

Friday, April 11, 2008

Dean T. Alexander Aleinikoff
Georgetown University Law Center
McDonough Hall 508
600 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Dean Aleinikoff,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing as the new President of the Student Bar Association (“SBA”). I was compelled to write this letter after a lengthy conversation I had with CIO Pablo Molina regarding social networking technologies at our University. This letter outlines the SBA’s proposal to create a comprehensive, online social network for our law school. As student representatives, we sincerely believe that significant improvements to our social networking tools will greatly improve our community. Any enhancements, small as they might be, have the potential to dramatically improve interactions between and within the student body, faculty, alumni community, and administration.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM.

There is a consensus that our current system is unworkable. There are essentially six separate social networking tools that Georgetown provides to professors, students, administrators and alumni. One is called *Courseware*, a system in which professors and students can post documents, have discussion boards and email one another. Every user must individually update that system, and it is far from integrated with our online course registration services. Stretching the definition of social networking, the second tool is *Law Mail*. A third tool is *Simplicity*, used by the Offices of Career Services (“OCS”) and Public Interest and Community Service (“OPICS”) as a job database and to organize career fairs.

The last two social networking tools attempt to connect students with alumni. Both their focus, however, is limited to job searches. For example, the fourth tool is a paper-only job database. OPICS and OCS separately gather alumni’s contact information, and then place it into big binders that are kept in each office’s libraries. The binders are incredibly hard to update and search through. In this, both administrators and students agree. The fifth tool is an alumni database run through the Georgetown Alumni Association’s website (alumni.georgetown.edu). It is called *Alumni Career Network* (“ACN”). Just like the OCS/OPICS paper database, the ACN is unsophisticated. It is rarely updated and its searching tool is very limiting. Also, it takes some six mouse-clicks and much searching to get to the ACN.

I recently tried searching for Law Center alumni through the ACN. I tried looking up information on six of our alumni: Kevin Conry F'76, L'86, the Law Center's Vice President for Law Strategic Development and External Affairs; 2007 Paul R. Dean Award recipient, Professor Sherman Cohn F'54, L'57, L'60; Gihan Fernando L'90, Assistant Dean for Career Services; Barbara Moulton L'89, Assistant Dean of Public Interest & Community Service; and Michael Goldman L'69, Director of Campus Ministries at the Law Center, as well as his late wife and fellow Georgetown Law classmate. Only Mrs. Moulton's information was available.

SUPPORT FOR AN IMPROVED SYSTEM.

In short, social networking at our Law Center is highly decentralized. It is cumbersome for all. Most importantly, I know we can do better. I have spoken to Deans Bailin, Fernando, and Moulton specifically about social networking at the school. I have also talked about the network to Mr. Conry; Matthew Calise, Assistant Director of Alumni Affairs; and Holly Eaton, Director for Pro Bono Programs. I also consulted with Pablo Molina, as mentioned above.

My impression is that everyone is on board. I have learned that everyone—current students, alumni, administrators, professors, OCS, OPICS and the law school's CIO—has been actively seeking, through different channels, the creation of a social network. Everyone wants an online tool that will unite our different, disparate communities into one.

I understand that the creation of such a network requires much more than technical capabilities. I know, for example, that our Law Center must adhere to different Georgetown-wide policies. Nonetheless, it pains me to know that a sophisticated social network has not been created despite years of talk about it. It saddens me to be aware of the inability to launch one, despite the generalized support and recognized need for it. Worst of all, on the alumni aspect alone, the opportunity cost of waiting an additional year to create such a social network is equivalent to losing the valuable information of some 4,300 graduating students per year,¹ roughly 800 of which are from the Law Center.

KADOO AS A POSSIBLE PLATFORM.

Mr. Molina has shown me an online application called *Kadoo*. I have, in turn, showed the application to students and SBA Delegates. Their reactions have been mostly positive. I believe that it would be beneficial to consolidate the patchwork of social networking tools that our school currently offers into *Kadoo*, or a similar platform. As a student representative, I must strongly urge the University to move towards an integrated system such a *Kadoo*. If the Main Campus does not take the lead, as a representative of some 2,600 Georgetown law students, I must implore the Law Center to take the lead in this important matter.

Such a network would put our school leagues ahead of our peer institutions. It would allow more fluid communications between students and professors. It would allow the distribution of information, both for curricular and extracurricular purposes, to be conducted in a more efficient and less intrusive fashion. It would allow the University to remain

¹ "Traditions Continue as 4,300 Students Graduate," Blue & Gray (May 21, 2007) ("Georgetown held its 208th commencement exercises over May 18 to 20[, 2007]. The university conferred degrees on more than 4,300 scholars in the Class of 2007. About 2,700 of those students received advanced degrees in master's or doctoral programs."

connected with alumni, long after they have graduated. It would be a powerful administrative resource, reducing double-posting on websites and misinformation. It would improve the communications apparatus at our university. It would undoubtedly create a tighter knit community among all Georgetown graduates, and certainly among Georgetown Law graduates. Most importantly, an integrated social network will serve as a catalyst in creating a more vibrant Georgetown University Community.

Lastly, the Student Bar Association fully supports such a social network. If given the opportunity, we would like to closely work with the Law Center's administration to create this proposed social network. In order to start the conversation, I have attached to this letter some suggested guidelines for the social network. Thank you for your consideration. Looking forward to our meeting next week,

Respectfully yours,

Leon C. Skornicki
Student Bar Association President

SOCIAL NETWORKING AT GEORGETOWN LAW

Below please find some preliminary suggestions from the Student Bar Association (“SBA”) to improve the state of social networking technologies at Georgetown. The suggestions have been outlined for the convenience of the reader.

The SBA believes a social network at Georgetown should, at the very least:

1. **Have a single password and username for every user.** This means that users should maintain their passwords and usernames as long as they have access to the network. In practical terms, it implies that a student’s password and username will continue to be his/her own password and email even after they graduate. That way a student whose username/password is, for example, JDD123/gohoyas, would continue to use that JDD123/gohoyas combination to log into the alumni network once they have graduated.
2. **Require one log-in per session.** An individual user, when accessing different sections of the social network (e.g. class documents posted by professors, the alumni database, and email), should only have to log-in once during the same session. A session is the single continuous use of the network on one computer or electronic device, such as an *iPhone* or *Blackberry*.
3. **Take into account four important groups.** Any improvements in our Law Center’s social network should be mindful of and incorporate four important groups: students, professors, alumni and administrators.
4. **Allow users to personalize their accounts.** Each user of the social network should be able to change the appearance of their network. Also, users should be able to modify, within reason, the way in which information is presented on their network. Examples of this include *iGoogle* (<http://www.google.com/ig>).
5. **Incorporate a “Hoya Net,”** an online, searchable, and secure alumni network, which:
 - a. Should have a short and easy-to-remember URL, such as hoyanet.law.georgetown.edu.
 - b. Will be a user-generated content database. Each user will be responsible for inputting and updating their own information. Hoyanet should be modeled after sites like *LinkedIn*, not *Facebook* or *MySpace*.
 - c. Will be aimed at:
 - i. Reconnecting former classmates.
 - ii. Fostering structured as well as unstructured mentoring among alumni, and between alumni and students.
 - iii. Allowing exchanges among different sectors of our alumni community through the creation of *listserves* or groups with special interest, e.g. immigration law, parenting, or golfing.
6. **Integrate all academic communications for students into one easy-to-use site.** Such a site would automatically grant each student access to course sites at the beginning of each semester, something *Courseware* does not currently do.