

REFLECTIONS ON SHARED LAW SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

*Jessica W. Berg and Michael P. Scharf**

I. INTRODUCTION

OUR law school began the 2013-2014 academic year after a summer that featured immense budget challenges, staff layoffs, and an entering first-year class dramatically smaller than any in recent memory. The season's sole bright spot was that our faculty had overwhelmingly approved an innovative, more experiential curriculum developed over the previous several months.¹ The new approach would require major changes and increased work, but the faculty recognized the urgent need and came together to make it happen.

In the fall of 2013, however, the news grew even grimmer. New admissions applications were running well behind 2012's already-anemic numbers. Then, the law school encountered an additional unexpected hurdle when a highly publicized lawsuit was filed against the then-dean, prompting him to take a leave of absence in mid-November 2013.²

All of us—faculty, staff and students—were reeling. What should we do? What *could* we do? University President Barbara R. Snyder and Provost W.A. “Bud” Baeslack III had the official call on what came next. But we also knew that the school's ability to recover depended not on any one person or even a handful of individuals. If we were going to emerge from this crisis, we *all* had to take part; in short, we would have to save ourselves.

To their credit, the president and provost immediately recognized this point. Rather than unilaterally make decisions and issue pronouncements, they actively engaged the school community in every step of the process. Faculty and staff responded with enthusiasm and have continued to do so ever since.

What follows is an account of how the two of us fashioned and managed a co-dean model at a unique moment in the life of our particular law school. It

* Jessica Berg (JD/MPH) is Interim Dean at Case Western Reserve University School of Law and the Tom J.E. and Bette Lou Walker Professor of Law. Michael Scharf is also Interim Dean at Case Western and the Joseph C. Hostetler–BakerHostetler Professor of Law. We thank Timothy Bierer for providing valuable research assistance on the history of co-CEOs, and University VP for Marketing and Communications, Chris Sheridan, for her editorial suggestions.

1. The new curriculum adds to the first year a client contact component, a leadership module, and a skills program focusing on both litigation and transactional skills. The second year involves a deep dive in one of seven concentrations. We have added an experiential capstone requirement to the third year, which can be fulfilled by taking a full-time, semester-long clinic or externship in the United States or abroad.

2. In March 2014, the dean voluntarily resigned to return to the faculty.

offers many lessons for those considering dual leadership approaches of their own, but we begin with a major caveat: context matters.

Our experience suggests that a shared deanship *can* succeed within an academic unit, but the prospects of any particular partnership depend enormously on three factors: the individuals involved; the actions of the central administration; and the response of the school's own constituents. In our case, we were incredibly fortunate to be paired with one another; work with university leaders willing to act strongly on the school's behalf; and encounter a school and alumni community absolutely dedicated to doing all they could, together, to advance the institution.

II. THE POTENTIAL OF PAIRING

In the days after the dean announced his leave, the provost placed telephone calls to every member of the law school's tenured faculty and most of the senior staff. He asked all of us about the leadership qualities we considered essential at this juncture, as well as the individuals we thought might possess them.

The concept of co-deans was most actively championed by Edgar A. Hahn Professor of Law, Sharona Hoffman. As chair of one of our earlier dean search committees, she had become convinced that no single person fully possessed all of the qualities needed to lead the institution, and, even if such a person existed, there simply wasn't enough time for one person to perform all of the duties well. In 2006, Professor Hoffman's perspective found validation; the University of Minnesota Law School announced a two-year dual appointment, saying that the two faculty members "bring tremendous and complementary strengths to this important role."³

Seven years later, Professor Hoffman believed that our school's unusual circumstances warranted a similar, non-traditional approach. In an informal conversation with one of us, she even went so far as to suggest the two of us should be the appointees.

"No, seriously," was the response.

"I *am* serious," Professor Hoffman replied.

Today, Hoffman insists she was one of several who proffered the concept of co-deans. That may well be. But she undoubtedly is the person primarily responsible for our respective consideration of the idea and of one another as potential decanal partners.

In the moment, we each reflected separately. Comparing notes later, we discovered that our thoughts ran along eerily similar lines. Both of us had served on the faculty for more than a dozen years. Each of us specialized in an academic area where the school had particular strength.⁴ And, from years of

3. *The Law School Welcomes Interim Co-Deans*, U. MINN. L. SCH., <http://www.law.umn.edu/news/interim-co-deans.html> (last visited Apr. 12, 2015).

4. Jessica Berg has earned national recognition for her scholarship in the field of law and medicine. She is co-author of a book on informed consent published by Oxford University Press,

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faculty meetings and work together on committees (including a dean search committee), we each recognized that we shared a real affection for the school and confidence in its potential. In fact, each had suggested the other when the provost asked about potential acting leaders.

We also had obvious differences. One of us had, in addition to teaching, served for the past 19 years as managing director of a national nonprofit that provides counsel and assistance to foreign governments and international organizations.⁵ The other had a joint appointment at the school of medicine and so had extensive experience with the culture and practices of an organization in another discipline. One of us held an associate dean position within the law school, while the other had co-chaired the effort to develop and secure approval of the new curriculum. One of us had previously been a candidate for the dean's position; the other never even considered the possibility.

Our two main questions were: Would the other be willing to do it? And, how would it actually work?

We did not have long to ponder. Over a few days, the provost sounded out each of us about the idea of co-deaning and potential pairings. Finally, we learned that we would, in fact, be the appointees, and that the announcement would come that afternoon. The president emphasized that we would not be "seat-warmers"; in fact, she made clear that the school's circumstances demanded that we move boldly on multiple fronts. But we would not be on our own, she assured us. The university's central offices would lend support from marketing and enrollment, to budget and planning. More importantly, the university would invest additional financial resources in ensuring that potential students recognized the great strength of our academic offerings.

The involvement of the president and provost made an enormous difference that day and every day since. We never had a moment where we doubted that either supported us or the ability of the school to overcome its challenges. That spirit extended to leadership across multiple other university offices; we not only felt as though people wanted the school to succeed, but that they would *do* all they could to help make sure it did.

And yet, as we stood in the front of a law school lecture hall overflowing with faculty and staff, we each felt an enormous weight of responsibility. We had worked closely with many in the room for more than a decade. We all had supported one another through tragic life events and celebrated each other's personal and professional successes. Now, the two of us had agreed to try to steer the institution through one of its most challenging times. We wanted to inspire optimism but, at the same time, acknowledge the gravity of the moment. We wanted to move forward but also keep what was great. Most of all, we

and her articles have appeared in the top journals in the field of medical ethics and law and medicine. Michael Scharf is author of 17 books in the field of international law, including 3 that have won national book of the year honors.

5. Information about the Public International Law and Policy Group is available at *PILPG*, PUB. INT'L L. & POL'Y GROUP <http://publicinternationalallawandpolicygroup.org/> (last visited Apr. 12, 2015).

wanted to engage everyone in the room. We needed them all for this turnaround to succeed.

III. ALL-HANDS EFFORT

Rather than go directly to the office the next morning, we decided to meet at one of our homes. We needed uninterrupted time to discuss how we would work together and what we considered the school's most urgent needs. Among the first steps we agreed upon was scheduling joint meetings with each member of the faculty and of the school's senior staff. Some might have seen this choice as needlessly time consuming; after all, we knew our colleagues well. But this was a unique time for the law school, and for us as new leaders. We thought it important to hear what our colleagues thought.

In retrospect, those sessions proved to be among our most important and valuable investments of time. We discovered something new about every colleague, gained deeper insight into his or her current activities and future aspirations, and heard an overwhelming message of commitment to help. In fact, one of our colleagues closed the meeting by saying that he so liked what he heard that he was going to stop at our chief development officer's office on the way out. We later learned he had made a will commitment to the school on the spot.

Meanwhile, our alumni leadership swung into action with the energy and efficiency of a veteran political campaign organization. As one of her first acts after the announcement, President Snyder contacted local alumni leaders and asked if they would host receptions to introduce us to our northeast Ohio graduates. Within a week, we had three scheduled and enjoyed strong turnouts at each. A few days later, we spoke at the school's annual fall alumni luncheon. Attendance from graduates and faculty was huge, and two of those same alumni leaders took to the podium to speak with great passion about the promise of the school and our potential as co-deans. We could not have asked for a more positive, constructive response and continue to feel immense gratitude to everyone involved.

Back on campus, one of our highest priorities involved halting our devastating admissions slide. Nearly every U.S. law school had been subject to a nationwide decline in applications, but ours had some unique challenges. One of our first steps, then, involved connecting the school's admissions leaders with university Vice President of Enrollment Management Rick Bischoff, his Director of Recruitment and Strategic Initiatives, Jonathan Wehner, and Vice President for Marketing and Communications Chris Sheridan. Over the previous three years of Bischoff's leadership, undergraduate applications doubled, selectivity improved by a third, and academic quality (SAT, GPA, and top 10% class standing) had soared. With the central administration's financial support, we embarked on a multi-pronged campaign that sought to raise awareness among potential applicants of our new curriculum and strategic strengths (health law, international law, and intellectual property), growing employment success, and deep faculty involvement in securing internships and jobs for our students.

At the same time, the provost directed his Vice President for University Planning, Chris Ash, to assist with our administrative and financial work. Our

school's longtime chief financial officer had accepted a position at Duke University a few weeks before the dean stepped down, so the position was vacant when we assumed our new roles. Ash not only helped immeasurably in clarifying our financial condition but also led the successful search for our new CFO. Similarly, Deputy Provost Lynn Singer and Vice President for Human Resources Carolyn Gregory spent countless hours working with us and answering questions about personnel and policies.

Every one of these individuals already had extraordinarily demanding full-time university roles. The way that they so graciously invested significant time into the law school's needs speaks volumes about their individual characters, as well as the culture of Case Western Reserve University. One of the key reasons co-deaning worked in this instance is their tireless efforts on the law school's behalf.

IV. LESSONS FROM THE CEOs' SUITE(S)

In the increasingly complicated and challenging climate with which law schools are faced, deans find themselves managing everything from teaching and scholarship to fundraising, marketing, and developing new revenue streams. In short, the role increasingly involves skills previously thought to reside more squarely in the business sector. There, conventional wisdom has long reflected Napoleon's maxim: "better one mediocre general than two brilliant ones."⁶ More recently, though, co-CEOs have begun to appear as a viable and occasionally enormously successful model.⁷ True, we have seen some high-profile misses,⁸ but the co-CEO model has succeeded at many successful corporations, including NovoNordisk, Samsung, Motorola, Whole Foods, Chipotle, Bed Bath & Beyond, American Eagle Outfitters, Deutsche Banc and, most recently, Oracle.⁹

A recent study¹⁰ of 111 major companies with co-CEOs, undertaken by Stephen Ferris, a Finance Professor at the University of Missouri's Trulaske College of Business, found that:

- Among the companies surveyed, 54 of the co-CEOs had "experience complementarity," while another 50 had "education

6. Jennifer Pellet, *Are Two CEO's One Two Many*, CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Jan. 1, 1999), <http://chiefexecutive.net/are-two-ceos-one-two-many>.

7. See Russ Banham, *Co-CEOs: Are Two Better than One?*, CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Apr. 2, 2012), chiefexecutive.net/co-ceos-are-two-better-than-one-2.

8. Examples include Goldman Sachs, Research In Motion (the maker of Blackberry), and Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, to name a few. See Elizabeth Woyke, *RIM CEOs Balsillie and Lazaridis Step Down as COO Takes Top Post*, FORBES (Jan. 22, 2012, 10:02 PM), <http://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabethwoyke/2012/01/22/rim-ceos-to-step-down-as-coo-takes-top-post/>; Richard Feloni, *Why Major Companies Like Oracle, Whole Foods, and Chipotle Have 2 CEOs*, BUS. INSIDER (Sept. 19, 2014, 10:38 AM), <http://www.businessinsider.com/why-major-companies-have-2-ceos-2014-9>.

9. See Feloni, *supra* note 8.

10. See generally Matteo P. Arena, Stephen P. Ferris & Emre Unlu, *It Takes Two: The Incidence and Effectiveness of Co-CEOs*, 46 FIN. REV. 385, 397 tbl.3 (2011) [hereinafter Ferris].

complementarity,” providing them “a broader set of experience and ideas from which to chart a strategy or make a decision”¹¹;

- Length in position did not vary significantly by co-CEOs or single CEOs¹²; and
- Companies that transitioned from a traditional single-CEO leadership to a co-CEO structure experienced a statistically significant positive reaction from the market.¹³

As instructive as this data is, experience also shows that intangible factors strongly influence the result of dual-leadership initiatives. Jack Zenger, head of the leadership research firm Zenger Folkman, pointed to the traits of the leaders involved: “It takes great discipline to consult when appropriate, be decisive when needed, and not blow up the arrangement when one’s partner has violated an aspect of the arrangement.”¹⁴ Bill Gladstone, who shared the co-CEO title with Ray Groves for two years at Ernst & Young, put it this way: “If you have the right relationships and confidence in the other person’s views and positions, it can be done.... You need to have two people with a clear mutual understanding about how you should move the firm ahead and who will sublimate their egos to a certain extent.”¹⁵

Neither of us knew this literature when we began as co-deans. Instead, we harkened back to respective experiences collaborating with co-authors or in other co-leadership roles. We discussed our visions for the school, and found them remarkably similar: We both believed that all law schools, including our own, needed to revamp programs to prepare graduates more effectively for the rigors of actual practice. We saw our own new curriculum—in particular, its heavy emphasis on experiential education—as a way to position our school as a leader in legal education. And we both felt that promoting the new curriculum, as well as our nationally ranked specialty areas, would be essential to recruiting more students.

We also recognized that a productive partnership begins with building trust. No matter how positive our first days, we knew we needed to guard against the adage, “[a]sk two people to share and one person will want to share just a little bit less.”¹⁶ From the start, then, we committed to give one another wholehearted allegiance and support. We would give the other the benefit of the doubt in any

11. Banham, *supra* note 7; Ferris, *supra* note 10, at 388.

12. Ferris, *supra* note 10, at 388.

13. *Id.* at 405-08. The Ferris study also documented that companies typically use the co-CEO structure in five types of situations: (1) as a transition after a merger (20%); (2) in the context of a family-owned business whose head is nearing retirement or wants to bring on a professional executive to manage the growing business (25%); (3) when a company has co-founders (15%); (4) as an interim measure during a leadership change (9%); or (5) when the co-CEO model meets the particular needs of the company, including attracting highly qualified CEOs with children (31%). *Id.* at 394 tbl.1.

14. Feloni, *supra* note 8 (internal quotations omitted).

15. Pellet, *supra* note 6 (internal quotations omitted).

16. Mark Athitakis, *Can a Co-CEO Structure Work?*, ASS’NS NOW (Sept. 9, 2013), <http://associationsnow.com/2013/09/can-a-co-ceo-structure-work>.

potential conflict and raise concerns early. It was fine to differ on matters—in fact, we knew our decisions would be better when we talked through our divergent perspectives—but we also needed ground rules for resolving disagreements. When possible, we would defer the decision for a day and see how our opinions evolved. Or we would ask a senior colleague or staff member to provide a perspective. And, when all else failed, we agreed that the person who did not feel as strongly about the issue would defer to the other. Over time, we even identified buzzwords that telegraphed a strongly held position—“My gut is telling me we should do X,” or “My ‘spidey sense’ is really tingling over this one.”

Another source of insight came from our experiences as parents—chief among them, the importance of a united front. Within hours of the announcement of our appointment, the school’s Director of Information Technology, Tron Compton-Engle, created a joint email address (lawdeans@case.edu) to ensure that we both received and issued every communication. In addition, people received the same response regardless of whether they made a request of one or both of us, because we always communicated with each other before announcing a decision.¹⁷ Finally, the check-and-balance inherent in joint decision-making helped defuse potential perceptions that a negative outcome had more to do with personal bias, past history, or snap judgment, rather than the actual merits.

In this context, it probably comes as little surprise that the notion of artificially dividing dean duties—for example, having one “external” and one “internal” leader—held little appeal to either of us. So much needed to be done, and nearly all of it crossed both sides of that imaginary line. Over time, we have developed certain spheres of presumptive responsibility.¹⁸ But the president and provost had emphasized that we were jointly responsible for the overall success of the school; therefore, we both needed to understand and participate in all aspects of its management, strategic planning, and representation.

In addition, we both wished to bring to the school a more collegial and transparent style of leadership. Starting with our initial meetings with faculty and senior staff, we committed to be candid about the school’s challenges and to ask others for ideas and assistance. When we made a recommendation or decision, we explained the context and our rationale. And, whenever possible, we directly shared information with faculty.

As we prepared for the 2014-2015 budget, for example, we presented all of the current year’s data to our faculty—and also sought their perspective on how we could best control costs. We ultimately cut more than \$700,000 from this year’s spending—a move that involved limiting faculty raises, reducing the size of faculty summer writing stipends, cutting faculty research and travel budgets, and trimming faculty administrative supplements. Every one of these choices

17. For more formal communications, we use a joint Google document to draft, revise, and edit memoranda to the faculty from the two of us. This joint drafting process helps us refine our shared vision and strategies for implementation.

18. For example, Jessica often takes the lead on human resources and endowment issues, while Michael often takes point on marketing, communications, and international matters.

was difficult, but it helped that our faculty colleagues understood why cuts were required, and had a voice in deciding which we should make.

V. EXPONENTIAL ADVANTAGES

One of the most positive elements of our co-dean experience involved the range of benefits involved in sharing leadership equally. Some benefits were obvious—we literally can be in two places at once—but even those obvious benefits had greater impact than we might have expected in light of the school's needs. Between November and June, we traveled separately to 22 cities, and made joint trips to Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. We personally recruited students at 50 colleges and universities and met with more than 500 of our graduates across the country. Admissions and alumni engagement were among our top priorities, and our schedule left no doubt that we were determined to make progress on both. At the same time, however, when one of us traveled, the other was almost always present and visible in the building. Similarly, the ability to divide the work when necessary made an enormous difference. Between the two of us, we called 600 admitted students within 48 hours of their offers of admission.¹⁹ And, since we could split the time on the road, the co-dean structure enabled us each to continue teaching, which has helped us keep a finger on the pulse of the law school and remain accessible to students.

Other lessons proved more surprising. For example, some might expect that the consultative decision-making process would mean delays in providing responses. With modern technology, we almost always were able to call, email, or text one another, and could usually obtain a near-instantaneous reply. For larger issues, we found that co-deaning actually accelerated the process. For us, the act of discussing an issue ended up bringing focus and speeding deliberations. And, once we made a decision, we had greater confidence that we considered fully all of the possible alternatives and implications.

In addition, the model helps alleviate the sense of isolation individual leaders sometimes experience. As equal partners, we share all information. When we face the most delicate, difficult, and heart-wrenching choices, we encounter them together. We can talk honestly about our reactions, even our uncertainty, and then engage together in finding our way to the best possible outcome.

This advantage extends beyond sharing the burdens of leadership. It also makes us better at it. We have a built-in sounding board, someone who can correct a misinterpretation in the moment or chide us when we speak too long or inadvertently use the singular pronoun. Sometimes it is as simple as defusing tension with a shared laugh at an absurd situation or a quiet vent after a particularly challenging interaction. In short, co-deaning helps each of us maintain a more even keel.

Finally, we have discovered that two heads really are better than one. We have complementary skill sets and educational backgrounds, coupled with a

19. Galen J. Roush Professor of Law Craig A. Nard, the leader of our intellectual property efforts, assisted with our calls by contacting those students who had expressed interest in IP law.

common enjoyment of brainstorming and problem solving. The cross-pollination of expertise and experience has helped us be more creative and effective in moving forward on new initiatives and identifying ways to improve existing functions.

VI. BY THE NUMBERS

As much as we have relished working together, we both recognize that results matter most. Fortunately, spring 2014, brought a wealth of positive news. We had been encouraging our faculty to intensify their efforts as “headhunters.” When our audited employment numbers were reported in March, we learned that those efforts had helped the class of 2013 achieve a 6.5 percentage point increase over the previous year for overall employment, and an 11-point jump in the percentage of graduates employed in positions that require passage of the bar exam.²⁰ Shortly thereafter, we learned that our health law ranking climbed to third in *U.S. News & World Report’s* annual rankings.²¹ International law ranked 15th,²² while our overall school standing improved by four places.²³

Perhaps our most striking success came in admissions. By early February, our increased marketing and new enrollment outreach strategies began to show positive effects. Throughout the spring the numbers continued to improve, and our faculty, students, and alums proved tireless in making follow-up phone calls to admitted students to help “seal the deal.” By season’s end, our applications had increased by more than 60% over the previous year our selectivity and yield rates improved dramatically,²⁴ and we ended up enrolling a class 50% larger but with the same median LSAT and a better median GPA than the previous year. By contrast, nationwide applications, selectivity, and enrollment had declined for a third year in a row.

Finally, on June 30, we received remarkable news about our annual fund. It is, as one of our university trustees likes to observe, “the canary in the coal mine”—that is, an early warning of ill tidings or initial indication of more promising days to come. This year, for us, the figure was the latter—an 11% improvement over the goal set by the former dean and university, and the second-

20. Our overall employment nine months after graduation for the class of 2013 came in at 91%, and our bar-required employment was 83%. In July 2014, *The National Jurist* reported that Case Western Reserve had the 10th highest increase in employment among all law schools this year. Rebecca Larsen, *Largest Employment Gains by School*, NAT’L JURIST (July 15, 2014), <http://www.nationaljurist.com/content/largest-employment-gains-school>.

21. *Health Care Law*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP., <http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/clinical-healthcare-law-rankings> (last visited Apr. 12, 2015).

22. *Frederick K. Cox International Law Center*, CASE W. RES. U. SCH. L., <http://law.case.edu/Academics/AcademicCenters/Cox.aspx> (last visited Apr. 12, 2015).

23. *Law School Rankings Increase*, CASE W. RES. U. SCH. L., <http://law.case.edu/Home/Trending/tabid/251/vw/1/ItemID/304/Default.aspx> (last visited Apr. 12, 2015).

24. The percent of applicants we admitted decreased from 49% in 2013 to 33% in 2014—our lowest acceptance rate in years.

largest amount in the history of the school.²⁵ In light of the challenges the law school faced in 2013-2014, this result is in some ways our greatest cause for hope. Our graduates truly believe in their law school, so much so that they did not simply stick with us in tough times—they became even more active and generous. All of us—every member of our faculty and staff—are committed to demonstrating that our graduates' confidence in the school's future is well placed.

VII. NEXT STEPS?

As the end of the academic year approached, President Snyder and Provost Baeslack returned to meet with faculty. The dean had chosen to resign in March to return to the faculty, and our title had transitioned to "Interim" from "Acting." Now it was time, the president said, for those who had experienced the past several months firsthand to let the university's leaders know their preference for next steps. Should Case Western Reserve launch a dean search right away?

We were not present for the small group sessions the president and provost hosted with faculty and senior staff in the subsequent days. But several colleagues were kind enough to share what they had said, and the provost later summarized the comments. Altogether, two themes had emerged: First, what the school needed most at that moment was stability. A dean search now would bring a new round of uncertainty to a community that had endured so much already. Second, our colleagues cited an emerging sense of momentum within the school, a true cooperative, can-do attitude across every constituency. They did not want to see anything alter that positive trajectory, including a transition in leadership. Bottom line, the provost told us: Any (external or internal) process for a dean search would be pushed back a year, which meant it was likely that we would continue to lead together for at least two more years.

When we agreed to become acting deans in November, no one knew how long our stints would be. It could have been a few weeks, a few months, or maybe until the end of the academic year. It had not occurred to either of us that the appointment might stretch into 2016. But, as we dug into the job and began meeting with graduates across the country, we found our own senses of commitment growing. Every one of those alumni encounters inspired us, while those with potential students proved unbelievably energizing. On campus, the pieces of the new curriculum were coming together beautifully. Law firms and other potential externship and internship providers responded to our requests with enthusiasm. And individuals and firms that had declined visits for years, decided to give us an audience.

In short, we felt as though we were just getting started. We had gleaned new ideas from conversations with our alums, leaders at other law schools, and

25. At the same time, one of our graduates made a \$3 million capital campaign donation to endow our Intellectual Property Center. See Karen Sloan, *3M Gift Means Growth for Case Western's IP Center*, NAT'L L.J. ONLINE (Sept. 15, 2014), available at <http://www.nationallawjournal.com/id=1202670093769/3M-Gift-Means-Growth-for-Case-Western-s-IP-Law-Center?slreturn=20150312221948>.

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our own colleagues within the school and broader university. We had begun to understand better our respective strengths and started to structure conversations and meetings to take advantage of those distinct skills. And, as gratifying as this year's gains had been, we now saw areas where we knew we could make yet more improvements.

Most importantly, though, the members of our school community had more than followed through on their November pledges to pitch in however possible to help support the school. In fact, even with the news of modest salary increases, many of our colleagues made significant contributions to the annual fund. Such dedication and mutual support is humbling to see and makes us even more committed to continuing as co-deans.

As much as we have learned over the past year, we know that we have many more lessons to master. Just as important, though, we recognize that we will face none of them alone. Alumni, faculty, staff, students, and the university leadership all stepped forward at critical junctures last year. Their efforts enabled the law school not only to survive, but achieve beyond all reasonable expectations. Our chief goals for the year ahead, then, are to capitalize and expand on the progress of the past year; to find ways to maintain that engagement, enthusiasm, and optimism; and, of course, to continue to attract promising new students and inspire our alumni community.

A unique confluence of events and individuals made this experiment in co-deaning possible and, in turn, allowed it to succeed. The two of us will keep communicating with one another and with all of our stakeholders. We will continue to share information and ask advice. And, most of all, we will rely on one another for insight, support, and, on occasion, a hearty disagreement that comes down to gut instinct—or a tingling “spidey sense.”

We are grateful for the support of university leadership, the engagement of alumni, and the dedication of our faculty, staff, and students. Like the faculty and staff who spoke with the president and provost in spring 2014, we also feel a strong sense of momentum and are eager to see what we can accomplish together in the coming year. Without a doubt, the double-dean model is unusual. But for this school, at this time, we believe it has provided an incomparable opportunity to fulfill the ambitions articulated in our law school motto: “Leading the Way in Legal Education.” And, as the synergies that emerged last year grow, we just might also meet the exhortation of the university's tag line: “Think beyond the possible.”²⁶

26. On August 18, 2015, Case Western Reserve University announced that Jessica Berg and Michael Scharf were appointed permanent Co-Deans of the Law School on a five-year, renewable contract.