

**Association of American Law Schools**  
**Workshop for New Law School Teachers**  
**June 19, 2009**

**BIGGEST TRIUMPHS AND MISTAKES: JUNIOR FACULTY PERSPECTIVES**

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**I. Introduction**

**A. Understanding the Role of Professor**

- A composite identity that
  - allows for creative freedom,
  - requires initiative and self-discipline, and
  - provides many opportunities for personal growth, challenge, and satisfaction.

**B. The Subparts**

- Three main responsibilities are (1) teaching, (2) scholarship, and (3) service.
- The “unspoken” fourth responsibility--maintain (or at least strive for) work-life balance.

**II. Teaching**

**A. Preparation**

- Adequate preparation builds confidence and eases anxiety.
- Biggest mistake is to think you can ever feel 100% prepared when you're just starting out.
- Biggest triumph is to be able to appreciate your relative mastery of the materials, while recognizing that there's always more to learn.

**B. Curriculum & Pedagogy**

- There's a lot of room for creativity in your curriculum and pedagogy, even when following the general format of a textbook or teaching a standard doctrinal course.

- Biggest mistake is to stay wed to the curriculum or a pedagogical method if it is not working for the students. It's ok to make minor adjustments to enhance the learning process.
- Biggest triumph is to design a curriculum for your courses that teaches the law, engages the students in analysis, and builds the students' lawyering skills.

### **C. Style**

- Each professor brings her own style to her classroom.
- Biggest mistakes are to be inauthentic or to lose sight of how your style may affect the way students are learning in your classes.
- Biggest triumph is to develop a style that is authentic, approachable, engaging, and confident.

## **III. Scholarship**

### **A. Your Interests**

- Your interest in being a scholar is in large part why you entered this profession.
- Biggest mistakes are to ignore your personal and intellectual interests in your scholarship and to develop ideas and scholarship without the informed input of trusted colleagues.
- Biggest triumph is to turn your interests into meaningful scholarship.

### **B. Turning Interest into Scholarship**

- Read extensively in the area and find a question to answer, an illustrative comparison, an exposition of law that can clarify an issue, or some other way to fill a gap and make a scholarly contribution.
- Respond to calls for papers that are in your area of interest which can help define your focus.
- Talk to other scholars both inside and outside the field to help generate ideas.

### **C. Turning Scholarship into an Agenda**

- Once one scholarly idea has germinated, it will be easier to craft a scholarly agenda.
- Biggest mistake is to force an agenda before you have a good grasp of the scholarly area to which you want to contribute and before you've vetted ideas with others in the area.
- Biggest triumph is to craft a tight scholarly agenda on a topic that interests you, will interest law reviews, and that helps to craft your identity as a scholar in a particular area or on a particular issue.

#### **IV. Service**

- Service is a wonderful opportunity to build community at the law school and interact with other faculty, students, and administrators as part of a team.
- Biggest mistakes are either to take on too much before tenure or to suggest that you are generally unwilling to be of service to your students, the law school, and the university.
- Biggest triumph is to engage in service that makes a tangible contribution to the law school, exposes you to other faculty and administrators, fosters good relationships with students, and somehow reinforces your teaching or your scholarship.

#### **IV. Work-Life Balance**

- The responsibility of work-life balance is as important as any other.
- Biggest mistake is to ignore your personal life. Having one makes you more interesting, informed, and connected to the world beyond the "ivory tower."
- Biggest triumph is to find time to exercise, get through your summer reading list, and connect with friends and family, while mastering the other three responsibilities of being a professor. It's a tall order, but, the good thing is, once you do all this, you can write a best-seller on lifestyle. 😊

#### **V. Conclusion**

- Mark Twain's "Life on the Mississippi": Remembering what brought you to the profession.