

DEAN WEXLER'S REMARKS

*Joan G. Wexler**

Good afternoon. I am Joan Wexler, Dean of Brooklyn Law School, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to our Legal Writing Symposium, celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Brooklyn Law School Legal Writing Program.

We are very proud of our outstanding Legal Writing Program, which teaches cogent, persuasive, and eloquent writing—an essential skill for the practicing attorney. We are also proud of our outstanding writing faculty—authors of three of the leading writing textbooks and many scholarly articles. Our writing faculty are also active participants in legal writing conferences.

Some years ago, faculty members at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and twenty-three other colleges and universities conducted an assessment¹ of how undergraduate students could make the most of their educations.² Two conclusions from the Assessment are relevant to our discussion here today.

First, the Assessment found there is one academic goal that is widely shared by students: they want to improve their writing.³ They know they will be asked to write an enormous amount in college, and most expect this to continue after they graduate.

Second, the Assessment found that there is a close relationship between the amount of writing for a course and the students' level of engagement in the course.⁴ The more students write, the more engaged they are with their learning.

The importance of writing has been emphasized in the legal academy as well, through the increased professionalization of legal writing programs, the development of legal writing scholarship,

* © 2006, Joan G. Wexler. All rights reserved. Joan G. Wexler has been the Dean of Brooklyn Law School since 1994. She joined the faculty in 1985 and served as Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for six years before being named Dean. She also taught at New York University School of Law, worked as an associate of Debevoise & Plimpton, and served as a law clerk to Judge Jack B. Weinstein of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York. Dean Wexler is an active member of many legal organizations and has published in the areas of family and matrimonial law.

¹ Richard J. Light, *Explorations with Students and Faculty about Teaching, Learning, and Student Life* (2d rpt., Harv. Assessment Serv., Harv. Univ. Graduate Sch. of Educ. & Kennedy Sch. of Govt. 1992).

² *Id.* at cover pg. 4.

³ *Id.* at 24.

⁴ *Id.* at 25.

and the expanded number of writing courses offered beyond the first year of law school. This Symposium explores the relevance of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement to legal education. Participants will consider the ways in which faculty may creatively use writing to teach doctrine and to develop students' analytic and persuasive skills, and will report on some of the problems they have encountered.

I hope you find these presentations stimulating, and I thank you for coming.