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Mind the Gap: A Tribute to David Logan on His Retirement

Colleen P. Murphy & Justin R. Kishbaugh*

David Logan is a force. He is the man who can do anything and frequently does everything. Standing literally head-and-shoulders above his peers, he is the man you cannot miss, and his professional accomplishments stand as tall as the man himself. As the Dean of Roger Williams University School of Law (RWU Law) and a legal scholar as well as teacher, colleague and friend, David pours himself into everything he does. As Iggy Pop might phrase it, David has a “lust for life” and, for most, that passion is contagious, memorable, and inspiring.

While we could—and will—easily fill this essay by listing David’s many accomplishments, we also want to identify and celebrate the main behind or “between” them. The French artist Marcel Duchamp once opined, “It’s not what you see that is art; art is the gap.” In that sense, then, we contend that David Logan is an artist. And, dear Reader, as you work your way through this essay and consider the efforts and initiatives to which he has devoted himself, please also make a point to recognize each of those accomplishments as a single star in the constellation that is David Logan, which has and will continue to shine over RWU Law.

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While the average tenure of a law school dean runs about four years, David Logan held that position at RWU Law for eleven years, during which he paid a particular attention to positioning the law school as a force for equity and justice. During David's deanship, the law school made a major step forward in this regard by establishing the Pro Bono Collaborative that creates connections between major law firms, community-based organizations, and law students to provide pro bono services to the unhoused, at-risk youth, immigrant workers, low-income families, and individuals in need of expungement counseling. Under David's leadership, the law school also expanded its public-service graduation requirement for law students from twenty to fifty hours, increased funding for students who work in public-service jobs each summer, created scholarships for law school applicants with a public-interest commitment, and secured funding for the Public Interest Loan Repayment Program that helps graduates who choose public-interest careers repay their student loans.

And that dedication to equity and justice has not gone unnoticed. Rhode Island Legal Services honored David Logan in 2009 for his commitment to equal justice. He was also the recipient of the 2010 AALS Deborah Rhode L. Award, which recognized a "Dean who has made an outstanding contribution to increasing pro bono and public service opportunities in law school through scholarship, leadership, or service." The AALS announcement of the award stated, "In choosing to make public interest a priority through his vigorous fundraising, programmatic leadership, and academic excellence in public interest offerings, Dean Logan has infused a culture of public service into the law school and indeed, in the state of Rhode Island."

Another hallmark of David's tenure as Dean was the effort he placed on increasing diversity in the student body and legal profession. David established the Office of Diversity and Outreach at the law school and helped create the Latino Policy Institute at the university as well. During David's deanship, the law school also established the Immigration Law Clinic, which has had a profound and positive impact on the provision of pro bono legal services in the state. Moreover, David's "Pipeline Initiatives" were instrumental in diversifying the legal profession. In that vein, the law school launched leadership scholarships awarded based on applicants' overall potential, which have helped students from

underrepresented communities attend law school; hosted 100 students from the Providence Academy for International Studies at the law school for a day so they could meet with law faculty and law students; and created the annual Diversity Symposium Dinner that brings together high school students, college students, law students, and members of the Rhode Island bar and judiciary to discuss issues relevant to communities traditionally underrepresented in the legal profession. In conjunction with the Thurgood Marshall Law Society, the law school entered the national Street Law Program that sends RWU Law students into urban high school classrooms to provide information on legal issues and individual rights. David further served on the Advisory Board of Latino Dollars for Scholars and the Law School Admission Council's Minority Affairs Committee, which is dedicated to improving access to legal education for underrepresented groups. Overall, David's efforts as Dean were critical in diversifying the legal profession and providing services to those who might not otherwise be able to obtain legal advice or representation.

One experience that was particularly meaningful for David and which he loves to recount was when U.S. Congressman David Cicilline invited him to participate in John Lewis's annual pilgrimage to Selma, Alabama to reenact the 1965 "Bloody Sunday" March. That march, in David's words, "cemented in American minds the reign of terror facing Blacks who had the temerity to insist on the right to vote." Of that event, David has stated that it "was without a doubt a highlight of my life" and that the pictures from that trip remain "precious" to him.

David's work as a scholar should also not be overlooked, particularly his efforts in the area of Tort Law and the First Amendment. As an Advisor on the American Law Institute Restatement of the Law (Third) Torts: Defamation and Privacy, David provided insights that have been invaluable to the legal community. His scholarship has been published in leading national journals, and his most recent article, "Rescuing Our Democracy by Rethinking *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*,"¹ was cited sixteen times by Justice Gorsuch of the U.S. Supreme Court in a dissent to the Supreme Court's denial of certiorari in *Berisha v. Lawson*. Additionally,

1. David A. Logan, *Rescuing Our Democracy by Rethinking New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 81 OHIO STATE L. J. 259 (2020).

David has made frequent appearances in the national and international media on libel law cases, including the recent, high-profile case, *Dominion Voting Systems v. Fox News*; David's commentary on that case was published in over 200 news outlets and in nineteen countries, with a potential audience reach of one billion people!² He has also been a go-to expert on mass torts, providing commentary on high-profile events such as the Johnson & Johnson talc powder lawsuits and the BP Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico. That work by David not only made an immediate impact on the legal community but also will have a lasting effect on judges and lawyers in their charge to apply the law in a constantly evolving world.

Despite the numerous accomplishments and awards David has accrued during his professional tenure, he would, we believe, most want to be known and remembered as a teacher, and David brings boundless energy and enthusiasm to his teaching. Even while leading the busy life of a Dean, David exemplified his commitment to teaching by continuing to teach Torts and other courses. One ventures to guess that if he were to wear a pedometer in the classroom, David would cover a distance similar to that traveled by Pheidippides from Marathon to Athens. "Professor Logan" was known to prowl the classroom, coaxing answers with beckoning fingers that seemed to conjure the answers themselves in the minds of his students. So engaged and engaging, David rarely contained his lessons to the classroom. No, David's classes would regularly spill into the law school's halls or atrium at the conclusion of class time, and students would encircle their professor to ask questions and listen to their answers along with the other musings of a man who cares so deeply about his course materials and students—and who clearly relishes his students' attention and his ability to contribute to the education, professional development, and lives of those students—that he never stops teaching.

Yet, while we believe David would want to be thought of and remembered as a teacher, we will remember him most as a colleague and friend. The music in the faculty hallway was often coming from David's office, and David is known for forwarding several articles a week to people whom he believes might be interested in them. He would often connect people over dinner, and his Jeopardy

² Media report on file with Roger Williams University's Marketing Department.

tournament among students, alumni, and faculty was a social highlight of every academic year. David hosted movie nights for students and colleagues at his home, and he even acted as a referee during the Criminal Law Society's JD vs. PD basketball tournament. David is one of the rare people who is as familiar with William S. Burroughs as he is Steely Dan, and the accomplishment of which he is likely most proud is that he was for a period a time an album reviewer for *Rolling Stone* magazine. David was a college disc jockey and a champion basketball player. He loves pistachios and Rice Krispies treats. He loves music and travel. He is not afraid to dance and enjoy life, and, maybe more than anything, he loves sharing these experiences and pleasures with his colleagues and friends. David has made us all enjoy our lives more, and for that we are truly grateful.

Thus, dear Reader, we use these accomplishments and attributes to paint a picture in these pages of man who is larger than and who embraces life and who helps others do the same. David Logan is all these stories and accomplishments, but he is also more: he is the man who connects these discrete moments and shares them with those lucky enough to enter his sphere. For those reasons, again, we consider him an artist, and we consider ourselves and RWU Law lucky to have been able to witness and play a role in the art he has and will continue to create.

