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Dear Friends of Iowa Law:

Later this month, newly enrolled law students will be introduced to a place so many of us hold close to our hearts. I thought that you, as alumni and supporters of the University of Iowa College of Law, might welcome an update on the ways in which we are addressing the changing—and sometimes challenging—legal environment that law schools across the country are increasingly finding themselves having to navigate.

For nearly 150 years, the College of Law has been dedicated to doing the right thing for our students, the legal profession, and the University as a whole. Among the many accomplishments we can be proud of, the College of Law was the first to graduate a female law student; we were among the very first to graduate African-American students; we were among the first to make legal research and writing a central part of the first-year curriculum and to introduce clinical legal education; and our progressive history and reputation help us consistently rank among the top law schools in the country. Every day, we see the results of our longstanding principles: through their work in law, business, and government, College of Law graduates are making a powerful difference in people's lives.

Over the past several years, a sluggish national economy has affected nearly every segment of society. As you know too well, the legal profession is certainly not immune to these difficult times; we have seen continued uncertainty across the industry. Because the ailing economy has also caused government revenues to decline, public institutions are being asked to do more with less. Across the country, young people today are graduating with more debt than at any time in history, as tuitions and fees at both public and private law schools continue to rise.

In the face of these mounting challenges, the total number of students taking the LSAT has declined dramatically over the past decade, with one-third fewer students taking that exam this year than last year. As a result, the number of well-qualified applicants for law schools across the country has sharply declined. The simple truth is that fewer students today are willing to commit to the cost of a law degree.

For a time, the College of Law remained almost entirely insulated from this storm. In the first few years of the recession, the number of applications we received was actually up over previous years, while applications at other law schools were already falling. But faced with an overwhelming national trend, we knew it was inevitable that we too would likely see a steep decline in applications. The inevitable has finally occurred.

With significantly fewer applicants to choose from this year, we were left with a decision: maintain the number of students in the incoming class or maintain the high quality of our student body. You will not be surprised to learn that we chose to protect the caliber of the class, rather than its size. The effect of this decision is that the College of Law expects to matriculate approximately 95 J.D. students this year.

The bright minds that are headed to Iowa City this fall are as good as we have ever seen, upholding our proud tradition of academic performance and excellence. Looking at these incoming students, this class is remarkably similar to those we have admitted in recent years. More than half of our entering class consists of Iowa residents; 23 other states and one foreign country are also represented. The number of students who already have advanced degrees is stable at eight percent. And we were able to increase the percentage of incoming students from historically under-represented groups to 20 percent.

By remaining steadfastly committed to producing lawyers of the highest caliber, we have continued to achieve great success in placing our graduates with their first employers. Despite the challenging economic circumstances, we consistently outperform the national average in placing students in legal jobs (complete employment information can be found at [www.law.uiowa.edu/about/statistics.php](http://www.law.uiowa.edu/about/statistics.php)). An Iowa Law degree enables our graduates to go as far as their ambitions take them, with the most recent class accepting employment in 31 different states and territories and seven foreign countries.

We are taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by smaller class sizes to enhance our already strong program of legal education. This incoming class will benefit from a new plan to incorporate legal writing across the curriculum; they will be able to take advantage of a new field placement program that enables students to spend as much as a semester in professional settings across the country; and they will experience our new simulcast classroom that provides live instruction and discussion when students and their teacher are geographically separated.

We also are making plans for future expansion. A new early matriculation program will allow highly qualified undergraduate juniors to come to law school in their senior year, saving one year of study and tuition. An advanced-standing J.D. program for international lawyers will allow them to complete the degree in two years instead of the usual three. We also have a revamped LL.M. program and a new S.J.D. program awaiting approval by our accrediting body.

The College of Law stands in the midst of exciting and dynamic change. And yet even as we look forward to new students, new classes and new horizons, we also look back to all those who came before -- including those of you reading this letter -- to honor an extraordinary commitment to building and supporting an institution that is among the finest anywhere in the country. Throughout our long history, we have benefitted from the loyalty of friends and alumni like you to protect and preserve the University of Iowa College of Law. Thank you for your commitment this fine institution. Your support has always made a tremendous difference to us and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

Very truly yours,



Gail B. Agrawal  
Dean and F. Wendell Miller Professor of Law