



An Interview with
Cardozo Dean
David Rudenstine

David Rudenstine, Dr. Herman George and Kate Kaiser Professor of Constitutional Law, has been at Cardozo since 1979. He was appointed dean in November 2001, just a few weeks after the Law School kicked off its 25th anniversary year and terrorists made a devastating attack on our country. With these episodes in mind, Cardozo Life editor Susan Davis sat down with Cardozo's fifth dean to learn what's on his agenda and where he sees his greatest challenges.



SUSAN DAVIS: After September 11, you said that being dean of Cardozo seemed an even more compelling challenge than before. Do you think the role of law schools in our country has changed or become more relevant since 9/11?

DAVID RUDENSTINE: September 11 did help make more evident the significant roles that law schools and lawyers play. They are both essential in influencing the social, political, and ethical fabric of our country.

We Americans have always taken our liberties very seriously, but we often forget that lawyers are central in shaping order and liberty in a very complicated society like ours. They have played that role since the republic was founded in 1789. Although I heard many students say that their studies seemed insignificant or irrelevant during the days immediately after the World Trade Center disaster, I think the better view is that becoming a lawyer is important and will serve the individual and the society well.

DAVIS: Do you think that the Law School has been responsive to the needs of students in understanding that balance between security and freedom?

RUDENSTINE: Trying to understand that tension is something that law schools address all the time. So much of what we do every day is directly related to how we as a society organize ourselves, how we harness dynamic and complicated forces so as to preserve freedom and liberty. Legal education plays a very special role in

defining and sustaining a general culture that vigorously tries to mesh our concerns for security and liberty.

DAVIS: Upon being appointed dean, you said you were touched and inspired by the many congratulatory notes you received.

RUDENSTINE: It was particularly satisfying to get notes from folks with whom I have not had any contact for quite a while. I received a very large number of letters and emails from our graduates, some of whom took classes with me. Many recalled particular moments or episodes, and it was gratifying to hear that my appointment as dean had special meaning to them. Through me, they felt a fresh connection to the Law School and their days at Cardozo.

DAVIS: How did it feel going from a professor to being dean?

RUDENSTINE: The transition feels natural and comfortable. I have hopes and ambitions for the institution, and it's particularly exciting to be in a position where I can realize them.

DAVIS: Are there many challenges that you want to tackle?

RUDENSTINE: Of course, many! The faculty is like a dynamic engine that's been pushing the School for a long time. I certainly want to help them feel as if their energies and ambitions are supported and affirmed. I also want to be responsive to the hopes and dreams of our student body—to address the issues they have now regarding their daily lives at school and those they will face after they graduate.

It is essential also that Cardozo be an important touchstone in the lives of its alumni—a place of personal significance where they continue to have meaningful experiences. We need to celebrate our graduates more. They are individuals of exceptional achievement in diverse and wonderful endeavors. Their careers are a source of pride for us, and we should trumpet their remarkable, collective successes and contributions.

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DAVIS: Do you have a plan for Cardozo to be more involved in the community?

RUDENSTINE: I am eager to position Cardozo as a place where important ideas related to law and public affairs are generated, discussed, and evaluated. For example, I would like Cardozo to use its resources and facilities to sponsor and facilitate debates on contemporary social issues so that the public can better understand contemporary controversies: What is actually at stake? What are the value choices and real-world remedies? This semester we held panels on Enron, the Yahoo! case, and torture as a method to find terrorists—all to explicate current issues that are relevant to the law and our everyday lives.

DAVIS: What qualities do you think make Cardozo's character unique?

RUDENSTINE: Uniqueness is a tough standard. However, we do things here that give us distinct stripes. First, we try to help our students become truly fine lawyers. We do that by providing them with exposure to legal doctrine, lawyering skills, and legal theory. We are unusual in that way. Especially so in that we have many professors who are committed to legal theory in a way that is intense, high level, and exciting, and they bring this passion into the classroom. Our clinical programs and lawyering opportunities are particularly strong as well.

So, on one day our students are getting hands-on lawyering experience—how to interview, marshal evidence to build a case, how to negotiate or mediate a dispute, how to stand before a judge who is grilling you in a very challenging way. On the next day, they will be discussing legal philosophy and jurisprudence with an expert in that subject. We combine these aspects of the law in a dramatic and important way. This doesn't make us unique, but does make us special.

For a long time most people thought that the law was unrelated to and sovereign and independent from disciplines like philosophy, history, economics, sociology. Then, at the turn of the century, there was far more openness to the idea that law was closely and intimately interrelated to other disciplines. At Cardozo we take that

lesson seriously. We try not only to have it reflected in the research and writing of the faculty, but also to address it in particular courses. Our faculty is known nationally for taking significant and relevant ideas from other disciplines and incorporating them into legal studies. This enriches the scholarship and writing of our professors and makes the courses they teach that much richer.

DAVIS: And what about the opportunities here for hands-on legal training?

RUDENSTINE: I think we need an integrated and comprehensive approach to lawyering opportunities. We have a wonderful Intensive Trial Advocacy Program and terrific clinics. But some students don't want to do a clinic. I would like all our students to gain some exposure to more aspects of lawyering so they are adequately prepared for the demands of the profession.

DAVIS: In recent years the effects of globalization and a more international world community has had an impact on Law School curriculum, programs, and discussions. Do you see that increasing since 9/11?

RUDENSTINE: Absolutely. This spring, for example, the Floersheimer Center is sponsoring a conference with a



post-9/11 theme related to tolerance, fundamentalism, security, and liberty. For next year, we are talking about holding a conference on the important and controversial idea of universal jurisdiction and a world court. Some professors have altered their regular courses in light of 9/11, and this spring we are offering a special course on Civil Liberties and National Security.

DAVIS: One of the chief roles of a dean, and one of the more time-consuming challenges, is to raise funds. What specific needs at the School have you prioritized for funding?

RUDENSTINE: No institution of higher learning is worth its salt if it seeks to fund its entire educational program solely on the back of tuition. It just cannot be done. The expense of a meaningful and exciting education outstrips tuition charges here and at the leading law schools of America.

An important challenge is to enhance our endowment and annual fund. This effort will have to fall upon the shoulders of our graduates, board of directors, parents, and friends in the broader community.

We are in the midst of a capital project for which we need additional support as well. The renovation of our lobby and library is expensive. There is a whole variety of new programmatic and faculty initiatives that we need to develop and enhance. Our nationally ranked Intellectual Property Law and Alternative Dispute Resolution programs have managed to achieve their accomplishments on a shoestring. One can only imagine what the professors who direct these efforts could do if their programs were endowed and more money was available to them.

DAVIS: And what about more monies for scholarships?

RUDENSTINE: We especially need additional funds to help students who have a commitment to public service to realize their professional goals and ambitions.

At the moment, the cost of a legal education at Cardozo is over \$45,000 a year once you add tuition, books,

housing, food, and miscellaneous expenses. Many of our students, and it is true also for law students around the country, are graduating with enormous educational debts. A student may want to do public service work with the federal, state, or city government or at a non-governmental organization or a classic not-for-profit, however, salaries in these jobs are not going to allow them to pay the rent, put food on the table, and discharge their loans.

These days there is a lot of pressure on law schools to find a way to give grants to students so they can complete their legal studies with less loan obligation. Law schools are also under increased pressure to develop a loan forgiveness program so that students will have their indebtedness decrease by a certain percentage for each year that they engage in public service work. In addition, we need to support summer jobs in the public sector so that our students can make important contacts and gain critical experience.

This expensive agenda is very important. Everyone in America benefits from having qualified, able, and ethical students pursue public service.

DAVIS: We are celebrating our 25th anniversary and now boast more than 7,000 graduates. What message do you want to share with these men and women?

RUDENSTINE: Cardozo's achievements are remarkable. Few, if any, would have imagined that so much could have been accomplished so quickly. Our history is the consequence of many influences including our graduates' tenacious ambitions, their commitment to the highest values I hope for and expect great and exciting things of Cardozo. I am fully confident that the future will be as rewarding and engaging as the past.

We now need to remain true to our deepest values and sustain a spirit of generosity and ethics. These qualities stir our students, graduates, and friends. Their presence will continually enrich and refresh us. They will help to make Cardozo stronger and more vibrant than it is today. ■

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