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Nina Appel: Pathbreaking Pioneer and Boundless Educator

*Dean Michael J. Kaufman**

When luminaries in the law think of Dean Nina Appel, accolades like “pathbreaker” and “pioneer” quickly come to mind.

After all, Nina, along with her classmate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, was one of the first female graduates from Columbia Law School. She became one of the first female law professors, teaching and writing in the fields of torts, administrative law, products liability, and evidence, and in 1983, Nina was named the first female Dean of Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Serving as an extraordinary Dean and visionary leader for more than twenty years, Nina forged new programs and new fields of study. Among her many accomplishments, Nina designed and built innovative programs, such as the Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy, one of the top health law programs in the country; the Civitas ChildLaw Center, a world-renowned program offering a rich pediatric law curriculum and clinical programs on behalf of children and families; the Institute for Consumer Antitrust Studies, a non-partisan, independent academic center designed to explore the impact of antitrust enforcement on the individual consumer and the public; and the Center for Business Law, with its cutting-edge clinical program serving both entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations.

Nina not only transformed our law school and legal education as a whole, but also helped invent new law school degrees. In the 1980s, Nina developed three Master of Jurisprudence degrees in Health Law, Child Law, and Business Law. She envisioned that professionals in those fields would be well-served by acquiring skills and values that enabled them to preempt legal problems and to engage with lawyers more effectively to solve those problems as they arose. In all of these endeavors, Nina was way ahead of her time, and it is fair to say that legal education is still trying to catch up.

And of course, Nina justly deserves all of the many accolades and honors that she has received along the way. For example, she was selected to serve as the Chair of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions

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to the Bar of the American Bar Association (“ABA”). Further, in 2003, Nina received the ABA’s prestigious Robert J. Kutak Award in recognition of her service to legal education, the legal profession, and her leadership in fostering collaboration between the legal academy, the bench, and the Bar. She also received the Distinguished Columbian in Teaching Award from her alma mater and was named one of the ten highly influential leaders in the twentieth century by *Today’s Chicago Woman* magazine.

In all of her work, Nina has been a champion for professionalism, ethics, and public service. She has worked hard to improve access to legal education and the legal profession for those who have been left out, and to provide access to justice for those who are most vulnerable and in need of a voice.

Thus, Nina truly deserves the labels of “pathbreaker” and “pioneer.” But, when Nina’s law school colleagues and friends think of her, those are not usually the first words that come to mind. Instead, my colleagues and I think of who she is as a person: thoughtful, empathetic, compassionate, vivacious, positive, gregarious, and warm-hearted.

When we think of Nina, we think of an educator. Whether she is in the classroom or in the café, Nina is always teaching. She teaches by sharing powerful stories, including those about her own incredible life journey. Nina teaches by her example of integrity, erudition, perseverance, kindness, caring, compassion, and commitment to justice.

Nina certainly encountered boundaries throughout her career. But when we think of Nina—of Dean Appel—of our beloved colleague, leader, teacher, and friend—we think of boundless.