

Getting to Know Interim Dean

REBECCA H. WHITE

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- Interim Dean Rebecca H. White

Editor's Note: Hosch Professor Rebecca H. White assumed the position of interim dean of the law school on July 1, 2003, after her predecessor, David E. Shipley, announced his resignation. With a wide range of academic experience, Dean White is aptly suited for Georgia Law's top position. She has been a Georgia Law faculty member since 1989; served as a University of Georgia associate provost and associate vice president for academic affairs; received the Josiah Meigs Award, UGA's highest honor for teaching excellence; and been awarded the law school's Faculty Book Award for teaching excellence six times as well as the John C. O'Byrne Award for furthering student/faculty relations. In addition, she is an accomplished scholar in the fields of labor and employment law.

Left: Interim Dean Rebecca White is the first female to lead Georgia Law in its distinguished 145-year history. Here she poses in the law school's rotunda with a portrait of the institution's first leader, Joseph Henry Lumpkin, in the background.

Opposite page: At Homecoming 2003, Interim Dean White mingles with alumnus and former student Clement Doyle (J.D. '99), his wife Mary Margaret and son Clay.



As is typical, whenever there is a new dean at Georgia Law, the editor of the Advocate sits down with the institution's new leader to provide readers with some insight as to where the dean plans to direct the school, the challenges he or she will face and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Q: Georgia Law will celebrate its 145th anniversary this fall. What does it mean to you to be the first female dean to lead the school in its distinguished history?

A: It is an honor and a privilege to lead this law school and to follow in the footsteps of so many talented and dedicated people who have helped shape our institution. Certainly, I am pleased to be the first woman to serve in this capacity. Each time a woman accomplishes a "first" I think it makes it that much easier for other women, and it demonstrates to our students that our profession welcomes and values talented people, male and female, in leadership positions.

Q: What do you think is the school's greatest strength?

A: Its students.

Q: What is the school's greatest weakness?

A: The size of our faculty. We need additional faculty, and I hope to hire some outstanding professors this academic year.

Q: What objectives would you like to achieve during your tenure as dean?

A: Enhancing our academic reputation, enriching our learning environment and increasing private giving.

Q: What objective is primary?

A: I think these objectives are interrelated. Increasing our level of private support is essential if we are to accomplish our other objectives. We need to hire new faculty and provide additional support for our faculty's scholarly activities. Doing so not only increases the research productivity of our faculty but it also enriches the learning environment for our students by allowing us to expand curricular offerings and to expose our students to additional talented people who can generate excitement about their areas of teaching and research. Enhancing our academic reputation and our learning environment means additional resources must be obtained. Since I do not believe it realistic to expect increased public support during these economic times, these additional resources must come from our alumni and friends.

Q: You have been a law professor and served in UGA's central administration. How does the role of a law school dean differ from what you anticipated?

A: First, let me say that I believe my prior experiences as a law professor and as associate provost for the university were excellent training for this job. I am familiar with not only the faculty and staff of our school but also with the workings of the university as a whole. But, having said that, the role of the dean is substantially different from these prior roles. In many ways, a law school dean's job is a lot like running a small university. We have our own admissions, registrar, career services, alumni and development offices, and, importantly, our own library. So, a law dean not only

is a leader of academic programs but of the law school as a whole. I never know when I come into the office in the morning what problems or opportunities will present themselves, which is very different from being a law professor and reminds me of my days practicing law. Fund raising is increasingly a critical component of a law dean's job, and that is a wholly new experience for me. But I'm finding, somewhat to my surprise, that I enjoy it immensely.

Q: Has your transition to the top post at the law school been difficult?

A: I don't get as much sleep, and my personal time is very limited. But I feel I've hit the ground running.

Q: Will you continue to teach while being dean? Do you think you will ever return to the classroom full time?

A: I am teaching Employment Discrimination this fall semester, which is bit of a challenge because it is a demanding class that meets three times a week. But I would not want to give up teaching completely while I am in this job. I love it too much. As for whether I think I will ever return to the classroom full time, absolutely I will.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge personally since becoming dean?

A: I have a 16-year-old daughter, and this job has affected the amount of time I am available for her. Because she's a teenager, I'm not sure she really wants me around all that much, but I do find myself regretting my inability to spend as much time with her as I would like. Taking on this job would have been much easier for me two years from now, but I believed it was important to accept this responsibility when I was asked to perform it.



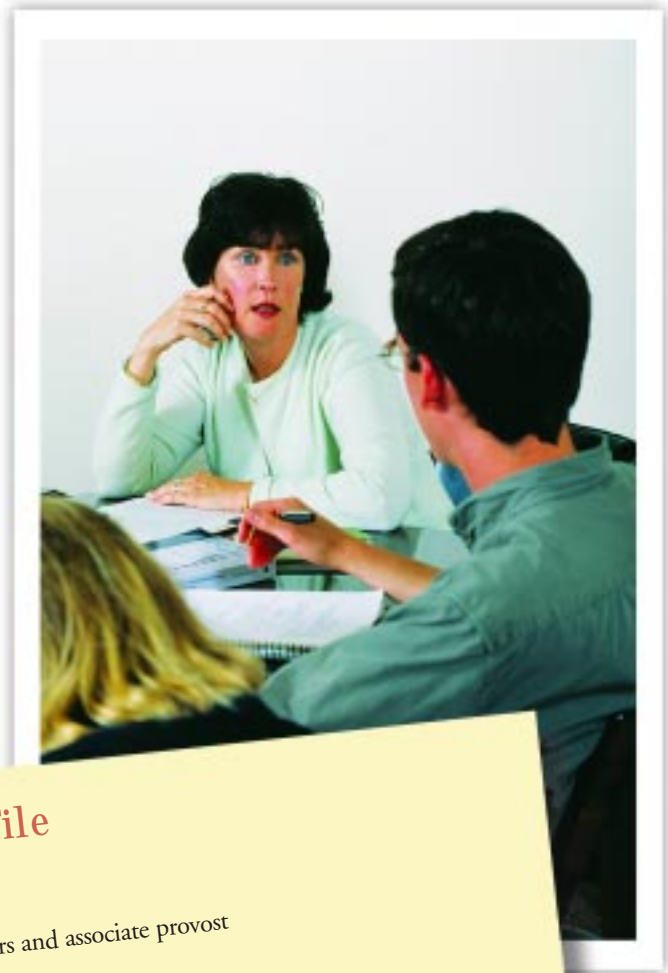
Q: *You are serving as dean in an interim capacity. How long do you think you will serve the university in this role? Do you aspire to become the dean on a permanent basis?*

A: I don't know how long this interim capacity will last. Ultimately, that is not my call to make. However, as you know, we do not have a dean search underway, so I will be in the job for at least the next year or so. Whether or not I would like to become the dean on a permanent basis will depend in large part on what I think of the job I've been doing. If I think I can contribute effectively and am enjoying the job, then I will likely want to stay on. I'll make that decision when the time comes.

Q: *What is the one thing you want alumni to know about you? How about other sectors of the law school community - students, faculty and staff?*

A: I love our school and am committed to doing my level best to make it an even better school. I do not expect everyone to agree with every decision I make, but I do hope the various constituencies of the law school will understand that I am making the decisions that I believe are in the best interest of our school. ■

White instructs students in one of her classes in 2000, the same year she received UGA's Josiah Meigs Award, the university's highest teaching honor. ►



The White File

Professional Experience:

2003 – present Georgia Law dean
2002-03 UGA associate vice president for academic affairs and associate provost
1989 – present Georgia Law faculty member
1982-1989 Labor and employment lawyer at Dinsmore & Shohl, Cincinnati, OH
1981-82 Judicial law clerk for Chief Judge George C. Edwards of the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals

Publications:

In addition to publishing articles in the law reviews of schools such as Boston College, Emory, Georgia, Michigan, Ohio State, William and Mary among many others, White is also coauthor of several books including *Cases and Materials on Employment Discrimination* (6th ed. 2003) and *Employment Discrimination: Law and Practice* (3rd ed. 2002)

UGA/Georgia Law Honors:

Josiah Meigs Teaching Award, UGA's highest teaching honor - 2000
Student Bar Association Faculty Book Award for Excellence in Teaching - 2002, 1996, 1994, 1993, 1992, 1991
John C. O'Byrne Award for Contributions Furthering Student/Faculty Relations - 1991
Honorary Graduating Class Marshall - 1992
UGA Senior Teaching Fellow - 2000-01
UGA Lilly Teaching Fellow - 1991-92

Education:

J.D., University of Kentucky, 1981 (graduated first in class)
B.A., Eastern Kentucky University, 1976

Family:

Husband

Son

Daughter

Daniel White, associate director for programs at the Institute for Continuing Legal Education
Brendan, sophomore at Furman University
Maren, junior at Athens Academy

Hometown:

Lexington, Kentucky