

## GABRIEL WILNER TRIBUTE

*Rebecca H. White\**

On behalf of the University of Georgia's School of Law, I thank the *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law* for organizing this issue in honor of our former colleague, Gabriel M. Wilner. And I also thank the *Journal* for inviting me to write these remarks in tribute to Gabe.

Professor Wilner was a member of our faculty for thirty-seven years. And during his lengthy career with us, he wore many hats, often simultaneously. At the time of his death, for example, Gabe served not only as the Executive Director of our Rusk Center, but he also served as the Associate Dean for our LL.M. program and the Director of our summer study abroad program in Brussels. And he managed these responsibilities while serving as the Charles H. Kirbo Chair, teaching a full course load of international law offerings.

Gabe was passionate about his work. The Brussels Seminar on the Law and Institutions of the European Union, held in Brussels, Belgium each summer from 1973 until the time of Gabe's death, was a program for which Gabe had a particular fondness. Gabe organized and directed the program, and generations of law students from Georgia and from law schools around the country learned about the law of Europe from Gabe and the team of instructors he assembled in Brussels. This study abroad program was established through the efforts of former U.S. Secretary of State and Sibley Professor Dean Rusk, who worked with Gabe on the program for over twenty-one years and to whose memory Gabe dedicated the Brussels program. We, in turn, honor Gabe's memory by our continuation of a program on European Union law that will continue to be taught in Brussels.

In 2000, Gabe became the Executive Director of the law school's Dean Rusk Center for International and Comparative Law. In existence since 1977, the Center has as its mission the promotion of international law and international cooperation. Gabe was the Center's third director, and under his leadership, the law school's international programs were consolidated and largely run through the Rusk Center. This included bringing the law school's LL.M. program, which Gabe had directed since 1985 and which has

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at its core providing education in United States law for foreign educated lawyers, under the Rusk Center's umbrella.

The loyalty of LL.M. graduates toward the law school was a testament to Gabe's work. Through the LL.M. program, our law school has a world-wide presence. And many of those LL.M. graduates remained close to Gabe through the years. The LL.M. graduates have their own alumni association, and once every five years, graduates of the program travel back to Athens from their jobs around the world. While the ostensible purpose was to reacquaint themselves with the law school and to mingle with friends, the real purpose, I'm convinced, was to see Gabe. He served as professor and adviser to these students during their time in Athens, and for years afterward, he maintained strong connections with these graduates, continuing to serve as a mentor and friend.

The affection for Gabe from former students was not limited to our LL.M. graduates. As Dean, I have the privilege of interacting with so many of our alumni, who share with me their memories of law school and of the faculty who inspired them. I have been struck through the years by the large number of former students who not only praise Gabe's dedication to their legal education but who credit Gabe with influencing their career choices and indeed their lives. Our law school has many prominent graduates who practice in the area of international law. And time after time, I hear from these lawyers that Gabe Wilner is the reason their practice has an international law component. They tell me of Gabe's influence on them as lawyers, and they describe Gabe as a professor who truly wanted his students to make a difference in the area of the law he devoted his life to advancing.

Law professors often are privileged to impact the lives and careers of their students. Gabe certainly did. His is a legacy that will long be a part of our law school, and we were privileged to have had him as a faculty member for almost four decades. His life's work, through his former students, continues, and our law school is the richer for his presence with us.