One Path Towards the Future [introduction]

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The theme of this issue is the “Past, Present, and Future” of Duquesne University School of Law. In this short note, I introduce two articles which reflect recent changes to our program of instruction that suggest the future direction of the school.

In the spring of 2006, the faculty and administration of Duquesne University School of Law made the decision to devote more resources to the skills training of our students, and embarked on a path that resulted in a new Legal Research & Writing Program that began operations in the fall of 2007. Built around an experienced program director, three full-time professors of legal writing, and an increased number of adjunct professors, the new program boasts low student-to-faculty ratios and a demanding curriculum. For every year since the program began, we have gained national recognition through U.S. News & World Report as one of the nation’s top Legal Research & Writing programs, with a top-ten listing for the magazine’s 2012 “Best Graduate Schools” issue.

Further, the Legal Research & Writing Program faculty have hosted two national Legal Writing conferences at Duquesne. The first Colonial Frontier Legal Writing Conference was held on December 5, 2009.

2. Before joining Duquesne’s faculty, I directed the writing programs at the University of Virginia School of Law, the University of Arkansas Leflar Law Center, and Temple University School of Law.
Volume 48, Issue 3 of the *Duquesne Law Review* contained thirteen articles written by presenters at the first conference.6

On March 5, 2011, the Legal Writing faculty at the Duquesne University School of Law hosted the Second Colonial Frontier Legal Writing Conference.7 There were sixty-two attendees, including fifty-two law professors from twenty-eight law schools. The theme of the conference was “The Arc of Advanced Legal Writing: From Theory through Teaching to Practice.”8 Nationally renowned scholars and legal writing professors Michael Smith (Wyoming), Elizabeth Fajans (Brooklyn), and Mary Ray (Wisconsin) were the lead presenters at the conference, and this issue of the *Duquesne Law Review* contains two articles based on the presentations, written by Mary Ray9 and Elizabeth Fajans.10 We anticipate that a third piece, written by Michael Smith, will appear in the next volume of the *Duquesne Law Review*.

In addition, three legal writing professors from the Dayton University School of Law, Sheila Miller, Susan Wawrose, and Victoria VanZandt spoke about their extensive surveys of the bench and bar, and reported on the advanced writing skills that lawyers and judges believe new attorneys should have.11 Then three of Duquesne’s legal writing professors, Julia Glencer, Erin Karsman, and Tara Willke described the team-taught advanced legal writing “law firm simulation” course they have created.12 The closing session was a panel of law firm attorneys from the firm of Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis LLP. George E. McGrann, Marla K. Conley, and Bruce P. Merenstein, addressed how law firms can be agents of curricular change, encouraging law schools to implement advanced legal writing courses.13

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12. Their PowerPoint presentation is available at http://www.duq.edu/law/lrwp/pdf/conference-2011/presentation-glencer-karsman-willke.pdf (last visited May 19, 2011). Development of the course was funded in part by a grant from the Association of Legal Writing Directors.
13. See Levine, supra note 5.
These conferences, and other work by the Legal Writing faculty, have put Duquesne firmly into the forefront of a national movement to train students better by devoting more attention to skills, and we have known for decades that the core skills for any lawyers are research and writing. The students have responded very well to the new program, and beginning with Duquesne's class of 2010, our graduates have entered full-time law practice with a better foundation for their future work. In July 2011, Professors Willke, Karsman, and Glencer will become tenure-track faculty members at the law school, a major step to ensure that our work continues as Duquesne University School of Law begins the second hundred years of existence.

14. See e.g. ROY STUCKEY, ET AL., BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL EDUCATION: A VISION AND A ROADMAP (Clinical Legal Education Ass'n 2007); WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN, ANNE COLBY, JUDITH WELCH WEGNER, LLOYD BOND & LEE S. SHULMAN, EDUCATING LAWYERS: PREPARATION FOR THE PROFESSION OF LAW (Jossey-Bass 2007).


16. Glencer, supra note 3, at 264-72 (detailing the responses from student evaluations of the new writing program).
