Dear Alumni,

As our talented, dynamic students fill the classrooms of McDonough Hall, the study rooms of the libraries and the community spaces of Hotung and Gewirz at the start of another academic year, I am writing to update you on the most recent developments at the Law Center. As I begin my fifth year as Dean, I am mindful every day how important Georgetown Law’s mission is. We are committed to providing a rigorous academic environment for students, to enriching their education through exposure to cutting-edge scholarship, to challenging them to grapple thoughtfully with their obligation as lawyers to advance social justice, and to giving them the practice skills they need to be competitive in the global economy. Equipped with a Georgetown Law education, our graduates are ready to make important contributions to the world — and because the benefits of a Georgetown education are so consequential, we are working to ensure that Georgetown Law’s doors are open to the deserving students who want to study here. The developments that I discuss here reflect our focus on this mission.

The entering class of new students is simply remarkable. While, as you may have heard, law school applications nationally are down 8 percent, ours are up 7 percent. The average grade point average of the entering J.D. class is the highest in our history. But, of course, in selecting students we do not just look at their academic records. We look at students more broadly, considering the full range of skills and personal qualities that will equip them to contribute meaningfully as lawyers. As a result, we have continued to expand our admissions interviewing program — 53 percent of the entering class was interviewed in the admissions process, up from 14 percent just a few years ago.

Our LL.M. class is equally impressive. Students hail from 63 countries, and I have already heard from faculty members who taught them during the summer how strong this year’s students are. Some of these students are enrolled in one of our two new LL.M. programs. We are now offering an LL.M. in environmental law — an area of increasing importance and one of great depth on our faculty. Three years ago, we started an LL.M. in National Security Law; the environmental law program, like the national security law program, was established to help educate the next generation of leaders in a crucial field. We are also launching our first online degree program, an LL.M. in tax. As you know, we have one of the finest graduate tax programs in the country. We piloted online classes under a contract awarded to us by the IRS. Now, students who live anywhere in the world can apply to study in the program without moving to Washington, D.C. As we find new ways to open Georgetown’s doors to the best students, this online program is an important initiative.
When I last wrote you, at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, I reported on our superb new full-time faculty members: Bill Buzbee, a leading scholar in environmental law and administrative law; Anne Fleming, a rising star in the fields of consumer debt, bankruptcy and legal history; and Anne Marie Whitesell, a renowned practitioner in the area of alternative dispute resolution who will serve in our graduate program in the newly created position of professor of international arbitration and director of international dispute resolution programs. In addition to our new full-time faculty, I am pleased to report that we will also be joined by an extraordinary group of visiting faculty, 10 in all, who come to us from both the field of practice and from universities around the world; they will teach a broad array of courses such as civil rights, family law, law and literature, and sports law. Two areas of particular focus among this year’s visitors are tax and trade. We are honored to have David Schizer serving as the Law Center’s Martin D. Ginsburg Visiting Professor of Taxation. Dean Schizer, who spent the past decade serving as dean of Columbia Law with the greatest distinction, will co-teach a tax law and public finance workshop this spring. Professor George Yin, the former chief of staff of the U.S. Congress’s Joint Committee on Taxation, comes to us from Virginia Law, and he will teach Tax I and Tax II, as well as a seminar. In the area of trade, we are delighted to welcome Jennifer Hillman and Joost Pauwelyn. Hillman, who most recently served as one of seven judges from around the world on the World Trade Organization’s Appellate Body, will teach international trade and business law. Pauwelyn, a professor of international law at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, will teach an international trade law course as well as an innovative seminar that will team Georgetown Law students with those at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, using technology so our students in Washington, D.C., will be able to work on cases in front of the World Trade Organization. And once again, in addition to our new full-time faculty and visitors, we also welcome a deep and impressive group of new adjunct faculty, who bring into the classroom their practice experience and their understanding of the most pressing issues of the day.

Fall 2014 will see some wonderful initiatives on campus. Our new Center on Privacy and Technology launched in July, with Executive Director Alvaro Bedoya, who previously served as chief counsel to the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy and to Senator Al Franken (D-Minn.). In the years ahead, debates about privacy will shape central aspects of all our lives; the Center will ensure that our students and faculty are at the forefront of that debate and that our graduates are prepared to be leaders in privacy practice, policymaking and advocacy. The Law Center will also be home to an important series of symposia on public-private partnerships, building on our involvement in the White House Rural Council’s Rural Opportunity Investment Conference this summer.

We are also strengthening our curriculum in important ways. This summer, because of the generosity of April McLain-Delaney (L’89) and John Delaney (L’88), we were able to establish the Delaney Public Policy Scholars. The program, taught by Professor Laurie Rubiner, innovatively combined a public-policy related internship with a course that focused on the intersection between emerging legal issues and how those issues are best pursued in the context of public-policy coalition building, legislative and media strategy, and grassroots advocacy. Similarly, the Business Law Scholars Program, led by Professor Andrew Sherman, combined a business-law related internship with a course that taught students about strategic planning, corporate finance, human capital and governance, capital formation, management and communication.
Teaching our students to write effectively remains a major focus. Building on our deep first-year legal writing curriculum, this fall we will be starting an upper-class advanced professional writing initiative as an “add-on” to already popular courses such as Professor Julie O’Sullivan’s Federal White Collar Crime Seminar. For additional credit, students in the class will write several documents under the supervision of alumni practitioners in such relevant practice areas as client letters, legal research memoranda, motions and responses. We will offer at least six such courses this year. We are also continuing to develop new courses that combine classroom work with hands-on experience. For example, this spring law students in Professor Peter Byrne’s Urban Laboratory will collaborate with students in Georgetown’s program in Urban and Regional Planning, learning land-use planning law as it actually develops here in our D.C. neighborhoods. And the “Demystifying Finance” course we were able to launch last year through the generosity of Jules Kroll (L’66) remains a favorite. Nearly 100 eager students studied the basics of finance and accounting in an intensive weeklong program in August, and another 60 are scheduled to take it in January.

At the same time as we hire leading faculty members and launch new educational initiatives, we also remain conscious of the high cost of legal education. Of the nation’s top-ranked law schools, Georgetown’s tuition is among the lowest. With alumni support, we’ve been able to increase financial aid for many of our deserving law students. Yet we realize that legal education still remains out of reach for many talented students we would like to bring to Georgetown Law.

Dean of Admissions Andy Cornblatt and I are working together in a very focused way to make law school accessible to all our students. He and I will be traveling the country to raise support for financial aid, and we hope to see you along the way. And, because financial aid is so important, this year we have decided to direct all undesignated Law Annual Fund donations to financial aid, in order to help the dedicated students who need assistance the most. While you can still direct your contributions toward specific purposes, such as journals or the law library, all other funds will be used for financial aid. This is a new initiative — we have never before made a commitment to use the annual fund for a specific purpose — but we are making this commitment now to help make a Georgetown legal education accessible to our most deserving students.

Please consider making a donation to the Annual Fund. Georgetown Law provides an education of unparalleled quality. It should be available to the students who can benefit from it most, regardless of means.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Georgetown Law.

With best regards,

William M. Treanor
Dean and Professor
Georgetown University Law Center