

February 17, 2007

President's Announcement on Dean Smolla

On behalf of the entire University, I welcome Rodney A. Smolla to our community as the next dean of the School of Law. Washington and Lee University's School of Law is known for its excellent academic standing, its dedicated faculty and staff, and its commitment to preparing lawyers who exemplify the best in the profession. We are honored that its future will be in the hands of Dean Smolla. He is a distinguished scholar and author, an outstanding teacher, an attorney who has argued in front of the leading courts in the land, and a proven administrator known for his collegial and creative leadership.

Washington and Lee University is committed to advancing the Law School's position as a leader in American legal education. The University has made a commitment to Dean Smolla to pursue the core elements of the strategic vision for the future of the Law School that are currently in the process of being formulated, including commitments to maintaining the small student body size, increasing student financial aid, adding new faculty and administrative positions, pursuing creative curricular innovations, particularly for the third year of the Law School experience, creating new permanent and temporary faculty chairs, and addressing space needs. The University has agreed to a plan to add additional professional positions to the Law School in the coming two academic years, including permanent funding for a new clinical faculty position in the 2007-08 academic year, two new administrative positions (one dedicated to Law School Development and one for a purpose to be determined), and additional faculty positions consistent with the strategic plan beginning with at least one in 2008-09 and at least one in 2009-10.

As the chair of the search committee, I extend my deepest appreciation to those who served in this very important capacity. The members included from the Law faculty, Bob Danforth, Mark Drumbl, Margaret Howard, Lyman Johnson, Mary Natkin, and Scott Sundby; from the undergraduate faculty, Lucas Morel; from the Law staff, John Keyser; from the Law Council, Jessine Monaghan; from the Board of Trustees, Robert Grey and Ray Hartwell; and from the student body, Juliette Syn '08L.

I also wish to thank the students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the School of Law for their commitment to the process and for their assistance throughout the search. Dean Smolla will have the privilege of working with a highly talented and devoted group of individuals who care deeply about the School and about legal education.

And, finally, our thanks to Brian Murchison who has served and will continue to serve as acting dean until Dean Smolla joins us on July 1. Brian has not only tended to the School's daily business this year. He has advanced the School, continued to develop its curriculum, and prepared it for the next major phase of development. We are deeply grateful, not only for what he has accomplished this year but for doing it in his typically professional manner.