

## **UVA LAW | Goluboff State Law School**

RISA GOLUBOFF: Good morning, everyone. So good to see you all here. It is now my privilege and duty to offer you the state of the law school. So I always try to think about ways to offer you the state of the law school that are not just a series of facts and figures without anything interesting to tie them together.

So I was thinking about how wonderful it has been this year to have everybody back in the building after COVID and the wonderful energy and joy that we felt and that I feel every year when we are able to be together for law alumni weekend. And so I thought I would frame my remarks as a little tour of the building. Now, don't worry, it's not going to be that kind of tour.

And some of you may know the building better than others, some of you may have gone to law school here. But regardless of how familiar you are, you have not had my tour. So my tour I have entitled The Dean's Extra Special Metaphysical Tour of UVA Law School Complete with Commentary and Annotation. And the goal is for me to share with you all of the amazing things that go on here that our faculty, students, and staff do all day every day, and the values that underlie them by taking you into the spaces where we do them. OK.

So we start in the front of the law school looking up at the inscription over the doorway. This was written by Professor Leslie Buchler in 1932, and it was originally emblazoned over the doors of Clark Hall. And I will say that when I speak to many of you who were in the Clark Hall building. You know these words by heart. They were emblazoned over Clay Hall when we moved here, and they are still there. But they're not quite as visible, and younger generations don't know them as well.

So here is what they read. "That those alone may be servants of the law who labor with learning, courage, and devotion to preserve liberty and promote justice. These words are so important. The law is not just a job. It is with medicine and theology one of the three learned professions. Our graduates are entrusted with knowledge and the license to practice law, and therefore obligated to profess--" profession, "--the values of preserving liberty and promoting justice to do public good."

And that is core to our mission alongside educating our students for their careers and creating new knowledge about the law as we just saw in judge-- judge-- Professor Laycock. And I'm going to share more below about how we discharge this responsibility to prepare our students for public service.

So from the front steps of the building, we head inside to the east side to Walter Brown Hall, where many of our classes take place and where most of our faculty offices are located. We have a brilliant and accomplished faculty, including many like Professor Laycock, who are leaders in their field.

We have long-serving faculty members, who many of you will recall from your own days. Dick Howard, class of '61, Richard Bonney, class of '69, John Jeffries, class of '73, Alex Johnson, John Harrison, Ruthie Bach, class of '88, as well as an incredible group of newcomers who are talented and diverse in every way.

Over the past three years, we have hired 20 new tenure line law faculty. And a faculty of 80, that's a very large number. They have a wide array of intellectual approaches, ideological perspectives, subject matters, methodologies, and career stages. And what they share is excellence, absolute excellence, and deep excitement about joining this wonderful community that is UVA Law School, where I hope they have all found the welcome and the intellectual stimulation that Doug just talked about.

From the classrooms in Brown Hall, we'll stop at our beautiful law library, which is a hub for research, scholarship, and study. So one day, one of my faculty members was in the library, and he pulled out a treatise, this old dusty treatise. And a piece of paper fluttered down from the middle of the treatise. And he read it.

And this is what it said. It said, "Dear weary student, hello! I hope this letter finds you well. May its contents bring you encouragement. And if it has, then I hope you will add your own piece of inspiration so that future wanderers may find this uplifting," signed, one of you. Others had added their own notes to the bottom of this letter over the years, including our professor who put it back in the stacks after he was done with the treatise.

And this story-- I often tell facts and figures, but I wanted to tell a few stories today in addition because I think the stories are really what tell you about the culture of this place that you can't only from the facts and figures. And what this shows you is how different a law school we are from the horrors you hear about the paper chase image of people tearing out pages and not sharing it with each other.

This is the exact opposite of that. This is a student who took the time to write to other students saying you're not alone, we're here, we're in this together. And our students are ambitious, and they strive for excellence. And they are deeply competitive, as are our faculty and our administration. Deeply competitive, but we do all that to be our individual best.

And we do it to be our best together, not alone. And our community makes us better together. And we do it for that community and not despite it. As you all know, our students meet their friends, their colleagues, their life partners here. And that is a result of our culture.

So speaking of our student culture, from Walter Brown Hall, we'll walk to the back of the law school to the HMZ's class of 1975 Student Faculty Center which houses Scott Commons. Scott Commons is the hub of our student life at the law school. You walk into Scott Commons, and it is buzzing with activity. And everyone is there, and they're eating, and they're having coffee, and they're chatting with one another. This is where student life happens.

And student life is unbelievably robust. We have approximately 70 active student organizations at the law school right now, including and plus 10 student journals, student academic journals. Our organizations span the gamut from subject matter interest groups to pre-professional groups to political groups to affinity groups.

And because of how diverse our students are and how boundless their energy, there are new student organizations popping up all the time. Newer groups range this year from the Plaintiff's Law Association to the Virginia Ski and Snowboard Society to the Orthodox Christian Law Student Association. And these organizations are crucial to the thriving of our students at the law school. And our students do it better than anybody else.

And they frequent-- I say that not-- I know that to be true in my heart-- but in addition, they frequently get regional and national recognition. Our Black Law Students Association won the mid-Atlantic chapter of the year again this year. That is the seventh time in recent years, including last year. And they also frequently win the National Chapter of the Year.

[APPLAUSE]

In addition, our Federalist Society hosted the National Student Symposium last year at which Governor Glenn Youngkin gave the keynote address. And they won National Chapter of the Year in 2020. So our student orgs-- this is what we do at UVA, student self-governance, right? So it's not a surprise that our student organizations are so robust and so vital. They've been especially active this year as we've come back from the pandemic and been fully in-person.

It's been my highest priority to make sure that we don't lose our culture, given that disruption. But I can only do so much from the top. And every time I met with student groups over the course of the year, I'd say, what are your priorities? I say, oh, we're going to come back after the pandemic. We're community-building after-- I was like, OK, we're all on the same page. This is great. We're doing the same thing that you're doing.

This year, this spring, for example, we just hosted or the North Ground Softball League just hosted the 40th annual softball league Invitational that was a three-day event for more than 1,000 participants from 37 law schools. And they also raised \$37,000 for our Public Interest Law Association and a local charity. All of our students are out at this event.

And I will tell you all of the law students from elsewhere are like, is this how you live all the time? We say, of course, it is, right? So our students are just-- they are institution builders. They're institution builders for themselves, they're institution builders for other law students. And you all know because you all become those institution builders wherever you go in your careers.

So the panel that's going to be coming up in a minute will have a lot more to say about the student experience. But I will just note that our internal sense of success on how wonderful our student experience has been validated once again this year in the most recent Princeton Review rankings. We were voted again number one for Best Quality of Life for the ninth year in a row. So that's pretty amazing.

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I do have some numbers to share with you. Yeah, just the best ones. We also remain in the top five in Princeton Review for Best Professors, Best Classroom Experience, Best Career Prospects, and Best Federal Clerkships. This unparalleled student experience is critically important to the thriving of our students and I think to their success as lawyers. It is what sets us apart and what continues to bring us the best and the brightest students year after year.

So I want to brag for a moment about our students as we hit the next stop on our tour, Slaughter Hall, which is where we're sitting this morning. And in particular, the Karsh Student Services Center, which is the newest part of the law school. You can see it in that atrium just behind us. This is where our student services offices are as well as the law school foundation.

I always like to joke with our students, the first floor of the Karsh Center is admissions. It's where we admit you, it's where we welcome you in. The second floor is career development. That's where we get you a job and launch you on your career. And the third floor is the foundation. Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

You know what we do in the foundation. OK. So I will start on the first floor with our terrific admissions and financial aid offices. Our first year class that is just finishing right now is the academically strongest we have ever had. They have a median LSAT score of 171 out of 180, and a median GPA of 3.94 out of 4. I know. They are also the most racially diverse, and they are also with this class at 50% women, the first time in our history that our student body has had more women in it than men by 24 students.

[APPLAUSE]

We had another very competitive admission cycle this year with more than 5,000-- sorry, there's something in my eye-- with more than 5,500 applicants. We won't exactly what the incoming class looks like for certain, but we they are looking equally talented and terrific.

We continue to spend a lot of time about how to make sure that this law school and the legal profession are open to all and to make sure that there is real access to the legal profession. And we launched a new initiative last year that I am super excited about called the Roadmap Scholars Initiative.

This initiative is open to first generation college students as well as students from low income backgrounds. We launched it last summer with major support from the Jefferson Trust, the Horace W Goldsmith Foundation, and alumni donors. Our first cohort of 12 rising juniors in college spent a month with us last summer.

They took classes from our regular faculty, they heard from leaders in the profession. Those students then went back to their campuses during the year this year, and took LSAT classes that we paid for. And they'll come back to us for a week of boot camp for law school applications. And then we have placed them in internships.

And they will spend their summers this summer in legal internships. And we have paid for all of it. It is all expenses paid plus stipends to enable them to forego employment income over the summer. And so this year we have our second cohort coming for the first time and our first cohort coming for the second time.

Let me know if you are interested in being an alumni mentor. Each of our students has an alumni mentor as well as a student mentor. Or if you might be interested in hosting an intern in a future year. Mark Jefferson is leading that program. And I saw that he just walked in. So you can talk to him if you are interested.

I have to say, we are just thrilled about this program. There are lots of pipeline programs out there, but none are as comprehensive as this one. Meant to provide all of the different kinds of resources that students with means have and students without means don't have, not only financial but personal, internships, networking, information about how the process works. We are very excited that it will pay dividends both for our law school and for the profession as a whole.

All right. The next stop on our tour is the second floor of Slaughter Hall. That is the home to our in-house clinical education program. Our clinical program is divided into in-house and external clinics. And we now have 24 different clinics. Some are litigation clinics, some are transactional clinics, some are policy clinics that enable our students to hit the practice world on the ground running with the experience, the integrity, the judgment, and the humanity that the best lawyers, UVA lawyers all have.

Now, the clinics share the second floor, as I said before, with our incredible career development team. And Kevin Donovan has just walked in. You'll hear more from him in a minute. We have three different and amazing career development offices dedicated to the private sector, public service, and clerkship. So Kevin we'll talk a lot more about this.

But I just want to let you know some of the extraordinary career outcomes that our students have achieved with the unbelievable help and support of our career development offices. So for the class of 2022-- we don't yet have the class of 2023 data-- 98.5% of our students were employed. 98.5%, right? That is just an incredible number. And the even--

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And even more incredible number I think is that more than 95% of our 2022 grads are in the creme de la creme of law jobs. The ABA categorizes all the jobs, and these are the full time, long term jobs requiring a law degree. We are number one in the country for placing our students in those jobs Thanks to Kevin and his shop.

[APPLAUSE]

We are also number five in the Elite 100, which are our students going to federal clerkships or large law firm jobs. The market is changing, the market is challenging, both what it looks like out there and how the process works in here. But our career development office is always innovating and always thinking how to stay abreast of it.

And our 1Ls and 2Ls who are in the market and where-- or rising 2Ls and 3Ls are already in the market. And those outcomes are looking terrific as well, even as the landscape is obviously shifting. On the public service side, over the last few years, we have seen an increasing number of graduates entering public service directly upon graduation.

They are prosecutors and public defenders. They're joining honors programs at the Department of Justice, the Department of Interior. They're entering impact litigation and legal aid, receiving national fellowships to do so. Important to that and going back to the Leslie Buchler quote, "above our doors," we have increased support for our students who are interested in public service by a lot.

We now have full public service scholarships at the front end, three-year scholarships for two students a year. So there are six in the building at any time. We have post-graduate fellowships that we have increased the size of. We guarantee summer funding to our students working in public service. And we've increased the amount of funding that we provide there as well. These are just the highlights. There are other things too.

And then probably most significantly, we have increased access to our loan forgiveness. And I often realize people don't what I mean when I say loan forgiveness. So for our students who are making \$80,000 or less, we pay back their entire loan payment for them while they are in jobs making those amounts of money. If they make \$100,000 or less, we pay a prorated amount from 80 to 100.

And that is most significant for our public service students who tend to make \$70,000 to \$80,000 per year. But it is also a safety net for all of our students. It applies-- we just had a gift recently that enabled us to fully endow this program, and it applies to any law student whatever they are doing, if they are making below those thresholds, we are paying their loans back for them while they are in those jobs.

[APPLAUSE]

Clerkships are the third leg of the three-legged stool of our career development program. And in 2022 and the 2022 term, our graduates were in 104 clerkships. We are number four in the country in recent years for federal clerkships and number five in placement of clerks at the Supreme Court of the United States.

It is really our goal to enable our students to enter the career paths of their choice and to do what they came here to do or that what they discovered they loved once they got there. And the career development support that we provide as well as the financial support that we provide for our graduates entering public service and the financial counseling we provide for all of them makes that possible.

All right our last stop-- don't get excited that I'm done though, because I have a few things to say about the last stop. Our last stop takes us to Kaplan Pavilion, where you had breakfast, and here to the Purcell Reading Room, two of the spaces in the law school where we regularly host events for our community.

In any given semester, we have literally scores of invited speakers, conferences, symposia, guest lectures hosted by student organizations, faculty members, career development, student orgs, and the law school itself. The multitude of views expressed at these events is hard to overstate.

And it leads me to talk about one of the things that I love most about UVA Law School, one of the things that brought me here, and one of the things that has sustained me since I've been here. And that is that we are a big tent. Our faculty, students, and staff embody and embrace a broad array of perspectives, viewpoints, politics, ideologies, experiences, backgrounds, and life.

And this means that we can and do disagree with each other, sometimes passionately, sometimes vehemently. And the free exchange of ideas that results from all of that is a gift to our students, it's a gift to our faculty and to the work that our faculty produce. And it is also a key part of our mission because free speech, free expression, and the exchange of ideas are crucial to the flourishing of our profession, our society, and our democracy.

And so law schools have to educate our students so that they can engage in that free exchange of ideas and become lawyers who support and facilitate it. And I know that many of you are concerned about this because I've heard from a number of you, and a lot of you have asked me questions over the course of the weekend.

So I want you to know how seriously we take this responsibility to educate our students to engage in a free exchange of ideas and to be a forum for those ideas. We articulate these as values from the very first minute that our students enter the building at orientation. Our policies on them are clear, easily accessible, widely known, and regularly enforced. We do trainings with our students at orientation, with our student leaders at other times.

And our goal is to be a forum for full discussion across the political spectrum. So our policies allow for peaceful protest, which is protected free speech. But they prohibit disruption. And we have and do make clear to our students that disruption is unacceptable, and all of our administrators are on board. And they are trained and we continue to train them toward this end.

But I can't emphasize enough, it's not that we train them. It's that we are all on board with this idea. And our student services folks, and especially Sara Davies and Mark Jefferson, who you hear more from, work all the time not only at the macro level but at the micro level with our students on how to have real conversations across difference and how to respond when speakers come in with whom they might disagree.

Now, most of the conversation you've probably heard about law schools and the free exchange of ideas lately is about events, flash points, controversial speakers who come in. But most of the free exchange of ideas that happens at any law school and certainly at ours happens in the classroom. We have faculty and students from all across the political and ideological spectrum.

And the bread and butter of what we do here is learn to talk across difference, learn to analyze problems, learn to hear every argument, and make the best arguments for your side, which you can't do unless you're listening. And I think that we are well positioned to do this, not only because we're a big tent, but also because of our legendary collegiality.

We help students foster trust and real relationships across their differences in which they are able to see each other as whole human beings, and they find commonalities, and they find shared experiences. And that actually facilitates disagreement. It facilitates their ability to say, you may have this view, but I know you as this full person. So when we talk about this view, we're going to really be able to get somewhere.

And as you know, our students have so many different interactions with one another on the softball field, in the Libel Show, where they all participate and they make fun of everyone, right? That is a crucial thing to do. As well as through our peer advisors and our community fellows programs. In other words, our relationships with each other, being a community of trust, they facilitate a true exchange of ideas.

Now that said, our law school, like all institutions are is affected and buffeted by all of the things that go on out in the world. I think left to our own devices, we would be awesome. Our students come here knowing that we're a big town. They come here seeking to have conversations with people who disagree with them. They come here for our collegiality.

And yet outside of the law school, there's political polarization, there are generational divides about free speech. There are social media, which can be democratizing, but also so pernicious. There's curated news and a lack of shared facts. And I think that we have a better chance than anyone of doing this really, really well because of all the benefits that we have. But it is the case that we have to be vigilant because we are buffeted and our students are buffeted by all that is going on in the world.

And so our students may not get it right every time, but they work really hard at it, as do we. And I'm so proud of the work that they do here and proud of the work that we do here and proud of our aspirations to continue to educate lawyers who can see all the different sides, who can talk to each other across our differences, and who become lawyers who support free speech out there in the world.

My final thought. One last observation about this last stop on my metaphysical tour, about this room as it is used for this event this weekend every year. And that is that it is filled with you, UVA Law School alumni. Your ties to each other and to this place are legendary, and they are a wonder to behold. This is one of the happiest weekends of the year. And it is because you all come back.

You are crucial to the law school's thriving and the law school's success, and I don't only mean that financially. Although, of course, I do mean it financially as well. I mean the dozens of you who come back to teach and to guest-lecture and visit to judge our 1L oral arguments who serve as mentors to current students, who speak to student groups and classes, who recruit our students to join you in your work, and of course, who return every spring to your reunions.

The UVA Law School community begins here in these buildings on these grounds, which is why I want you to see them as I do and see the values and the activities that exist in these spaces. But you take that UVA community with you when you go, and you bring the world back to us when you return.

And you make possible all of the amazing learning, discovery, joy and intellectual exchange that happens here every day in every room, hallway, softball field, and garden through your time, your support, your engagement, and your friendship. And for that, I am eternally grateful. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]