Loyola law’s new dean a familiar face

Michael J. Kaufman named dean after 31 years at law school

BY LAUREN P. DUNCAN
Law Bulletin staff writer

Loyola University Chicago School of Law has named longtime professor and former associate dean Michael J. Kaufman as its new dean after a nationwide search.

Kaufman, who has been with the school for 31 years, began in the position as interim dean of the school last July. For 11 years until last summer, he served as the school’s associate dean for academic affairs.

The decanal position became vacant last year after former dean David N. Yellen left to join Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., as its president.

Loyola Provost John P. Pelissero, who conducted the search process for a new dean, said the school used executive search firm Witt/Kieffer to help find possible candidates for the position.

Kaufman was the pick among three finalists after the school’s search committee and administrators considered more than 50 possible candidates identified by the search firm, Pelissero said.

“We ended up selecting Michael after doing this national search,” he said. “We thought it was important to the validity of his selection that we take a look at the field to see if there were as equally qualified candidates out there, and everything that we learned through this process is that Michael was the best of the candidates and pretty much validated what we thought about his knowledge and skills and values that were so important for selecting the next dean.”

Kaufman said he endorsed the school’s decision to conduct a national search. Following interviews by the school’s search committee, Pelissero and Loyola President Jo Ann Rooney approved his selection as dean. The appointment was announced Monday.

Kaufman said he first took the position as interim dean as a way to serve the school, which helped him to realize it was a role he’d like to have for the long run.

“I’ve been here for 30 years as a faculty member ... I love this law school, I love this community, and so I saw the interim dean [position] as really a service that I was performing to the law school and the community, but as I became interim dean and grew into the job I really grew to love it.

“It’s a chance to affect tremendous positive change in the law school and in the legal community around the law school as well. I love working with this community. It’s a wonderful community of very supportive faculty, students, administrators and alumni.

“It’s really a very tight family and I couldn’t be more thrilled and honestly humbled to be asked to lead it.”

Prior to joining Loyola in 1986, Kaufman practiced securities and civil rights litigation at Sachnoff & Weaver Ltd., a legacy firm to Reed Smith LLP. He graduated from the University of Michigan Law School and clerked for Judge Nathaniel R. Jones of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

He joined Loyola where he went on to teach courses including civil procedure and education law and policy. Kaufman founded the school’s Education Law and Policy Institute and its Institute for Investor Protection, both of which he still oversees, and he was also instrumental in the creation of one of the school’s newest programs, the Weekend J.D. program.

The program, which launched last fall, has been more successful than school leaders anticipated, drawing students from a variety of backgrounds and from around the country who take classes taught over the course of several weekends at the school, including a course taught by Kaufman.

Kaufman said he intends to keep teaching civil procedure on the weekends as he assumes his new role as the school’s dean.

Kaufman is also a public arbitrator for securities disputes and teaches bar-exam review classes the weekends as he assumes his new position as interim dean as a way to serve the school, which helped him to realize it was a role he’d like to have for the long run.

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