When people have a chance to share their thoughts about the law school with the dean they feel an increased connection, even if their ideas are not accepted.<sup>82</sup> Building the time to go into the world as dean is building time for marketing, feedback, development, and many other vital aspects of the law school mission. It becomes easy to get stuck in a silo, trapped in both time and space.<sup>83</sup> Successful deans must find time to break free of confinement and into the world, and they must do so from the beginning of their tenure. In fact, starting at the start is perhaps the most important time as new deans introduce themselves and their vision to the community of their school.

Putting yourself out there starts with being present. A dean needs to be visible at events. Alumni need to see the dean at bench and bar functions. Students need to see the dean in the hallways, in formal listening sessions, at student-sponsored events, and teaching whether formally in class or informally in mentoring conversations and other ad hoc engagements.<sup>84</sup> Faculty need to see the dean at faculty meetings, in presentations of in-progress scholarship, and other locations where the dean can be both an administrative support and a colleague. The dean needs to take the

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<sup>80</sup> *Id.* at 139-41.

<sup>81</sup> *Id.* at 138-39 (describing the higher degree of respect and importance assigned to law deans in comparison to many other academic leaders).

<sup>82</sup> *Id.* at 146. Conversely, alumni who are ignored are likely alumni who are angry or disengaged. The same is true of most members of the law school community for that matter. The dean has little currency more valuable than their time and engagement. Deciding early in the tenure as dean how to spend that capital is crucial. *See supra* notes 27 to 29.

<sup>83</sup> Leaders who are stuck in silos produce organizations with problems of silos and lack of cooperation. PATRICK LENCIONI, *SILOS, POLITICS, AND TURF WARS* 175-77 (2006).

<sup>84</sup> Dessem, *supra* note 77, at 45-48.

initiative to go to the members of the law school community on their turf.

By putting themselves out there to the entire law school community, the dean promotes a culture of engagement that makes law school life more productive and enjoyable. Creating opportunities for scholarly exchange and community allows faculty to be more productive.<sup>85</sup> Opportunities for student engagement helps to develop professionals skilled in creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive profession. By setting an example of availability and engagement from the start, new deans help to build law school communities of energy, engagement, and shared vision and values.

Put yourself out there from the start of deanship. It is imperative to give a deanship life.

## VIII. FIND JOY IN THE MOMENT

Being a law school dean comes with the cost of significant pressure and obligation. Reading much of the cautionary literature about decanal service, it is possible to forget that the job also carries great reward.<sup>86</sup> It is also possible to lose sight of the rewarding aspects of the job in the course of doing it. Particularly in the early days of being dean when the curves of learning, adjustment, and initiative are all quite steep. Keeping a high pace makes it challenging to pause and appreciate the joys of the moment, but it is necessary to do so.<sup>87</sup>

Finding joy in the moment of decanal service is less technically necessary to success than the other ideas presented above. A successful dean can somewhat mechanically set priorities and goals, develop structures and systems, and execute the work. That approach is not the most fulfilling or best course, however.

The better course is to find joy in the moments of service as dean. All the moments. Even the difficult ones. As with the other priorities discussed above, finding joy is a

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<sup>85</sup> Washburn, *supra* note 70, at 74-75.

<sup>86</sup> Dessem, *supra* note 12, at 268; Howard A. Glickstein, *A Dean's Survival Guide*, 34 U. Tol. L. Rev. 75, 75-76 (2002).

<sup>87</sup> Smolla, *supra* note 73, at 189. Joy breeds hope. Hope sustains an academic leader in their work and the personal sacrifices necessary to it. GARRIDO, *supra* note 71, at 172.

matter of choice and discipline for a new dean. Joy exists, but the new dean must choose to accept it. As Joseph Campbell notes, “[w]e can choose to live in joy.”<sup>88</sup> A better deanship starts with the choice to live in joy as dean.

Finding joy in the work will sustain a new dean (or an old one) by reminding them why they sought the job to begin with. Quite likely, a dean became dean because he or she is passionate about the law, education, and working with talented and intelligent people who share those interests.<sup>89</sup> Finding joy in each moment of the work will lead the dean to see opportunity and success, not only obligations and deficiencies, within the law school community.<sup>90</sup> From this viewpoint, deans can readily and regularly celebrate their school and members of its community to the benefit of all.<sup>91</sup> Finding joy will sustain the dean and their community by extension.

Joy is contagious. Choosing to live in joy as dean will call the law school community to do the same. Deans who find joy in their work will lift other members of the community up, which increases their investment in the

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<sup>88</sup> JOSEPH CAMPBELL, *THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES* PAGE (YEAR). In context, Campbell’s quote tells us more about the profound nature of this choice. His full sentence reads, “[w]e cannot cure the world of sorrows, but we can choose to live in joy.” Making the choice of joy in the face of, not the absence of, sorrows and challenges is the important thing. Choosing joy from a favorable position is an easy choice, choosing it in the face of difficulty, even sorrow, is an important one.

<sup>89</sup> Dessem, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, 19-20; James P. White, *A Tribute To Dean Robert A. Stein: Former Dean of the University of Minnesota Law School*, 80 MINN. L. REV. 27, 31 (1995) (describing the passion of Dean Stein, widely regarded as a model of professionalism and achievement as a law school dean, for the variety of opportunities presented to a modern law school dean).

<sup>90</sup> See Howard W. Brill, “*For Such a Time As This*” *Bible Verses For Law School Deans*, 2006 ARK. L. NOTES 125, 126 (2006) (finding inspiration to view each day as dean as a gift of opportunity in *Psalm 118:24* “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”) Truly every day as dean is a gift. The most successful deans accept these gifts for what they are, even if sometimes they are not exactly what the dean would have chosen for themselves.

<sup>91</sup> See *e.g.*, Dessem, *supra* note 77, at 53 (describing the benefits of celebrating student achievement). The same benefits are reaped whenever a dean can support and encourage students, faculty, staff, alumni, or any member of the law school community in their work and celebrate their achievements.

school and strengthens the culture of the school.<sup>92</sup> Any school succeeds through its people, not in some abstract form. A dean who lives in joy and pulls others to do the same creates a community that will thrive in good and bad times.<sup>93</sup> A community of joy is a community that can endure. As with many other things, the dean's example will be noticed and often emulated. A dean who chooses to live in joy creates a community that chooses to do the same.<sup>94</sup> While this is the least technically necessary choice of action for a new dean, it is potentially the most important and transformative.

## IX. CONCLUSION: YOUR JOB AND YOUR TIME

The first year as dean is a unique time. It contains comparable measures of uncertainty, opportunity, confusion, excitement, and planning. While any dean will evolve, the choices made in the first year will be a foundation for what comes after. A solid foundation is a platform for enduring success; a weak foundation carries the risk of eventual collapse.

Based on the experiences and observations of many, the ideas above can provide a solid foundation for a successful deanship. Whether each idea fits each dean or deanship will require individual consideration, but each merits such consideration. As a new dean, it is most important to take the time to consider these and other thoughts on what makes a successful deanship and thoughtfully build a personal foundation to achieve that success.

The deanship is yours. The time is now. Embrace both.

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<sup>92</sup> Care for the members of their community is central to the success of any leader. JIM MATTIS & BING WEST, *CALL SIGN CHAOS* 12 (2019).

<sup>93</sup> Setting a tone of joy in the work inspires all within the community that what they do matters and is part of something which is important and larger than themselves. WOODEN & JAMISON, *supra* note 14, at 179.

<sup>94</sup> Deans who do this have the potential to unleash a community that operates with the operating principle that "life is great." This stage of organization is more fully described as the summit of "tribal leadership." DAVE LOGAN, JOHN KING, & HALEE FISCHER-WRIGHT, *TRIBAL LEADERSHIP: LEVERAGING NATURAL GROUPS TO BUILD A THRIVING ORGANIZATION* 25 (2008).