

Law School Restructuring and Planning Final Report
Submitted to Provost Kent Fuchs
By the Law School Planning Task Force
November 3, 2009
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cornell Law School's mission remains that articulated by Cornell President Andrew Dickson White upon the founding of the law school over 120 years ago: "Our aim is to keep instruction strong and standards high and so to produce ... a fair number of well-trained, large-minded, morally based lawyers in the best sense."

Among the smallest of the elite law schools, Cornell has a 3-year J.D. program for 190 students per class, a one-year LL.M. program for 60 students from countries throughout the world, and a doctoral (J.S.D.) program for about 3 new students per year. Our small size is a defining feature of the school. However, a core objective has been to grow the size of the faculty, because our size prevented us from having the full impact on the legal academy and public policy that an elite law-school faculty should have. We have increased the tenure-track faculty over twenty percent, from 34 in 2003 to 42 in July, 2009, with a target of 45. Even at 42 tenure-track faculty, Cornell remains smaller than all top-15 law schools but Chicago. At least 10 of the top-15 schools are more than twenty percent larger. It would be a major loss for us to postpone or reverse the completion of our faculty-expansion goal. Achieving and cementing the goal depends on our financial situation in the next few years.

While the Law School is small, Cornell is large. A key goal of the Law School continues to be promoting academic engagement with the rest of the University. We have important initiatives with several colleges, including the Business Law Institute with the Johnson School, the Center for Conflict Resolution with the ILR School, the Law and Psychology Program with Human Ecology, the involvement of CIS faculty with our Legal Information Institute, and joint faculty appointments with several departments in Arts and Sciences, including Anthropology, Economics, and English. Most of these are funded by restricted endowments. Expansion into other areas will require additional endowment support.

Many of the structural questions other Cornell college task forces are wrestling with--such as whether to merge programs or departments--are unrealistic for the Law School. We have no separate academic departments, and as a professional school we must ensure that our students are competently trained for the many career paths that a JD can take them. While the faculty has areas of special distinction—including law and social science, property law, criminal law, and international and comparative law--we must cover the gamut of the modern legal curriculum.

The separate TUB financial model is a core feature of the Law School, and has been a key to our fiscal discipline over the past two decades. We have consistently

balanced our budgets, bringing in our own revenue and paying all our costs including an administrative charge to the University. While we have aggressive goals to expand the faculty and our buildings and create new programs, the TUB model ensures that we will only do so if we can cover the costs.

To ensure our continued financial stability, the Law School is taking numerous steps in response to the budget crisis. These include substantially reducing the number of visiting professors and adjunct professors; eliminating the popular but expensive study-abroad program with University College, London, shifting to cost-neutral exchange programs; trimming law library acquisitions; reducing the general-expense budget; keeping open several staff positions in the Law Library and Law School; and increasing the size of our entering J.D. class and LL.M. class by 5 students each.