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## Paying Homage to a Colleague, Friend, and Mentor: Dean Nina Appel

*Diane Geraghty\**

As I sat in my office on a spring day in 1993, I heard the telltale “click, click” of Dean Nina Appel’s always fashionable shoes approaching my door. She asked if I would join her in her office to speak with a young alumnus, Jeffrey Jacobs, who was interested in issues of child abuse and neglect. Although Jeff’s first thought was to hire a small number of students to carry out research on issues of child maltreatment, Nina immediately understood that Loyola University Chicago School of Law could do more to address Jeff’s concerns. In a whirlwind set of conversations between the two dynamic leaders—Jeff, it turned out, was the President of HARPO Entertainment Group—Loyola’s Civitas ChildLaw Center was born. The Center’s core mission was, and remains, to identify and train a cadre of law students committed to addressing the unique legal needs of vulnerable children. Over the past twenty-five years, more than 175 Civitas ChildLaw Fellows have graduated from the program, which has been ranked as the top child and family law program in the nation.

The story of the Civitas ChildLaw Center’s founding illustrates many of the qualities that made Nina a transformational leader over the course of her long and productive tenure at Loyola. First, she is blessed with “that vision thing,” shaped by a keen intelligence, boundless energy, and a remarkable ability to connect dots at lightning speed. As Jeff spoke to her of his passion for aiding abused children, for example, Nina immediately understood the link between creating a program dedicated to educating legal advocates for children and utilizing Loyola University Chicago School of Law’s interdisciplinary strengths and long-standing institutional commitment to social justice.

The Civitas ChildLaw Center is not the only example of Nina’s talent for connecting the law school’s mission to larger societal needs. Early on, she saw a role for Loyola in the burgeoning field of health care. As Dean,

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she played a pivotal role in establishing the Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy, today one of the premier health law programs in the country. She also understood that an aging population would need high-quality legal services and was an early champion of the emerging field of elder law. In addition, she was a driving force behind the founding of the law school's Institute for Consumer Antitrust Studies, a program aimed at ensuring that consumer interests are represented in competition law and policy.

Perhaps Nina's longest lasting mark on the field of legal education arose from her singular idea that law schools should expand their reach to educate non-legal professionals whose work requires a deeper understanding of the law and legal systems. She conceived of this idea out of a firmly held belief that interdisciplinary knowledge and an ongoing dialogue between lawyers and nonlawyers are critical for the future of the legal profession. Acting on this principle, in 1993, Nina spearheaded establishment of Loyola's Master of Jurisprudence ("MJ") in Health Law, followed by similar degree programs in children's law and policy, business, and global competition. The curriculum in each of these programs provides specialized legal and policy knowledge designed to complement students' professional backgrounds and interests and to promote a better understanding of the role of law in society. Loyola was a pioneer in the field of legal education for nonlawyers. Today, an increasing number of law schools have established master of jurisprudence or master of legal studies programs in areas ranging from the intersection of law and technology to degrees focused on issues of intellectual property and family law.

Nina's energetic and creative leadership has not been confined to her teaching and administrative roles at Loyola. Throughout her career, she has been an active participant in a range of professional groups and activities, raising Loyola's profile and reputation in the process. From 1992–93, she chaired the American Bar Association's Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, the accrediting body for the nation's law school J.D. degree programs. In 2003, the Section gave her its highest honor when it awarded her the Robert J. Kutak Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to legal education. That same year, she received the Distinguished Columbian in Teaching Award from Columbia Law School, her alma mater. She is also a life member of the American Bar Foundation.

When, in 2004, Nina announced that she was transitioning to the role of Dean Emerita (the first Dean in Loyola's history to be given that honor), I had the privilege of serving as interim Dean for a year before Dean David Yellen's permanent appointment. In that role, I was privy to many of the tributes sent to Nina from students, alumni, members of the

legal community, and other law school deans. Several common themes threaded through their letters and emails. Grateful admirers thanked her for her mentorship, her wisdom, and her friendship. Women deans in particular commented that she had served as a much needed role model and confidant in a position traditionally held by men. One dean summarized Nina's enduring contributions to the legal profession when he wrote: "You did a marvelous job at Loyola Chicago in your 21 years. You are one of the great deans in the history of American legal education."

For nearly four decades, I have had the privilege of calling Nina a colleague, mentor, and friend. This vantage point has given me an opportunity to appreciate the attributes that have made Nina such an inspirational and beloved member of the Loyola community. First, she is generous beyond words. Many of us have been the beneficiaries of her famous lunches, in which she routinely brings together new colleagues and old friends to discuss ideas, share stories, and forge connections. Nina is also invariably modest, in marked contrast to the realities of her personal and professional accomplishments. Although devoted to her late husband, Alfred Appel, and her children and grandchildren, only rarely and in passing does she share information about their brilliant careers and outsized successes. Nina is also compassionate, a quality no doubt shaped in part by her experience as a refugee, literally fleeing from her native Czechoslovakia with her family as the Nazi regime pushed east across Europe. Above all, Nina is devoted to Loyola and its mission, having spent almost all of her career rendering service to the school and its students. As Dean, she rarely missed a law school event even if it meant traveling home late at night and returning early the next morning, her sunny disposition, creative energy, and can-do attitude once again on full display.

Upon her retirement from teaching, it is a fitting tribute to Dean Appel that the *Loyola University Chicago Law Journal* is honoring her legacy as a teacher, dean, and colleague. It is a legacy that has left an indelible imprint on Loyola University Chicago Law School and on those of us who have been lucky enough to travel the path with her.