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Lissa Lamkin Broome

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IN APPRECIATION: JUDITH WELCH WEGNER

LISSA LAMKIN BROOME*

Dean Judith Welch Wegner concluded a decade of leadership of the University of North Carolina School of Law in the summer of 1999.¹ Throughout her ten years at the helm, Dean Wegner provided dynamic leadership that strengthened and advanced the school, even when it was affected adversely by external events. More importantly, she laid the foundation that will enable the law school to achieve an even higher level of prominence in the new millennium.

The ten years of the Wegner deanship were marked by a number of triumphs and celebrations. The University celebrated its bicentennial and the School of Law its sesquicentennial. Moreover, under Dean Wegner's leadership the law school benefited from record gifts from both private donors and public foundations. It is clear, however, that Dean Wegner's most visible legacy is the stunning new addition to the School of Law building. Much of her deanship was devoted to planning the new space, procuring funding from the state, and overseeing the often difficult construction process. All those associated with this effort agree that the General Assembly's decision to fund the law school's addition was due directly to the strength of Dean Wegner's vision and persistence. The slogan adopted at the groundbreaking ceremony, "Building the Spirit," aptly captures the uplifting atmosphere created by the addition. Dean Wegner is on leave from the law school, so she did not personally witness the fruition of her efforts when the new building was occupied this fall. Not one to rest on her laurels, Dean Wegner is serving as the Legal Education Senior Scholar with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in Menlo Park, California, where she leads the legal education segment of the Preparation for the Professions program.

I will remember Dean Wegner most for her hard work, imagination, and creativity. In the annual law school rankings (of which Dean Wegner is not a fan), the School of Law's overall ranking

* Professor of Law, University of North Carolina School of Law.

1. For more information on Dean Wegner and the beginning years of her deanship, see S. Elizabeth Gibson, *Preserving and Enhancing a Legacy of Excellence in Challenging Times: 1989- —The Deanship of Judith Welch Wegner*, 73 N.C. L. REV. 657 (1995).

was always reduced by its ranking on resources. In 1995, for instance, *U.S. News & World Report* announced that UNC's academic reputation placed it 17th in the country, while its resources ranked 114th; the school stood out as the one that did the most with the least. Dean Wegner's creativity clearly accounted for our ability to make few dollars fund significant initiatives. The school expanded its reach around the globe with international faculty and student exchange programs, courses on international law taught by international visitors, and a new summer school program with the University of Sydney in Australia. Dean Wegner was instrumental in the law school's increased focus on professionalism and professional skills training as evidenced by involving members of the profession in new courses such as intergenerational legal ethics, a judicial sentencing seminar, and a new externship program affording students the opportunity to do supervised work in a variety of practice settings for academic credit. Finally, Dean Wegner led the school into a new era of technology, overseeing the installation of the law school's computer network and new classroom computer technology, as well as the hiring of computer technology specialists. The innovations in globalization, professional skills training, and technology kept the school in the forefront even though its resources did not keep pace with those of other excellent schools across the country. Moreover, Dean Wegner's national stature—highlighted by her selection as president of the Association of American Law Schools in 1995—helped the school remain prominent in the minds of academics, lawyers, and judges.

Another hallmark of Dean Wegner's leadership style was her selflessness. She never took personal credit for the many accomplishments of the law school during her deanship and cared little for the spotlight that shines upon a dean. It is, therefore, characteristic of Dean Wegner that the most important, but least visible, work that she accomplished was to lay the foundation for the future success of the law school and her eventual successor. Dean Wegner arranged an independent review of the law school by a distinguished group of legal academics in 1998. The review group's report to University administrators highlighted the school's excellence, but expressed concern that its serious resource constraints could affect the school's continuing ability to fulfill its mission. The report also wholeheartedly endorsed a tuition increase for the law school to address these resource issues while providing additional student aid. Dean Wegner already had laid the foundation for such a request with University leaders, and the increase is likely to be

phased in beginning next year. The additional revenue that will flow to the law school as a direct result of Dean Wegner's carefully constructed plan will significantly aid the school in its quest for excellence in legal education in the next century.

All those associated with the UNC School of Law owe Dean Wegner their heartfelt thanks for her unflagging dedication, creativity, vision, and hard work on behalf of the school. We look forward to her eventual return to our faculty.

