

Tribute

Continuing the Path to Excellence: University of Minnesota Law School Dean Alex M. Johnson, Jr.

Edward S. Adams[†]

Alex M. Johnson, Jr., the ninth dean of the University of Minnesota Law School, served with honor and distinction from 2002 to 2006. He leaves a legacy of achievement consistent with the tireless drive, ambitious goal setting, and adaptation to change that marked his career before ascending to the position of Dean at the Law School. Receiving his early education in the public schools of Los Angeles, Mr. Johnson began his undergraduate education at Princeton University and then transferred to Claremont College in 1973.¹ He remained in Los Angeles for law school, earning his law degree at the University of California, Los Angeles.² Following graduation, Mr. Johnson practiced as an associate at the Los Angeles branch of Latham & Watkins, LLP.³

Two years into his career in private practice, Mr. Johnson received an unanticipated phone call. His former Wills and Trusts professor, Bill McGovern, called to inquire if he would consider a teaching position at the University of Minnesota Law School.⁴ At first, Mr. Johnson's response was, "Hell, no."⁵

[†] Howard E. Buhse Professor of Finance and Law, Co-Director of the Kommerstad Center for Business Law and Entrepreneurship, and Director of CLE Programs, University of Minnesota Law School. The author thanks Michelle Forsberg and Sara Kalis for their tireless assistance in connection with this piece. Copyright © 2006 by Edward S. Adams.

1. Interview with Alex M. Johnson, Jr., William S. Pattee Professor of Law, Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., in Minneapolis, Minn. (Oct. 13, 2005).

2. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Alex M. Johnson, Jr., <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/johnsona.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006) [hereinafter Alex M. Johnson, Jr. Faculty Profile].

3. *Id.*

4. Interview with Alex M. Johnson, Jr., *supra* note 1.

5. *Id.*

However, after Dean Robert A. Stein's persistence and an unpleasant day at work, Mr. Johnson agreed to travel to Minnesota for a visit.⁶ The University of Minnesota Law School offered him a teaching position, and he took a year—and then two—off from his law practice in Los Angeles.⁷ Initially unsatisfied with teaching, Mr. Johnson returned to practice in Los Angeles.⁸ After practicing in a law firm for two more years, Mr. Johnson realized the teaching of law was ingrained in him. He soon accepted a teaching position at the University of Virginia.⁹ He went on to establish a distinguished teaching career, including serving as visiting professor at the law schools of Stanford University, the University of Texas, and Washington University.¹⁰ While at the University of Virginia, Mr. Johnson also served as Vice Provost for Faculty Recruitment and Retention.¹¹ Mr. Johnson was also a prolific scholar, publishing books and articles with topics that spanned from modern real estate to critical race issues to critiques of legal education.¹²

In addition to his faculty and administrative positions, Mr. Johnson also performed distinguished roles on the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC); he served as the Chair of the LSAC, and as Chair of the organization's Board of Trustees, Minority Affairs Standing Committee, and Test, Development, and Research Committee.¹³

I. THE SELECTION OF A DEAN¹⁴

As E. Thomas Sullivan's time as dean of the University of Minnesota Law School approached an end, a search committee chaired by Professor Stephen Befort¹⁵ began the process of se-

6. *Id.*

7. Alex M. Johnson, Jr. Faculty Profile, *supra* note 2.

8. Interview with Alex M. Johnson, Jr., *supra* note 1.

9. *Id.*

10. Alex M. Johnson, Jr. Faculty Profile, *supra* note 2.

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.*

14. Interview with Stephen F. Befort, Gray, Plant, Mooty, Mooty & Bennett Professor of Law, Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., in Minneapolis, Minn. (Nov. 1, 2005). Unless otherwise noted, all information and quotations in Part I are taken from this interview.

15. Stephen F. Befort served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs from 2000 to 2004. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Stephen F. Befort, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/beforts.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006). He also served as Director of the University of Minnesota Law

lecting the next dean of the University of Minnesota Law School. The search committee consisted of thirteen members, including one alumnus, one student, one staff member, and several faculty members. The committee advertised nationally for applicants and sought nominations from alumni and other law school deans. When alumni or other deans suggested desirable candidates to the search committee, the committee contacted the potential candidates to invite them to apply for the deanship. The minimum qualifications for the dean's position included a law degree and, ideally, previous management experience. The committee also preferred that the candidate have experience as a faculty member. Approximately thirty applicants met these qualifications.

Several of Mr. Johnson's professional characteristics distinguished him from the other applicants. First, he had experience as a successful law professor at the University of Virginia, one of the top ten law schools in the country. As Professor Belfort explained, Alex Johnson "was a respected member of the law teaching community." In addition, Mr. Johnson had served as Vice Provost at the University of Virginia, demonstrating his ability to oversee faculty and signifying his capacity to contribute to the recruitment aspect of the position of dean.

Beyond Mr. Johnson's history as a faculty member and administrator, his accomplishments also demonstrated his understanding of "legal education on a national level." Mr. Johnson's lengthy work with the LSAC illustrated that he was connected to the law school issues that were nationally important.

The search committee took note that, besides his understanding of law school administration on a national level, Mr. Johnson was also personally familiar with the unique life at the University of Minnesota Law School. Mr. Johnson had begun his legal teaching career at Minnesota, remained in contact with colleagues at Minnesota, and knew what to expect from the Minnesota climate. The search committee met with the candidates in New Orleans and later narrowed down the list of applicants to six candidates, including Mr. Johnson.

Each of the remaining six candidates was invited to visit the Minnesota campus for an on-campus interview. The on-campus interview was a day-and-a-half long process, in which a candidate met with approximately five small groups of faculty,

School's Civil Clinics from 1982 to 2003 and specializes in labor and employment law. *Id.*

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as well as with groups of students. The students examined each candidate, attempting to determine if the candidate would be receptive to student ideas, place value on teaching, and represent the law school institution well. As a further means of evaluation, all six candidates met with the current dean.

Each candidate also presented an open lecture during the noon hour at the Law School. The presentation was to demonstrate the candidate's vision both as a potential law school dean in general and, specifically, as a potential dean of the University of Minnesota Law School.

Once again, Mr. Johnson's qualifications had a striking effect. In particular, he showed that he had close familiarity with the financial climate for law schools in the United States at the time. Mr. Johnson was interviewing for a deanship in a time when state support for universities was declining throughout the country. Declining state funding was exerting continuous pressure on tuition and fundraising, affecting scholarship money and student debt. Mr. Johnson's presentation made clear that he was aware of these issues, had contemplated them, and had ideas for the possible mitigation of their effects. For example, he suggested expanding the size of the entering class of law students, adjusting the LL.M. program, and altering revenue streams through fundraising. In addition, Mr. Johnson suggested approaching the University President's office with the claim that "[t]he Law School is important to the University of Minnesota and shouldn't be cut as much as other places."

Mr. Johnson impressed the audience with his understanding of "the Minnesota brand." He displayed awareness of the University of Minnesota Law School's unique blend of international programs, a quality library, and an emphasis on clinics. In particular, he recognized the important role that clinics play in legal education at Minnesota and he "knew it was important to make the clinics even better yet—make what we're strong in even better." For all of these reasons, the president of the University of Minnesota, upon the recommendation of the faculty, chose Alex M. Johnson as the ninth dean of the University of Minnesota Law School. Mr. Johnson served as dean of the University of Minnesota Law School from 2002 to 2006.

II. EXPANSION AND RENEWAL OF FACULTY

When a new leader arrives to take the reins of any sizable institution, the challenges can be complex. As Jim Chen, Asso-

ciate Dean and James L. Krusemark Professor of Law, described the advent of Mr. Johnson's deanship, "Transitions are hard. We were facing a major transition in leadership. We had had a pair of long-lasting deanships."¹⁶ The Law School had also experienced a number of faculty departures toward the end of the previous deanship,¹⁷ and when Alex Johnson arrived as dean, the faculty was "rather small."¹⁸

Dean Johnson placed strong priority on expanding the faculty.¹⁹ He worked to make sure that the Law School had the funds not only to replace the faculty members who had relocated, but also to add even more faculty members than the Law School had previously enjoyed.²⁰ Dean Johnson's administration sought both new scholars who demonstrated promise and publication and lateral hires who were excellent teachers with accomplished records of scholarship.²¹ He thoughtfully examined the issue of departing faculty in his essay *Having a Faculty That Everyone Wants . . .*.²²

New and visiting faculty at Minnesota during the 2005–06 school year alone included Mary Patricia Byrn,²³ Prentiss Cox,²⁴ Allan Erbsen,²⁵ Daniel A. Farber,²⁶ Michael J. Hannon,²⁷

16. Interview with Jim Chen, Assoc. Dean & James L. Krusemark Professor of Law, Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., in Minneapolis, Minn. (Nov. 15, 2005). Dean Chen has expertise in a broad range of areas including administrative law, constitutional law, and industrial policy. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Jim Chen, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/chenj.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

17. Interview with Jim Chen, *supra* note 16.

18. Interview with Stephen F. Befort, *supra* note 14.

19. *Id.*

20. Interview with John Matheson, Melvin C. Steen & Corporate Donors Professor of Law, Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., in Minneapolis, Minn. (Nov. 1, 2005).

21. *Id.*

22. Alex M. Johnson, Jr., *Having a Faculty That Everyone Wants . . .*, 36 U. TOL. L. REV. 95 (2004).

23. Mary Patricia Byrn is an authority in the areas of assisted reproduction, sexual orientation, and torts. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Mary Patricia Byrn, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/byrnmp.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

24. Prentiss Cox is a veteran prosecutor and former Assistant Attorney General in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Prentiss Cox, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/coxp.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

25. Allan Erbsen teaches and writes in the areas of civil procedure, international arbitration, and federal courts. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Allan Erbsen, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/erbsena.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

Jill Hasday,²⁸ Claire A. Hill,²⁹ Morgan Holcomb,³⁰ Heidi Kitrosser,³¹ William McGeeveran,³² Richard W. Painter,³³ Kevin R. Reitz,³⁴ Daria Roithmayr,³⁵ Mark D. Rosen,³⁶ Ted Sampsell-Jones,³⁷ and Chantal Thomas.³⁸ Further additions to the fac-

26. Daniel A. Farber specializes in environmental law and constitutional law. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Daniel A. Farber, <http://www.law.umn.edu/FacultyProfiles/FarberD.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

27. Michael J. Hannon serves as the Associate Director for Library and Educational Technology at the Law School. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Michael J. Hannon, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/hannonm.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

28. Jill Hasday is an accomplished scholar in fields including family law, constitutional law, and anti-discrimination law. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Jill Hasday, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/hasdayj.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

29. Claire A. Hill has expertise in areas including business and commercial law. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Claire A. Hill, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/hillc.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

30. Morgan Holcomb is a 2002 graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School and gained litigation experience at Maslon, Edelman, Borman & Brand, LLP. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Morgan Holcomb, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/holcombm.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

31. Heidi Kitrosser specializes in constitutional law, including free speech and separation of powers. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Heidi Kitrosser, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/kitrosserh.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

32. William McGeeveran has contributed prominent research in information law, including the fields of data privacy and communications and technology. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, William McGeeveran, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/mcgeeveranw.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

33. Richard W. Painter is an expert in legal ethics and has served as Associate Counsel to the President of the United States. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Richard W. Painter, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/painterr.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

34. Kevin R. Reitz teaches criminal procedure, criminal law, and professional responsibility, and specializes in criminal justice policy. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Kevin R. Reitz, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/reitzk.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

35. Daria Roithmayr is a recognized scholar in the field of critical race theory. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Daria Roithmayr, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/roithmayrd.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

36. Mark D. Rosen researches constitutional law and federal political systems. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Mark D. Rosen, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/rosenm.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

37. Ted Sampsell-Jones has both practical and academic experience in the field of criminal justice. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles,

ulty during the Johnson deanship included, but were not limited to, Kristin E. Hickman,³⁹ Bradley C. Karkkainen,⁴⁰ Fionnuala Ní Aoláin,⁴¹ Myron Orfield,⁴² and David Stras.⁴³ Joan S. Howland, Associate Dean for Information and Technology and Roger F. Noreen Professor of Law, stated of Dean Johnson's efforts to expand the faculty, "We are so fortunate to have Dean Johnson. He [is] an excellent leader; he [has been] instrumental in recruiting new faculty and also in retaining faculty."⁴⁴

Increasing the number of faculty enabled the Law School to offer a broader variety of courses and a more favorable student-to-faculty ratio.⁴⁵ The faculty has grown to be one of the largest among the nation's law schools. According to the 2003 American Bar Association survey, the student-to-faculty ratio at the Law School was 15.5 to 1.⁴⁶ In 2004, the student-to-faculty ratio

Ted Sampsell-Jones, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/sampselljonest.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

38. Chantal Thomas has taught and published in fields spanning from contracts to international law. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Chantal Thomas, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/Thomasc.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

39. Kristin E. Hickman specializes in tax law and policy, business associations, and administrative law. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Kristin E. Hickman, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/hickmanke.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

40. Bradley C. Karkkainen is an expert in natural resources and environmental law. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Bradley C. Karkkainen, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/karkkainenb.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

41. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin has extensive scholarship in human rights law and international law. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/niolainf.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

42. Myron Orfield has served in the Minnesota House of Representatives and is an authority in land use, civil rights, and regional governance. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Myron Orfield, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/orfieldm.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

43. David Stras specializes in constitutional law, criminal law, law and economics, and federal courts and jurisdiction. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, David Stras, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/strasd.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

44. Interview with Joan S. Howland, Assoc. Dean for Info. & Tech. and Roger F. Noreen Professor of Law, in Minneapolis, Minn. (Nov. 18, 2005). Dean Howland is an expert in law librarianship, American Indian law, law and technology, and legal research. Joan S. Howland, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/howlandj.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

45. Interview with John Matheson, *supra* note 20.

46. LAW SCH. ADMISSION COUNCIL & AM. BAR ASS'N, OFFICIAL GUIDE TO ABA-APPROVED LAW SCHOOLS 434 (Wendy Margolis et al. eds., 2005).

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had fallen to 14.5 to 1,⁴⁷ and by 2005, the ratio had dropped even further to 13.0 to 1.⁴⁸

The addition of faculty allowed the Law School to strengthen and expand its joint degree programs, create new student concentrations, add new institutes and centers, and offer a corporate internship to students.⁴⁹

The expansion of the faculty also contributed to the scholarly opportunities for the faculty members themselves; it “free[d] up enough time and presence in the world of scholarship to make the University of Minnesota presence felt.”⁵⁰

As Dean Chen described Dean Johnson’s effect on the University of Minnesota Law School faculty, “[Dean Johnson] revived the school. There had been many departures, and the school needed fresh blood. Through his own leadership and through people he added to the school, he really revitalized it.”⁵¹

III. SURGES IN STUDENT BODY STRENGTH

Beyond being a driving force in the Law School’s quest to expand and retain its faculty, Dean Johnson also played an important role in a nationally recognized surge in applications for admission to the Law School. He placed increased emphasis on recruiting and thus raised the academic strength and diversity of the student body. Dean Howland stated in a November 2005 interview, “In large part due to Dean Johnson, the most recent class has been the strongest and most diverse.”⁵² Dean Howland explained, “He will pick up the phone and help recruit

47. *Id.* at 442.

48. LAW SCH. ADMISSION COUNCIL & AM. BAR ASS’N, OFFICIAL GUIDE TO ABA-APPROVED LAW SCHOOLS 438 (Wendy Margolis et al. eds., 2007), available at <http://officialguide.lsac.org/OFFGUIDE/pdf/aba6874.pdf> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

49. See University of Minnesota Law School, Joint Degree Programs, http://www.law.umn.edu/prospective/joint_degrees.html (last visited Oct. 20, 2006); University of Minnesota Law School, Centers & Programs, <http://www.law.umn.edu/centers/index.html> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006); University of Minnesota Law School, Concentrations at the University of Minnesota Law School, <http://www.law.umn.edu/current/degrees/concentrations.html?op=switchOffAdmin> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

50. Interview with Stephen F. Befort, *supra* note 14.

51. Interview with Jim Chen, *supra* note 16.

52. Interview with Joan S. Howland, *supra* note 44.

students.”⁵³ His twin goals were to assemble “the most academically superior and diverse student body possible.”⁵⁴

On August 22, 2005, an article in the *National Law Journal*, titled *Fewer Students Apply to Top Schools; Fewer Minorities, More Women*, reported that the number of people applying to top law schools had dropped.⁵⁵ However, in contrast to many other top law schools, the number of applications to Minnesota increased in double-digit percentages.⁵⁶ The phenomenon was recounted in the *National Law Journal* article:

The greatest increase in applications occurred at [the] University of Minnesota, where they shot up 22%, to 3,073 from 2,509 last year. The school's incoming class of 276 represents 9% of its applicant pool, compared with last year's class, which equaled about 11% of its applicants. Alex Johnson Jr., dean of the law school, said it boosted its marketing efforts this year, which included increased direct mailing, a redesigned Web site and more participation in law school forums.⁵⁷

With the renewed push for recruitment and the rise in applications, the median LSAT score of entering Minnesota classes rose. In 2004, the median LSAT score of the entering class was 163.⁵⁸ In 2005, that number increased to 164.⁵⁹ The score of the 75th percentile of the 2005 entering class was 167, with the 25th percentile at 162.⁶⁰

The strength of the Law School student body was reflected in its bar passage rate. In the summer of 2004, 99.18% of students passed the bar exam.⁶¹

Dean Johnson also implemented a number of programs to increase student participation in extra-curricular activities, creating a stronger law school community while also improving alumni relations. The Race for Justice Annual Fun Run and Walk was established in 2003 to raise money for the Loan Repayment Assistance Program.⁶² The Theatre of the Relatively

53. *Id.*

54. *Id.*

55. Leigh Jones, *Fewer Students Apply to Top Schools; Fewer Minorities, More Women*, NAT'L L.J., Aug. 22, 2005, at 1.

56. *Id.*

57. *Id.*

58. Interview with Libby Washburn, Dir. of Commc'ns & Publ'ns, Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., in Minneapolis, Minn. (Nov. 18, 2005).

59. LAW SCH. ADMISSION COUNCIL & AM. BAR ASS'N, *supra* note 48, at 439.

60. *Id.*

61. Interview with Libby Washburn, *supra* note 58.

62. University of Minnesota Law School, Race for Justice, http://www.law.umn.edu/current/raceforjustice_2006.html (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

Talentless (TORT), which was founded in 2002,⁶³ produces a full-length musical and draws over a thousand audience members annually.⁶⁴ The Law School Musical is choreographed, written, performed, directed, and produced by law students at the Law School.⁶⁵

Students have been particularly impressed by Dean Johnson's efforts to solidify the University of Minnesota Law School's position as a national institution. Amy Bergquist, Editor-in-Chief of the *Minnesota Law Review*, commented that Dean Johnson "took great pride in the Law School and urged students to leave Minnesota after graduation—not because Minnesota is a bad place to live and work, but to spread the word to the coasts that Minnesota graduates are bright, hard-working, and have excellent skills."⁶⁶

IV. INCREASED LIBRARY DEPTH

Under Alex Johnson's deanship, the University of Minnesota Law School achieved additional distinction by enhancing the prominence of its library. The Law Library commemorated obtaining its millionth volume on October 22, 2004.⁶⁷ This millionth volume is of dual significance. First, the Law Library enjoys the distinction of being one of the eight largest academic law libraries in the United States.⁶⁸ Second, the millionth volume is not merely an everyday textbook, but rather the *Papers of Clarence Darrow*, "a premier collection of the eminent American jurist's personal and public records."⁶⁹ The *Papers of Clarence Darrow* includes letters that provide glimpses into a sixty-year time span in Darrow's life.⁷⁰

Dean Johnson played an instrumental role in this key acquisition. Dean Howland explained, "We acquired the *Papers of*

63. University of Minnesota Law School, The Story of the Theatre of the Relatively Talentless, <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~tort/about.html> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

64. Interview with Joshua L. Colburn, 2006–07 TORT Co-Producer, Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., in Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 8, 2006).

65. *Id.*

66. Interview with Amy Bergquist, Editor-in-Chief, Minn. Law Review, in Minneapolis, Minn. (Aug. 30, 2006).

67. University of Minnesota Law School Law Library, The Law and Clarence Darrow, <http://www.law.umn.edu/library/darrow.html> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

68. *Id.*

69. *Id.*

70. *Id.*

Clarence Darrow, which we never would have gotten without the support of Dean Johnson. He helped put together the funding from donations, University funding, Law Library funding, and Law School funding.”⁷¹

Dean Johnson was also a driving force behind an all-day symposium at the Law Library to commemorate this monumental acquisition. On Friday, October 22, 2004, the Law Library hosted the *Faegre & Benson Symposium: Law, Information and Freedom of Expression*.⁷² The many distinguished speakers at the symposium included, to name only a few, the Honorable Kathleen A. Blatz, Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, Fredrick Schauer of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and Daniel A. Farber of the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.⁷³ Dean Johnson’s fundraising efforts played a key role in obtaining funding for the event.⁷⁴ Professor Howland explains, “Dean Johnson was fundamental in working with Faegre & Benson, who underwrote the full-day symposium.”⁷⁵

V. DEAN JOHNSON’S LEADERSHIP STYLE: FRANK COMMUNICATION, LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE, AND PERSONAL OUTREACH

The trademark of Dean Johnson’s leadership style was straightforwardness. As Dean Chen described, Dean Johnson did “not hide the ball. You know what he’s thinking [and] where you stand with him.”⁷⁶ Dean Johnson worked with colleagues to set goals, and then gave them “the space and support that they need[ed] to achieve those goals.”⁷⁷ Professor John Matheson observed that Dean Johnson was “open and candid . . . a straight shooter.”⁷⁸

Dean Johnson was a striking leader and role model whose leadership skills were apparent to faculty and staff. Dean Howland reflected, “He really understands what it means to be

71. Interview with Joan S. Howland, *supra* note 44.

72. University of Minnesota Law School Law Library, Symposium Program, <http://www.law.umn.edu/library/symposium-program.html> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

73. *Id.*

74. Interview with Joan S. Howland, *supra* note 44.

75. *Id.*

76. Interview with Jim Chen, *supra* note 16.

77. *Id.*

78. Interview with John Matheson, *supra* note 20.

a leader. He's an excellent administrator and leader . . . He [was] actively involved in appointments, admissions, and teaching."⁷⁹

Inspiring faculty with his own actions is one way Dean Johnson used his leadership skills. Dean Johnson has taught courses at the Law School in both property and real estate transactions.⁸⁰ He encouraged faculty to be active philanthropic members of the law school community. At an auction to benefit the family of a staff member who was suffering from a terminal illness, the Dean's aggressive bidding set the tone, challenging other participants to follow his lead.⁸¹ Dean Johnson also highlighted the importance of participating in a University-wide United Way campaign. Professor Howland explained, "The Dean resonates with students, legal alums, faculty, and the community."

As part of his personal outreach to students, Dean Johnson recognized the importance of building a law school community. He took efforts to partner with students and the law library to provide community-building events and improvements. An avid baseball fan, Dean Johnson collaborated with the law library to celebrate the opening day of the baseball season with a picnic in the library lobby. In addition, in cooperation with the class gift of the graduating class of 2005, the Dean and the law library each matched the graduates' contributions to provide the library with new furnishings for a comfortable and inviting study area.

Dean Johnson's outreach to students extended beyond the Law School and included his own home. He and his wife, Karen Anderson, invited students to their home and opened their doors to alumni and faculty as well. Dean Howland described Ms. Anderson as "a complete partner—also a wonderful addition with the Law School. She's always a presence at events, a wonderful, intellectually stimulating, and gracious ambassador to the Law School." Ms. Anderson serves as Director of Civic Engagement, Global Initiatives, and Service Learning in the Office of Multicultural and Academic Affairs at the University of Minnesota.⁸²

79. Interview with Joan S. Howland, *supra* note 44.

80. Alex M. Johnson, Jr. Faculty Profile, *supra* note 2.

81. Interview with Joan S. Howland, *supra* note 44. Unless otherwise noted, all information and quotations in the remainder of Part V are taken from this interview.

82. University of Minnesota, Office for Multicultural and Academic Af-

VI. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Under Dean Johnson's administration the Law School preserved and expanded exchange programs that broaden the horizons of Minnesota students.⁸³ Law students at the University of Minnesota can take advantage of established exchange programs in countries including France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden.⁸⁴ Associate Dean of Administration Meredith McQuaid⁸⁵ reflected that Dean Johnson was "quite diligent about maintaining semester exchange programs."⁸⁶

The Law School is also a front-runner in pursuing groundbreaking international study programs that stand to benefit attorneys as far away as China. An exciting new development during Mr. Johnson's deanship was the Law School's steps toward offering a Master of Laws (LL.M.) Program in American Law on a campus in Beijing.⁸⁷ Recently approved by the Chinese government, the program is a partnership between the University of Minnesota Law School, a Chinese company called the Beijing Fazheng Group, and the China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing, China.⁸⁸ This program for Chinese attorneys will be taught both by professors from the University of Minnesota Law School and by Chinese professors from the China University of Political Science and Law.⁸⁹ The "Beijing LL.M. program [will be] the Law School's first off-campus degree program."⁹⁰

The Beijing LL.M. program reflects the aspirations and hard work of individuals and organizations that span the globe.

fairs, <http://www.oma.umn.edu/about.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

83. University of Minnesota Law School, International and Graduate Programs, <http://www.law.umn.edu/llm/exchange.html> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

84. Scott Russell, *Destination: Beijing*, L. ALUMNI NEWS (Univ. of Minn. Law Sch. Office of Alumni Relations, Minneapolis, Minn.) Spring 2005, at 31, 31.

85. Meredith M. McQuaid, Associate Dean of Administration and International Programs, oversees the LL.M. and exchange programs at the Law School. University of Minnesota Law School Faculty Profiles, Meredith M. McQuaid, <http://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/mcquaidm.htm> (last visited Oct. 20, 2006).

86. Interview with Meredith M. McQuaid, Assoc. Dean of Admin. & Int'l Programs, Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., in Minneapolis, Minn. (Nov. 29, 2005).

87. Russell, *supra* note 84.

88. *Id.*

89. *Id.* at 34.

90. *Id.* at 31.

It will be “the first of its kind in China offered by an American law school.”⁹¹ Key instigators of this endeavor include Dr. Hong Yang of the University of Minnesota’s China Center, Wang Guangfa of the Beijing Fazheng Group, Associate Dean of Administration Meredith McQuaid of the University of Minnesota Law School, and Professor Fred Morrison of the University of Minnesota Law School.⁹² Establishing such a program is “a complicated, multilayer situation, and the Dean [was] generous with time and financial support.”⁹³

Beyond supporting the study of U.S. law in China for Chinese attorneys, Dean Johnson also supported U.S. law students studying in China. During the summer of 2006, the Law School revived a program for U.S. law students to experience summer study in Beijing.⁹⁴ Dean McQuaid explained that Dean Johnson “put his money where his mouth is about getting involved in Asia.”⁹⁵

VII. TIRELESS FUNDRAISING

Another hallmark of Dean Johnson’s contribution to the University of Minnesota Law School was his talent in and tireless dedication to fundraising. Dean Johnson took the reins of the school in a time when state budgets had been cut and state leaders were reluctant to support the University.⁹⁶ The Law School under Dean Johnson had to face a financial environment more demanding than that of previous eras.⁹⁷ As a result, a new challenge was to raise further financial support.⁹⁸

Dean Johnson acknowledged the challenge and met it head-on. Dean Howland described Dean Johnson’s efforts by saying, “He’s an incredibly good internal and external dean, in fundraising, developing a relationship with firms and individuals, finding out where their heart is with regard to the Law School He’s very well-prepared. He makes a personalized effort.”⁹⁹ In his fundraising efforts, Dean Johnson met with law firms, not only in the Twin Cities, but also around the country

91. Interview with Meredith M. McQuaid, *supra* note 86.

92. *See* Russell, *supra* note 84.

93. Interview with Meredith M. McQuaid, *supra* note 86.

94. *Id.*

95. *Id.*

96. Interview with John Matheson, *supra* note 20.

97. *Id.*

98. *Id.*

99. Interview with Joan S. Howland, *supra* note 44.

in cities such as Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, and San Francisco.¹⁰⁰

VIII. FURTHER ENDEAVORS AND AIMS

In the September 2005 issue of the *Minnesota Syllabus*, Dean Johnson proclaimed his vision for the University of Minnesota Law School. He declared, "I believe we have the best urban public law school in the country and we are all here to play a part in one of the best legal educations in the country."¹⁰¹ His goal was to "focus on integrating the daily practice of law into teaching."¹⁰² In furtherance of this aim, Dean Johnson sought to bring changes to the Law School to take advantage of technological developments and to adjust to the needs of the culture. During his administration, the Law School adopted a laptop policy for first-year students, increased wireless Internet access, and expanded the use of webcasting.¹⁰³ The Law School also issued an updated, modern admissions brochure. The administration "ramped up the look of the Law School" and gave it a new logo.¹⁰⁴ Continually working toward goals, Dean Johnson made it his aim to make the University of Minnesota Law School "one of the top three public law schools in the country. We have the potential."¹⁰⁵

CONCLUSION

Dean Johnson faced a changing financial and academic climate and responded with innovation, tireless drive, and a marked candor and straightforwardness. Serving as the ninth Dean of the Law School and the first African American Dean, Dean Johnson's efforts reaped the rewards of ever-stronger entering classes, further globalization of programs, a revitalized faculty, and evolving revenue streams.

As Professor Befort reflected, each of the past three deans of the University of Minnesota Law School has demonstrated unique talents.¹⁰⁶ "Dean Stein knew the legal community in

100. Interview with John Matheson, *supra* note 20.

101. Alex M. Johnson, Jr., *To the Law School Community*, MINN. SYLLABUS (Univ. of Minn. Law Sch., Minneapolis, Minn.) Sept. 2005, at 1, 1.

102. Interview with Libby Washburn, *supra* note 58.

103. *Id.*

104. *Id.*

105. Interview with Alex M. Johnson, Jr., *supra* note 1.

106. Interview with Stephen F. Befort, *supra* note 14.

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Minnesota and elsewhere—he brought external prominence. Dean Sullivan spent time making the Law School hum, making it more efficient. Dean Johnson, as a chief financial officer, r[ose] to the current . . . financial challenges. He ha[d] the right strength for our time.”¹⁰⁷

107. *Id.*