

Letter From Dean Harold Hongju Koh



Bill Drayton '70 receives the Award of Merit from Dean Koh at Alumni Weekend.

Dear Graduates and Friends of Yale Law School,

As my deanship moves into its second year, I continue to focus hard on five priorities: globalization, the profession, public service, rejuvenation of the faculty, and securing the material resources to maintain and strengthen the unique community of commitment that exists among our faculty, students, staff, and alumni. We have made strong progress in each of these areas, particularly in developing our resources, and we ended the last fiscal year with more funds received than in any year in our history. For this remarkable result, I am hugely grateful to the great many of you who made such extraordinary efforts to support me and the School during my first year as Dean.

Yale Law School's influence in the legal academy stands unrivaled. As you will read in these pages, the deanships of law schools all over the country are held by Yale Law School graduates. For that reason, whatever innovations we bring to our curriculum are likely to have a broad national impact among our graduates, and through a ripple effect, to other law schools as well.

This year, we are working on several fronts to make our approach to legal education more international, more interdisciplinary, and more "interprofessional." The Fall 2004 Alumni Weekend, which addressed the question of how a Yale Law School education should address global legal issues, began our school-wide inquiry into internationalization that continues with the work of a Faculty Globalization Committee that now meets with me regularly. By an interdisciplinary approach, we mean continuing and extending the time-honored approach of exposing our students to how the intellectual discipline of law connects with other academic disciplines. By an interprofessional approach, we intend to encourage our students to consider how the profession of law relates to coordinate professions: like law and business, law and public health, law and journalism, and law and the environment. In several of these areas, we are developing joint degree programs with other professional schools here at Yale.

As Dean, one remarkable quality that I have consistently found in Yale Law graduates is a willingness to take chances. This point emerged vividly from the Dean's Program on the Profession, where Yale Law School graduates who have made a mark in professions outside the law describe how they moved from law into those other professions. What their careers tell us is that to explore our full potential as lawyers, we must take risks.

In these pages, you see many examples of this kind of risk-taking. Our profile on the pro-

fession shows the range of our alumni working in various areas of the legal profession. Brandt Goldstein's new nonfiction book, *Storming the Court*, tells the story of how a band of Yale law students of the '90s took risks and won freedom for a group of Haitian refugees. The profile of John Kecker '70 shows how one talented trial lawyer innovated by creating his own boutique trial firm. The biography of the late Lloyd Cutler '39 shows how one courageous lawyer's life can span sectors, political parties, and generations of pressing public issues.

As I write this letter, we have just concluded a memorable Fall 2005 Alumni Weekend on the topic of "Entrepreneurship and the Law." More than 1,000 members of our community heard the message that Yale Law graduates are entrepreneurs; they don't just follow the well-trodden path, they break new ones. We heard from alumni who have created new enterprises for the practice of private and public interest law, established charter schools, business entities, nonprofits, NGOs, media organizations, and health-care companies and engaged in pathbreaking social entrepreneurship. Our 2005 Yale Law School Association Award of Merit winner, Bill Drayton '70, the founder and CEO of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, urged us to engage in social entrepreneurship, reminding us that the curse of the privileged is "our failure to give ourselves permission" to take risks.

An honored tradition of our school has been that instead of just asking why, our graduates think of things that never were and ask why not? Surely that is as it should be. For if the most privileged law students in the world don't have the courage to take risks, who else will?

Harold Hongju Koh