

Mantra of New Dean is to Listen, not Lecture

This is the first of a series of articles profiling the deans of Ontario's six law schools.

By *David Leitch*

In January 2006, Dean Mayo Moran was installed as the 9th Dean of the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, the first woman in its 150 year history. Since that time, she has embarked on an extensive "Listening Tour" to learn about the major challenges and opportunities facing the legal profession. Her meetings have taken her to the offices of over 30 large and small law firms in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, London, and New York and she also met with leaders of the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Ontario Bar Association. She has plans to continue the tour in the fall to reach out to many more alumni.

Ms. Moran told *Briefly Speaking* about her own route to the profession and her goal as the new Dean:

"I began my career as a high school English teacher in Northern BC, but when the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was introduced in 1982, I became intrigued by the law. I went to McGill University for my LL.B. and then went on to do an LL.M. at the University of Michigan and a S.J.D. at the University of Toronto. This law school is an amazing intellectual environment with exceptional faculty members and students. As Dean, I want to create a more intimate learning environment while still engaging in the global conversation about legal ideas."

Asked how U of T Law School is responding to the suggestion that law is becoming more "international" in its scope and practice, Dean Moran replied:

"Both the teaching of law and the practice of law have become so much more transnational and international. As legal educators, we need to respond by developing more collaborative programs. Our faculty is well-positioned because we are already much more comparative and transnational than many other institutions, particularly those in the United States."

How is the students' classroom experience different today than what "older" lawyers might remember?

"Laptop computers have transformed the nature of the classroom. I had 75 students in my first year Torts class and almost all of them took notes on their laptops. This means students don't make much eye contact with teachers and classrooms are starting to resemble typing pools. At some U.S. schools – Harvard is one example – some professors have banned the use of laptops. I am not a fan of

that idea but the intellectual experience of law school is lost when students stop interacting with their professors and with each other. So we are looking at – dare I say it? – more Socratic forms of teaching."

How do you intend to ensure that the law school remains accessible to all talented students?

"I have been looking closely at this issue and I think the numbers suggest we are doing a very good job. We get more applicants than we did 10 years ago and the applicants are stronger. (We all wonder if we would get into law school these days.) In the past decade, we have done well on accessibility because we have been proactive on financial aid. For example, last year alone we disbursed more than 2 million dollars in front-end and back-end financial assistance.

There has actually been an increase in the percentage of students from low-income families. At the same time, the quality of applicants (measured by GPA and LSAT scores) has also improved, the gender balance has stayed the same and diversity has increased."

What are you doing to ensure that students have viable career choices when they graduate and are able to take lower paying public interest jobs if that is their preference?

"We encourage students to think broadly about their careers. We have amazing programs in public interest law, pro bono, and international human rights, as well as opportunities to work in various legal clinics and on international internships over the summer. We also have a dedicated staff person in the Career Development Office who counsels students on public interest career paths and provides specific programs and resources. And our back-end debt relief program provides financial support to students who choose less lucrative careers that are often in the public interest area."

Is it true that the law school will be staying on its current site in Flavelle House

and Falconer Hall?

"Yes, when the Royal Ontario Museum decided to withdraw its plans to develop the Planetarium site immediately north of the law school, this opened up the possibility of our staying in our current location and building new space on our existing two historic buildings, Falconer and Flavelle. Over the next few months, I will be consulting broadly and looking for creative ideas for the building project. Of course, we will have to raise the necessary funds to support the renovation and building (approximately \$40 to \$60 million). Construction itself, which will likely not start for three years, will take 18 months to two years to complete. During the construction phase, it will be important to minimize disruption to the student body. Ideally, I will look for a location where the entire law school community can move en masse for the period of construction. I hope that all of the building will be completed by the end of my term as Dean in 2011."



Dean Moran with law students