Dear Alumni,

As anyone who practices law — or even reads the newspapers — knows, this is a time of challenge for the legal profession and law schools. But Georgetown Law, which has been at the forefront of thoughtful change in legal education for decades, is responding in ways that make us, once again, a leader, a school that others in legal academia will follow. As the new academic year starts, it is a privilege to be able to share with you news of some of these initiatives and our successes.

Despite declining enrollment nationally and significant concern by students about investing in legal education, we have an entering class of great strength. The J.D. class’s median LSAT score was in the 95th percentile nationally, and their median undergraduate GPA was the highest in Georgetown’s history. The LL.M. class is equally strong, hailing from 63 countries and bringing to the Law Center an extraordinary range of backgrounds and achievements. This accomplishment is due to a number of factors. Georgetown Law continues to be a desirable destination law school. At a time in which J.D. applications declined nationally by 15 percent, our talented pool of applicants is down only 6 percent from last year, and we continue to receive more applications than any other law school in the nation. We take admissions seriously. While few top law schools interview a significant number of applicants, we not only have such a program, but we have been expanding it. This year, more than 2,000 of our applicants (and well more than half of the entering 1L class) were interviewed by either an alumni volunteer or by Dean Andy Cornblatt. This program both helps us select the most deserving applicants and, because alumni reach out to admitted applicants, helps in recruitment. Another vitally important feature of our admissions success is that we have enhanced financial support. At a time when students are understandably concerned about the affordability of legal education, we have increased financial aid to make a Georgetown education more accessible. Alumni gifts are the key to financial aid, and I am grateful for the contributions our alumni are making to ensure that the great students who want a Georgetown education are able to receive one.

Just as we have been focused on recruiting a great entering class, we have also been focused on ensuring that our students will have a strong start to their legal careers when they graduate. We are providing more than a million dollars to support fellowships for students working in the public interest during the summer, a program that helps them develop their legal skills. Similarly, when they graduate, they are able to participate in our Entry into Practice Program, which provides fellowships for them to work in the public interest and gain practical experience. Meanwhile, Career Services is rolling out an innovative new program to provide 1Ls with trained alumni mentors in a small-group setting. These “mentoring circles” mean that students can explore career concerns right from the very beginning of their law school experience.
Most fundamentally, however, we help our students prepare for successful and meaningful careers by providing them with an educational experience that is of unrivaled quality. A distinctive aspect of a Georgetown education is our commitment to providing students with academic experiences that link theory and practice. We have, of course, the leading clinical program in the country, and this year we will be expanding it by launching a new clinic in transactional law taught by Professor Alicia Plerhoples. We have also recently deepened our commitment to experiential education by developing an array of practicum courses that no other law school can begin to match. Practicum courses are seminars combined with a field placement or with a policy project. The number of these courses has increased from three to 33 during the last three years. They provide students with remarkable opportunities to study the law, see it in practice, and reflect on how the law actually operates. For instance, students in Federal Fraud Prosecution learned economic crime investigation techniques and trial issues while working 15 hours a week in the Justice Department's Fraud Unit. Students in How to Work the Hill: A Guide to Lawyer in the Congress were placed in 17 congressional offices and congressional committees to learn how laws are made. They reflected on their insights in a seminar and pitched to Senate staffers their proposals on how to amend filibuster rules. Students in Advanced Environmental Law grappled with the regulatory and constitutional issues of climate change. At the same time as we have been developing our practicum curriculum, we have also been dramatically expanding our externship opportunities, which have increased five-fold in the past three years. I am particularly proud of the fact that this year we combined our externships with 25 pass-fail workshops designed to teach students skills related to their externships. They choose several over the semester to meet their needs. These workshops include such subjects as learning how to write congressional testimony, how to engage in strategic planning, and how to network effectively.

Of course, we’re always striving to improve, especially now that we’re undergoing our once-every-five-year strategic planning process. Associate Dean and Professor Jane Aiken and Professor Mitt Regan, who chair the faculty strategic planning committee, have held an unprecedented series of meetings and retreats with alumni, a broad range of employers, students, and faculty to solicit suggestions on how to improve our curriculum with new legal realities in mind and how best to approach the future in a way that reflects the Georgetown Law mission.

It has been an invaluable process, and one that has profoundly influenced my thinking about legal education. It has already led to innovations. A new intensive one-week financial literacy course called Demystifying Finance will give upper-class students a head start in finance and accounting. We are also looking at whether to incorporate other skills traditionally taught in business schools — such as management, leadership, and strategic planning — more fully into our curriculum. Our planning discussions have encouraged us to launch the short courses linked to our externships and our faculty members have also been developing curricular pathways that students can follow to pursue their interests in areas such as business law and intellectual property.

A consistent refrain we have heard during the planning process is the importance of maximizing our D.C. location, which makes us uniquely suited to teach students to understand in a deep way the ways in which government works. Needless to say, that location already enriches Georgetown Law. Last year, every case the Supreme Court heard was mooted first at our Supreme Court Institute, a phenomenon the Sunday New York Times featured in an article last June. This year, in addition to providing each 1L a chance to attend an oral argument, the Supreme Court Institute will also give upper class students a chance to participate in a judicial clerkship practicum where students act as “law clerks” for their law professor “justices.” Students filled over 300 externship and practicum placements in federal agencies last year.

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Our students make the most out of studying law only minutes away from the Capitol. “That’s the great thing about being at Georgetown Law,” said John Tran (L’14), who was interviewed outside the Supreme Court after an oral argument last winter. “It’s hard not to feel involved while right in the middle of all these exciting things that happen in D.C.” Says Katherine Ivari, an LL.M. student from France, “There’s no better place to study law than in the nation’s capital.” (I encourage you to watch interviews with John and Katherine, who appear in videos on our website.)

Our core strength is our remarkable faculty. Their dedication to teaching is profound. This year, as I taught the Section Three Legal Justice class for the first time, I was reminded again of how deep that commitment is as so many of my colleagues who had taught the course before helped me think through my classes or as I sat in Mike Seidman’s insightful and thoughtful lectures. And our faculty’s commitment to excellence in legal scholarship is inspiring. This year, the quantity and quality of our faculty’s contributions to the leading law reviews in the country has been stunning, and our professors have new or forthcoming books on constitutional law, criminal law, and legal ethics. Their contributions to the op-ed pages of our leading newspapers and the most influential legal blogs have been equally impressive. And if you had visited the Social Science Research Network database site — the go-to place for cutting-edge legal research — last summer, you would have found that five of the top 10 “All Time Hits” in the category “U.S. Constitutional Law: Interpretation & Judicial Review” were by Georgetown Law professors.

As we celebrate our faculty, I would like to single out for praise Bob Pitofsky, our former dean, who is retiring. Bob is a giant in the history of the Law Center and the profession — a brilliant scholar whose contributions to the field of antitrust are particularly notable, a superb teacher, a dedicated public servant who was an outstanding chair of the FTC, and an extraordinary dean who, among his many accomplishments, spearheaded the building of the Williams Library, a building that transformed both our research capacity and our campus. It has been a privilege to get to know Bob during my tenure at Georgetown, and I know that you join me in wishing him well — and thanking him — as he begins his well-deserved retirement.

As we mark Bob’s retirement, we are very pleased to welcome Anna Gelpern to our full-time faculty this fall. Gelpern, who was a visiting professor last year, is one of the world’s leading experts on sovereign debt. She comes to the Law Center from American University’s Washington College of Law, where she taught international finance, contracts, and financial institutions. Gelpern has contributed to international initiatives on financial reform and sovereign borrowing, most recently as an expert for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Meanwhile, our lectures and symposia continue to draw legal luminaries to campus. Justice Antonin Scalia helped us celebrate the inaugural event of the new Georgetown Center for the Constitution. Sen. Patrick Leahy (L’64) came here to outline the agenda for the 113th Congress’s Senate Judiciary Committee, which he chairs. In early April, teams from law schools across the country joined Georgetown Law students to face simulated threats at the first-ever National Security Crisis Invitational.
Our students distinguish themselves in many ways, such as placing first among the highest ranked moot court teams in the nation at the Andrews Kurth Moot Court National Championship. Also, for the first time in its history, Georgetown won the Texas Young Lawyer’s Association National Trial Competition National Championship. Our students distinguish themselves in generosity, too. An unprecedented 82 percent of the J.D. Class of 2013 made a gift to the Law Center. The previous record had been set by the Class of 1999, 56 percent. These gifts, totaling nearly $10,000, reflect a commitment by the Class of 2013 that will lead to critical support for Georgetown Law in the years ahead.

This brings me to you, our loyal alumni, who are part of everything we do, everything we are. Your attendance at events in New York, Los Angeles and elsewhere across the country, your phenomenal return rate on the alumni survey — all are further proof that the depth and engagement of our institution has never been stronger.

Please consider making a generous donation today. On behalf of the Georgetown Law community, I thank you for your past — and future — support, and I wish you the very best.

With warm regards,

[Signature]

William Michael Treanor
Dean and Professor
Georgetown University Law Center