

A Tribute to my Dean

*By Annette E. Clark**

Dean James E. Bond taught me most of what I know about leadership. He was my dean – he began his tenure at this law school in 1986, the same year I began my law studies, he offered me a position on the tenure-track faculty in 1989 as I completed my 3L year, and he started me down the path of being an administrator when he invited me to be his Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in 1997. Without his guidance and mentoring and the confidence he showed in me, I would not be a dean today, and for that, I owe him everything. In my very first public presentation after I became the dean in 2013, I explained to the audience that as I faced the inevitable challenges of leading, my plan was to ask myself “What would Jim do?” I have stayed true to that plan, and it has served me exceedingly well, particularly in dealing with difficult institutional decisions involving downsizing the law school and managing the resultant financial challenges and in guiding the law school through the recent COVID-19 crisis.

What I learned from observing and working alongside Jim is that good leadership requires a set of essential skills: the capacity to communicate effectively (he was a master communicator and orator, and an even better listener), having a clarity of purpose and the willingness to act decisively when necessary, the ability to wear many different hats and appeal to different constituencies (I marveled as I watched Jim go from reading *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* to the staff to giving formal remarks on the founding of our country), organizational aptitude and mastery of numerous details, a genuine interest in people and a desire to build relationships, and the ability to envision the future you want for the organization and to work backwards from that future to articulate the steps going forward.

I also learned by observing Dean Bond that a leader who has those skills and nothing more would not succeed, at least not at the high level Jim set for himself and those around him. What I realized in watching him lead on a daily basis is that exemplary leadership is born from your heart, and your love for the work you’re doing, the people you’re working with, and the students who have entrusted you with their education. It is moral leadership that defined Dean Bond’s time with us. He led with integrity,

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honesty, a commitment to do what was right rather than what was expedient, and an understanding that leadership, even in times of great challenge, is a privilege. He knew who he was and what he valued, and he acted consistent with those values. You could trust Jim Bond's word; you could trust that he was being honest and straightforward with you. He respected others, including those whose views differed markedly from his own. He listened, he cared, and he loved the law, our country, and being an academic. He was an optimist and saw the good in others. Jim also brought joy and a wonderful sense of humor to his role. One of the things I remember vividly from the days I spent working alongside him is the laughter. Despite the seriousness of our work, he made deaning fun.

When I think about Dean Bond's legacy as an administrator, four things come to mind. First was his emphasis on pursuing academic quality, both in the student body and faculty. He immediately began reducing the size of the law school in order to improve the academic credentials of the student body, and he utilized his keen intellect, natural curiosity, oratory skills, and deep understanding of the law and our nation's history to begin to raise the level of intellectual engagement within the faculty. Second was his masterful handling of the transition of the law school from the University of Puget Sound to Seattle University. Although he was angry that the UPS sold the law school and he made his views known publicly, Jim quickly came to embrace the change of affiliation. He was particularly visionary when it came to seeing the value of our becoming a part of a Jesuit university, and he saw, almost from the beginning, the ways in which both the law school and Seattle University would be enriched by the change in sponsorship. He came from a tradition at Wake Forest where the law school was an integral part of the larger university, and he knew the benefits that would flow to the law school (and our students, faculty, staff, and alumni) from having a parent university that valued what a law school can bring to the educational enterprise. The third component of Jim Bond's legacy is the relationships he cultivated within the university and the legal profession. Our strong standing within Seattle University and the external legal community flows, in part, from his understanding that the dean is external face of the law school and its most important ambassador. He was an institution builder by nature, and we continue to benefit today from his efforts to forge strong bonds within these communities. And fourth and finally, Jim left us the legacy of our gorgeous and functional law school building. Sullivan Hall is truly the house that Dean Bond built.

Jim's legacy doesn't end, however, with his thirteen years as dean. As good as he was at being an administrator, he was perhaps an even better teacher. Fortunately for the law school and his students, he somehow found the time to teach at least one course each year—usually Criminal

Law—while he was dean. Although his leadership was vitally important to this institution, his impact on individual students was far greater as a teacher, and it is the quality of his teaching that makes him so beloved among our alumni. Jim was brilliant, organized, and intellectually engaging, and the hallmark of his teaching was that he loved to play with ideas and alternative viewpoints. Despite the fact that he never practiced law a day in his life, he taught law as more than an intellectual exercise because he understood at a deep level the critically important role lawyers play in our society and the sacred trust they hold as defenders of the Constitution and as zealous advocates for their clients. Jim reflected on the primacy of teaching in his long academic career when he uttered these words upon his retirement: “You cannot imagine what a joy it is to see one’s students transform themselves into lawyers.”

I had the privilege of representing Seattle University and the School of Law at the memorial service that was held for Jim in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in November. While listening to stories of the impact he had on people’s lives, what struck me most was that Jim had returned “home” when he retired to North Carolina. I had always thought of Dean Bond as ours, but the reality is that he was only on loan to the law school. North Carolina was the place that nurtured him, where he first became an academic, and where he and his wife Georgana had raised their precious son Garth. In the end, North Carolina called him home, and it is fitting that he rests in that place.

I miss Dean James Bond deeply, but I carry him with me, and I strive to live up to the leadership mark he set every day. It’s a humbling experience, but one that I embrace, particularly today, as I lead a law school community that has been separated from each other by the coronavirus pandemic but remains united in our love for the law and our determination to carry forward Dean Bond’s legacy of “a life in the law at the service of justice.”