

STEVE GEY'S MONUMENTAL IMPACT ON THE COLLEGE OF LAW

NAT STERN*

Any attempt to relate in a brief space what Steve Gey means to the College of Law must inevitably fall short of the task. Considered alone, any single aspect of Steve's impact on the law school would rank him as a towering figure in the life of the institution. Viewed as a whole, his contributions have been staggering. This Essay therefore represents a necessarily incomplete account of the astonishing range of ways in which Steve has made the law school an immeasurably better place.

To most students and alumni, of course, Steve is best known as the consummate teacher. For nearly a quarter-century, students have been enlightened, dazzled, and inspired by Steve's spellbinding classroom performance. A rough measure of Steve's immense stature is quantitative: the massive enrollment of students who perennially flock to his classes, his multitude of teaching awards, and his selection by every graduating class as one of the small number of faculty chosen to participate in the hooding ceremony at commencement. Even these striking tallies, however, provide only a glimpse of Steve's incandescent instruction. No figures can capture the experience of Steve's brilliant, captivating, and often hilarious lectures, or reflect the full extent of Steve's dedication to teaching. Even with hundreds of students each year, for example, Steve has always given famously long and demanding essay examinations. In addition, he has taken only a small fraction of the research leave to which his prolific writing entitles him, instead routinely offering summer courses to accommodate overwhelming student interest.

Steve is also committed to the broadest conception of his teaching responsibilities. As the patient queue regularly found outside his office attests, he is among the most accessible of faculty. Moreover, his assistance to students outside the classroom extends far beyond responding to questions arising from his classes. He has frequently given presentations and participated in debates at the request of student organizations and has been deeply involved as a coach and practice judge with the Moot Court Team. Furthermore, he has supplied invaluable critiques of countless student-authored article drafts, helped many students secure judicial clerkships and other positions, and served as advisor to the *Law Review* and law school chapter of the ACLU. In addition, he has made the vast pro bono practice described by Professor D'Alemberte still a further vehicle for pedagogy; by involving students in these projects, Steve has deepened their understanding of freedom of speech, the separation of church and state, and other principles that Steve has championed throughout his ca-

* John W. and Ashley E. Frost Professor of Law, Florida State University College of Law.

reer. Even this list does not begin to exhaust how Steve has shared his time, energy, and knowledge with students, but it gives some sense of the generosity that has made him a universally respected and beloved teacher.

Outside the law school, it is Steve's superb scholarship that has drawn his widest audience. The profound effect of that scholarship on the law school should not be overlooked. The rich body of work reviewed by Professor Chemerinsky has greatly enhanced the reputation of the College of Law in the academic world and beyond. At the same time, the impact of Steve's scholarship within the school has not been limited to external notice of the breadth and caliber of his publications. Enormously impressive in itself, Steve's scholarly productivity assumes even greater significance in the context of his career at the College of Law. In 1985, Steve arrived at a young law school that had not yet established the scholarly expectations needed to elevate the school to the prominence to which it aspired. While Steve would not claim to have single-handedly transformed the scholarly culture of the faculty, his example had a powerful effect in raising the bar for his colleagues. Complacency about one's own writing was impossible in the face of such phenomenal productivity. It is thus hardly happenstance that Steve's career has coincided with the law school's rise to national recognition as a serious scholarly institution.

In addition to his publications, Steve's visibility as a commentator in other settings has also sharply raised the national profile of the College of Law. As a speaker and participant in colloquia around the country, Steve has been the law school's invaluable ambassador in forums too numerous to name. It was a series of his appearances at home, however, that gained the law school fame with a wider public. When the pivotal results of the 2000 presidential election in Florida went to litigation, Steve was immediately engaged by ABC News as its analyst for the case. Each night for weeks, Steve became the face of the College of Law for millions of viewers, and his trenchant, insightful commentary placed a glowing spotlight on the school. Notably, many students who enrolled here after this episode pointed to Steve's involvement in the election coverage as a significant factor in attracting them to the law school.

Still, for all of Steve's remarkable accomplishments as a teacher and scholar, his greatest contributions to the law school may lie somewhere else, and have probably been least appreciated. Today the College of Law is a nationally respected institution whose reputation has been rising with each passing year. When Steve arrived at the law school, however, this robust future was by no means assured. Crucial to the realization of the school's ambitions was the development of high scholarly standards for the faculty, and here Steve's role has been essential. Even more than his example, it has been Steve's leadership that has been critical in catapulting the law school to the next level. From the outset, Steve has been an eloquent, principled, and indefatigable advocate of rigorous scholarly expectations.

It should be appreciated that much of Steve's work in advancing the cause of scholarly achievement has been logged in endless hours of committee activity that is the unglamorous but vital ingredient in a law school's ascension. Governance is typically the most tedious and thankless of a legal academic's duties; it is not uncommon to see this responsibility met with grudging acceptance and perfunctory performance. Steve, though, has undertaken this task with the same high purpose and tireless effort that so vividly mark his teaching and scholarship. He has been the indispensable member of those bodies crucially charged with upholding the quality of the faculty: the appointments, promotion and tenure, and dean search committees. In the process of determining the membership and leadership of the faculty, it is safe to say that no one has read more scholarship, analyzed it more thoroughly, or critiqued it more acutely than Steve.

It must also be noted that Steve's presence on the faculty has benefited his colleagues to an extent that can never be truly known. Never one to keep accounts of such things, Steve himself has doubtless lost track of the number of manuscripts that he has reviewed, as he has generously shared his erudition and gift for composition. Even he cannot assess how much he has influenced junior faculty over the years, not only as a mentor but also as a role model. Those who have followed Steve on the faculty have learned more from observing him than they could ever derive from abstract guidance about how to be a teacher, a colleague, a discerning reader, and a part of the institution. Indeed, truth be told, there is no one on the faculty, regardless of rank, who has not had a great deal to learn from Steve.

Again, this Essay does not purport to present a comprehensive description of Steve Gey's contributions to the College of Law. Nevertheless, it is breathtaking to contemplate that one professor can loom so large in the life of a law school. It is not only Steve's prodigious talents and accomplishments that amaze, but his willingness to devote so much of these to the betterment of this institution. It is for this reason that the law school owes Steve a debt of gratitude that, like the magnitude of Steve's achievements, is incalculable.

