

PRESENTER: I just want to call out, one, congratulations to all of you for the awards. And to those of you in the classes who weren't honored, congratulations to you for being here and giving and your classmates coming out too.

And I just wanted to call out Caroline in particular and the class of 2022. They spent two of their three years really in COVID time. And Caroline and her committee did an extraordinary job working with their classmates to get to that 75%. That was not a foregone conclusion. They did a wonderful job, and I just want to give her another round of applause.

[APPLAUSE]

OK. So good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

PRESENTER: I like the rowdy. The rowdy is good. Glad to see you all, and thank you so much to Elizabeth for leading our all class assembly. I am so happy to be here in person with so many of you and to see so many of you online who are watching this event from afar.

I want to thank everyone at the law school and the foundation who made it possible for us to be here together today for the first time in person since 2019. I have really missed seeing you. It is a wonderful, wonderful part of my job to interact with all of you, and I have not been able to do that in the style that I like, the style that the foundation makes possible, which means an in-person style, over the last couple of years. So it feels really fitting to be here together in person now.

This year, we have been back in person. We've been wearing masks. There have been moments of more stringent protocols, but we have been in-person operations with in-person classes and in-person events all year.

The support from the university who has, I think, navigated this pandemic tremendously, we've had their support every step of the way, and that obviously includes Jim Ryan of the class of '92; our president, Liz McGill, the class of '95; our provost who, sadly for us but to the benefit of the University of Pennsylvania is going to be their president; as well as our rector, Whitt Clement, of the class of '74; and BOV member Carlos Brown of the class of '99. We are really fortunate to have had the leadership at the university level that we have over these past several years.

So it has been a real joy to be together this year, as you will see in a minute. And our faculty, our staff, our students have taken full advantage of being back together and coming back together as a community, and bringing lots of folks in to the law school.

So we call this talk The State of the Law School. And every year, I try to figure out a new way to capture for you all the amazing things that go on here, that the people in this community do every day, and the values that underlie everything we do. And I try not to just come in with a list of stuff.

So as I was thinking about that a little while back in April, I opened our daily newsletter *The Docket*, which is put together by our terrific communications team. And you can be on the mailing list if you like. It's an email that comes every morning. And I realized that that day on *The Docket* was the perfect way to share with you what happens at the law school.

And as I read about this, it could have been a different day, though you'll see maybe why I chose this day. But it could have been a different day.

But I thought as I read *The Docket*, wow, this really captures the vibrance and the values of the law school, the extraordinary educational and career opportunities, the robust collegiality and community, both the joy and the humanity of this place, the variety of people, ideas, interests, and experiences, and the many opportunities for the free exchange of ideas that is crucial to educating the very best lawyers, public servants, and leaders, you all.

So here we go. A deep dive into the state of the law school brought to you by the April 1, 2022 edition of *The Docket*. And no, it was not a joke edition. OK.

[LAUGHTER]

I knew I would get a laugh there. OK. So the lead story maybe tells you why April 1 seemed like a particularly good place to start. So the first piece of news on *The Docket* was that Justice Breyer would be visiting the law school as the Thomas Jefferson Foundation Medal in Law. That is our highest honor. We don't announce Supreme Court justice visits every day, so maybe that's why I chose this day.

What I love about the Jefferson Medal is not just that fancy people come to the law school, but that our students get to interact with those folks. So we had a public event with Justice Breyer where I did an interview with him. I clerked for him.

And we had a lunch with Justice Breyer and about 45 students. And before the lunch, we asked, do you want us to pre-vet the questions? He said, no. The students should ask me whatever they like. And he visited one of our first-year constitutional law classes taught by Lawrence Solum and did a question and answer with the students there.

So one thing that our students at UVA Law get is both broad and deep engagement with luminaries in the law. And that is not only Justice Breyer, but so many others year in and year out, including this year Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin; Robert Mueller, class of '73, who participated in teaching a class on the role of a special counsel.

Former *New York Times* Supreme Court Reporter Linda Greenhouse; Dallin Oaks, the Head of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Harvard Law Professor Randall Kennedy; and a whole host of federal judges, including Judge Patrick Butmatay of the Ninth Circuit, Chief Judge Roger Gregory of the Fourth Circuit, and Judge Eleni Roumel of the US Court of Federal Claims.

OK. So next up on *The Docket*, we usually have some faculty news, which is what we have here. So we have Professor Naomi Cahn, who leads our Family Law Center, which is fairly new. And she had been on television discussing marital property.

And then Professor Kim Krawiec, a new faculty member who released the latest episode of her podcast series on, quote, "taboo trades." And in that podcast series, she partners every time with a student to interview experts and leading scholars on everything from college sports to kidney transplantation to marijuana legalization.

So Kim and Naomi are two of our incredible new faculty members. Over the past three years, we have hired 20 new tenure line faculty. They have come to us from Berkeley, Duke, Georgetown, UCLA, and other schools. They have clerked for Justice Kennedy and Justice Ginsburg. They have a wide array of intellectual approaches, ideological perspectives, subject matters, methodologies, and career stages. What they share is excellence and excitement about joining this robust intellectual community and a place that values and prioritizes the classroom and the student experience.

Now our hiring over the past couple of years has made us the talk of legal academic Twitter. Now you might not even know something called legal academic Twitter exists, but it's a very crazy place.

So one of my favorite tweets that was exclaiming over all of our hiring said the following. "Soon there will be a single US law school, UVA Law, and people will talk about other law schools the way we talk about independent bookstores."

[LAUGHTER]

So we have been compared to the Brooklyn Nets, the New York Yankees, and Alabama football, to which I say, Roll Tide. OK. So on the same slide, we also see an Instagram post about the new executive board of Virginia Law Women. Spring is when our approximately 70 active student organizations choose new leadership. These organizations span subject matter, interest groups, pre-professional groups, political groups, and affinity groups.

And because of the diverse interest and boundless energy of our students, new student organizations arise each year, including-- you'll see this on the next slide-- of the New Orthodox Christian Law Student Association. These organizations are critical to our students' happiness and success, and they frequently, our student organizations, win national recognition. BLSA, the Black Law Students Association, for example, won Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Year again this year, which is the sixth time in recent years, as well as several national awards.

Our student organizations have been particularly active this year after being hybrid over the past year and a half, really thinking intentionally about how to rebuild our in-person community and taking seriously the organic growth of our student culture. The panel that will be coming up, that will be joining us right after I finish talking, will have a lot more to say about the student experience. And Megan Durkee is here from the Student Affairs office.

So I will just note that our sense of our success in providing the best student experience in the country has been externally validated once again this year. In the most recent Princeton Review rankings, we remain number one in best student quality of life, best professors, and best classroom experience. So thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Now in our view, this unparalleled student experience is critical both to the joy that our students take in being here for their three years and the joy you all take in returning to revisit those three years, and also to the success of our students as lawyers in becoming all of you. It is really what sets us apart and what brings the best and the brightest to our law school year after year.

So I'll just brag for a minute on our admissions numbers, and then I'll move on. So our rising 2Ls, the first-year class right now, are academically the strongest that we have ever had. Our students in that class have an LSAT median of a 171 and a GPA median of a 3.91. Yeah, you're shaking your head. These are crazy numbers, people. They are also, this rising 2L class, the most racially diverse, and for the second time ever in our history, more than 50% women.

We have had another competitive admission cycle this year, over 6,000 applicants. We won't what this class looks like until after the summer. There's usually a bit of movement over the summer. But they are looking equally talented and terrific.

So we spend a lot of time thinking about how we can continue to expand our pool of applicants, and thereby expand access not only to our law school, but to the legal profession as a whole. And one new way that we are doing that this year is our brand new Roadmap Scholars Initiative, which is spearheaded by Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Belonging, Mark Jefferson, who will also be on the panel in a minute.

This program is focused on introducing first-generation and low-income students to law school, the admissions process, and the legal field. We are launching this program this summer with major support from the Jefferson Trust, thanks to Sharon Owlett, chair of that board and our graduate, as well as an anonymous alumni donor.

We will host this summer 13 rising college juniors, including three from UVA, for the month of June. They will attend many classes and workshops with our faculty, legal research and writing seminars. Over the next year, we will send them back to their home schools where they will have mentors there, as well as alumni mentors from the law school and student mentors from the law school.

We will pay for their LSAT prep and for them to take the LSAT. And then they will return here for an application bootcamp where we help them with their applications next summer. And then we place them in internships at legal organizations, law firms, companies, nonprofits, and government for next summer. These will come with stipends to enable them to forgo the employment opportunities they would otherwise have.

This is a two-year soup-to-nuts program. If any of you are interested in being a mentor, having interns at your organization, I hope you will reach out to Mark Jefferson. I could not be more thrilled about this launch of the program.

Many pipeline programs exist, but none for the law school that we know of are as comprehensive as ours. We think this makes us a real leader in this area. Law schools have already been reaching out and asking about the details of our program. And we really hope that it pays dividends for the profession as a whole, and of course, that many of these students will come to UVA Law. OK.

[APPLAUSE]

All right. Slide number 3 is where you really start to see the pace of life here at the law school and the unbelievable variety of interests, experiences, ideas, and opportunities represented here. So this is just one day-- on one day, a Friday, April 1.

The Virginia Law and Business Society hosted Covington & Burling attorneys to talk about their life sciences transactional practice. Several student groups, the law school's Family Law Center, and the *Virginia Journal of Social Policy and the Law* hosted a day-long symposium exploring 50 years of Title IX. There was a faculty workshop with a renowned legal historian.

Our *Sports and Entertainment Law Journal* hosted a talk on the changes in collegiate sports after the Supreme Court's *NCAA versus Alston* decision. And to top it all off, the North Grounds Softball League hosted the 39th Annual Softball Invitational.

[APPLAUSE]

There were more than 700 participants with 52 teams coming from as far as Michigan and Florida, and they raised \$25,000 for a children's charity here in Charlottesville, as well as additional funds for our own Public Interest Law Association.

It is pretty hard to describe what a joy it was to see the softball tournament back after a three-year hiatus because of the pandemic. I mean, going out there, seeing all of our students, seeing other schools come and say, is this what life is like in Charlottesville all the time, to which our students of course were like, yeah. It was really-- it was really such a joy.

So I am not going to run through everything on this entire calendar to demonstrate to you everything that we'll be doing. But I am not a slide person, and I was willing to forgo not being a slide person to be able to show you all of this. So let me just say, it includes everything from the National Institute of Military Justice Conference co-sponsored by Virginia law veterans and a number of law school centers and organizations to very timely events on Ukraine and crypto trading.

I do want to spend more time on a few items in particular. So Senior Assistant Dean for Career Development Kevin Donovan hosted one of his Professionalism classes for students. These are designed to demystify what it means to be a good summer intern or summer associate.

We have three amazing career development offices dedicated to the private sector, to public service, and to clerkship counseling. Those are the three main areas that our students go into upon graduation. They run programming like this. They coordinate on-grounds interviews and other networking and hiring events with employers. And they provide extensive, in-depth, individual counseling to all of our students throughout their time here.

I cannot emphasize enough how different this likely is from what it was like when you were here. Every student meets with a counselor multiple times for support going through this employment process. And they continue to work with our students after they graduate. Young alumni changing careers or changing employers, our Career Services offices are a huge resource to them as well.

We have had terrific outcomes that have continued during the pandemic. So I don't want to bore you with statistics, but I'll provide you with just a few. So for the class of 2021, which is the most recent class we have reported data on, we have a 98.7% employment rate. 98.7%.

[APPLAUSE]

Over 93% of our students-- and here comes some bureaucratic jargon-- over 93% of our students have full-time, long-term jobs requiring or preferring a law degree. That is ABA speak for the best legal jobs, the creme de la creme. That puts us at number four in the country, ahead of Harvard, Yale, and Stanford in that category.

[APPLAUSE]

We are number four in what is called the Elite 500 metric, and our rising 3Ls, the class of 2023, had our most successful OGI ever. For those going into private practice, they are heading to those jobs right now. We finished exams yesterday, so they are headed there now.

On the public service side, the last few years have seen an increasing number of graduates entering public service directly upon graduation. They are prosecutors and public defenders, government attorneys, and they work in impact litigation and legal aid offices.

We have been increasing our support to students who pursue careers in public service over the past several years. We now provide full scholarships at the front end. We've always provided postgraduate fellowships as well as summer funding to students who spend their summers in public service.

The law school now guarantees that summer funding. We increased the level of funding we provide for that recently, and we expanded eligible jobs to include federal judicial clerkships. PILA, the Public Interest Law Association, now provides supplements for our students who are going into more expensive markets.

We've also increased who is eligible for loan forgiveness. So loan forgiveness I feel like is that kind of term that people don't really know what it means. Here's what loan forgiveness means. If you graduate from our law school and you work in public service or you work in an underserved community in Virginia, we pay back your loan payments for you. That's what it means, right? So-- yeah, exactly.

[APPLAUSE]

The goal really is to make it financially feasible for our students to pursue the careers that they want to pursue, and especially to be able to financially go into public interest work. So the third leg of our three-legged placement stool are clerkships. In the 2021 term, we had graduates in 116 clerkships. We are number four in the country for federal clerkships for recent classes and number five in Supreme Court placement.

So we really do see it as our ideal and our aspiration to place every one of our students on the road to the career of their dreams, and to get to do either what they came to law school to do or what they discovered they wanted to during their three years here.

Now as we send our graduates out into their careers, we want to equip them to succeed in their financial lives as well as the workplace. So you'll likely hear more about this during the next panel, because Jennifer Hulvey is on it.

But I just want to flag our Assistant Dean for Financial Aid. Jennifer Hulvey hosted a session on personal income taxes and employee benefits for our students. This is part of her Real World Finances series that her office organizes each spring for our 3Ls, our graduating students. This is on top of the extensive individual counseling that she and her office provide for every student who wants it, really starting from the time of admission, right?

So students saying, is this the right call for me? These are the loans I already have. This is what I would have to take out. How can I do this? Jennifer Hulvey and her team have honest and real and helpful conversations with our students about that, and these conversations last long after our students graduate.

OK. Next, I want to highlight four events. And I'm not sure if they're on this page or the next, so I'll just move up thinking you've already seen this page enough. Oh, no. OK. They're here.

So I want to highlight four events in two pairs, and I think all can follow that. Four events in two pairs. OK. People say, oh, you can only say three. No, no. I have four events in two pairs. OK.

Have you ever read-- there's a book called *How to Talk like TED?* It's like a TED Talk primer. And it says, people can only understand three things, so you say three things. And then each thing can have three things. OK. So this is four, two and two. You can do it. You are UVA Law grads. OK.

[LAUGHTER]

OK. So the first pair, the first pair is if you look there on Thursday, April 7, this was also part of what made me think, I have to talk about these, this *Docket* for you all. So there was a conversation with Judge Andrew Brasher of the Eleventh Circuit hosted by our Federalist Society chapter followed immediately-- you could go to both if you wanted-- followed immediately by a discussion about *Iqbal v. Ashcroft* hosted by our National Lawyers Guild chapter.

And these two events, this pair taken together demonstrate one of the things I love most about UVA Law School and a core strength of this institution. We are a big tent.

UVA Law School is more diverse and more pluralistic than at any other moment in its history. We have an incredible broad array of perspectives, which means that we can and do disagree with each other, sometimes quite passionately.

Our students are regularly-- just look at this *Docket*, right? Our students are regularly exposed to a wide variety of ideas, views, and approaches to the law. And fostering an open exchange of ideas is not only one of our strengths, it is core to our mission. Robust and respectful dialogue are necessary for our democracy to function and our profession to flourish.

Our students need to learn to consider every argument, explore every idea, and argue for one's own side and collaborate with the other. That is how they become exceptional UVA lawyers.

And it is not just that our students are exposed to such a variety of viewpoints. It is also that they work hard every day to create and find opportunities for real and productive exchange across their different viewpoints, in and outside of the classroom.

So that brings me to our second pair. The student organization Common Law Grounds hosted a group discussion on balancing criminal justice reform and public safety. This group is dedicated to productive conversation across political, ideological, and cultural difference. They came into being after the 2016 election.

They're not exactly about finding compromise positions. Rather, they're about promoting debate and discussion where students, faculty, and administrators all listen as well as talk. As one student put it, quote, "Sometimes we find unexpected points of common ground, and sometimes we get to practice the art of arguing in a robust but respectful way. Two opportunities that are hard to find in today's hyperpolarized political climate."

Now the SBA event listed here, talk, Sharing Stories, Not Resumes, is the second of this pair of events that I wanted to flag. This is similarly part of our students' organic efforts to foster dialogue and exchange. Knowing each other as whole people, hearing each other's stories, not just knowing what each other has accomplished enables better communication, understanding, collaboration, learning, and exchange of ideas.

These kinds of interactions lay the groundwork for our students to engage productively, even when they might disagree vehemently. Every week, we host speakers from whom some of our students are excited to hear and others find fault in somewhat publicly, sometimes even publicly and vigorously. Our goal is to be a forum for discussion across the political spectrum, to ensure that invited speakers can share their views, and that those who disagree can register their dissent in ways that promote further dialogue.

This is a constant challenge not only here, but everywhere. We are in an increasingly polarized world. And it is not always easy to speak so that others can listen or to listen when the message is hard to hear.

But our commitment to free expression means we aspire to do exactly that. Our commitment to collegiality, to this community, to building a community of trust and belonging across our differences is what makes that aspiration possible. There is so much value in this aspiration, and I could not be more proud of the ways that our students pursue it day in and day out on their own and with their faculty.

The global challenges of the future, which will require a new generation of UVA lawyers, scholars, public servants, and leaders to follow in your footsteps makes these aspirations, these goals, and this core mission more important than ever. Now I hear it got quiet. It got very serious. I got very serious, and I am very serious about that. So I'm going to get a little lighter for another-- just for the end.

So speaking of your footsteps, let me leave you with one final observation about these listings, the alumni who participate in so many of them. And I just don't just mean the softball, that there are alumni teams in the softball tournament, and that those alumni teams often do quite well.

I mean the dozens of alumni like you all who come back to teach here as adjunct or short course visitors each semester, the scores of you who visit in the spring to judge 1L oral arguments, who serve as mentors to current students, who speak to student groups and serve as guest lecturers in classes on your areas of expertise, who recruit our students to join you in your work, and of course, all of you who return for alumni reunions each year.

The law school community begins in these buildings and on these grounds, but you take it with you everywhere you go, and you bring the world back to us when you return. You make possible this edition of *The Docket* and every edition of *The Docket*, all of the amazing learning, discovery, joy, and intellectual exchange that happens here every day through your time, your support, your engagement, and your friendship. So thank you.

[APPLAUSE]