

Overcoming Challenges

The entire country has been impacted in a dramatic way by the onslaught of COVID-19. The nation's economy has been tested, our health care system has been under assault by this new and unpredictable virus, and the entire educational community has had to re-imagine how classes had to be taught. Students had to return home and connect via Zoom while professors adapted their curriculum to this distance learning environment virtually overnight. While we all hope and pray that this fall will mark the beginning of a return to some normalcy, we should be thankful that we had access to technology that allowed us to finish the semester in an orderly fashion.

We all should be grateful for the extraordinary efforts of the staff and faculty who were daily being called upon to make decisions and consider various scenarios dependent upon ever-changing information and a virus that has created challenges that even our experts could not fully anticipate.

And while we must always confront whatever challenges are placed before us, we must never lose sight of the many things for which we should be thankful. Let me mention just a few. Of all the law schools in the country, Washburn University School of Law experienced the most dramatic improvement in the U.S. News and World Report rankings. And we are rapidly approaching the finish line with respect to the fundraising efforts for the new law school building. The initial renderings of the new building are creative, beautiful, and will afford us the opportunity to expand in the future. Also, we recently celebrated via Zoom the over 100 years of combined service provided by three of our distinguished professors. Professors James Concannon (and former long term Dean), David Pierce and Bill Rich leave behind a remarkable legacy that will not soon be forgotten. And while we are sad to see them retire, I would suggest that what drew them to Washburn Law, and what kept them here for well over 100 years, is what will sustain the Law School in the future.

In this issue of the Washburn Lawyer, we are recognizing the contributions that Washburn Law graduates have made within the judicial arena. And while I mentioned the challenges faced by our economy and our schools, the judiciary was impacted as well. Who could have imagined that we would experience the need to cancel trials for several months, suspend judicial deadlines and statutes of limitations. We should be thankful that the judicial branch was being guided by the steady hand of Chief Justice Marla Luckert, one of those we recognize in this issue.

Recently, Dean Pratt authored a thought-provoking and deeply personal letter about the state of race relations in our country. Topeka and graduates of Washburn Law School have been at the forefront of the efforts to achieve racial equality, and I hope we can continue to provide a platform, support, and leadership for the kind of thoughtful discussion that is so desperately needed.

Finally, it has been my privilege to serve as Board Chair the past two years, and I am pleased to be able to pass the torch to **Lynn McCreary, '94**, who I know will serve the Alumni Association exceedingly well. Please continue to stay connected to Washburn Law through your membership and generous support for our programs and events.

Sincerely,



S. Lucky DeFries, '78

Past Chair, Washburn University School of Law
Alumni Association Board of Governors



The Washburn University School of Law Alumni Association Board of Governors was first created in 1952. Our mission is to promote the interests of the Law School by engaging our alumni through service to the Law School and the Association, participating in alumni events and programs, remaining connected, and assisting to further scholarship funding. Appointments run July through June.

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