

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW: A HISTORY OF ITS FIRST TEN YEARS

By

Terry Andrews



Introduction

In 1984 Terry Andrews was asked by the Dean of Hamline Law School to write a history of the school's first 10 years. She was a freelance writer living in St. Paul, Minnesota, and she frequently wrote about people who were creating something or making contributions in the world. Telling the story of a group of determined students who founded a law school in order to have an opportunity to become lawyers, then, was not just a project that interested her, it meshed with her own idealism and attitude that if you believe in something, you can create it.

Andrews eventually left Minnesota to live on the coast of Oregon, and she left journalism to pursue her own dream of writing fiction. Her award-winning first novel, *Dance of the Jaguar*, was published in 2006. She has since published a second novel, *Quetzalcoatl Dreams* (2009) and continues to write.

This history was published first in pamphlet form in 1984. It has been reformatted. It is complete.



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UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LAW

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[1984]

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In the mid-nineteenth century a well-to-do bishop in New York decided to pursue his interest in furthering education on the developing Midwestern prairie. He wanted to “furnish the means and facilities of education to a large number of young persons,” he wrote. “For this end I have been in correspondence with frontier ministers, where the field is comparatively unoccupied, and yet is so filling up with emigrants that no time should be lost.”

No time was lost. Scarcely had the bishop put down his pen when he learned that the territory that would become Minnesota four years later had founded a college named after him.

Such was the beginning of Hamline University in 1854.

Variously described as a prodigy, a prankster and a fervent preacher, the bishop was a lawyer as well—accounts have it that he was admitted to the bar only after several lawyers had voiced their objections. But he was also a generous soul who favored the struggling coeducational school with \$25,000, one-quarter of his assets, and then sent it on its way.

Under the direction of its first president, a lawyer named Benjamin F. Crary, Hamline started the state’s first law school. For a \$15 annual tuition, it offered a two-year program in an academic setting, plus courtroom experience. But the school was short-lived; the outbreak of the Civil War brought it to a close.

Yet Hamline University was to eventually have a law school again, and that is where this history begins—with the founding of a law school 10 years ago on pluck and promise and the hopes and determination of 33 students to get a legal education.

It’s the story of a dream.

And more. It’s the story of the ingenuity, optimism and wholehearted dedication to a goal that made a dream come true. It took pioneering, confidence and commitment, coupled with sacrifice, tenacity and per-

severance. The focus was a vision: A law school where high-quality legal education would foster community service, where admissions would not be based solely on traditional test scores and grade-point averages, but on life experience, maturity and motivation.

These were important considerations. The founders were students who ranged in age from 22 to 54, many had attended graduate school and most were working full-time. And in spite of their qualifications, they had been turned away from other law schools. When their paths crossed in the fall of 1972, they all had one thing in common. They wanted to go to law school.

Lots of people did. The demand for legal education was high in 1972, and law schools across the country were flooded with applications. Hundreds of qualified applicants were being turned away—in Minnesota alone, more than 2,000 prospective students were turned down at the state's two existing law schools.

Taking advantage of that, a new school opened in Minneapolis that fall called Metropolitan College of Law. The owner and dean had previously run a school for medical technologists at the same location.

From the beginning Metropolitan was plagued with problems. Shortly after the school opened, the *Minneapolis Tribune* reported that the Hennepin County Bar Association would recommend that students not enroll at the college. The reason: The school showed no intention of meeting the stiff standards governing accreditation. Without accreditation, graduates of the school would not be able to take the bar exam.

The students already enrolled, who had invested money and time, were faced with a dilemma. By mid-winter came the realization that the school was indeed not moving in a direction that would bring accreditation.

So at the end of the fall quarter, nearly three dozen of Metropolitan's remaining students pulled out. Meeting at the Normandy Hotel on December 30, 1972, they reached a momentous decision. They would go it alone. They would build a school themselves, from scratch. They had no money, no books, no building and virtually no faculty. All told,

they had nothing more than an idea and 5,000 pounds of will to back it up. It was a gamble. But in the end that was what it took, because out of the meeting at the Normandy Hotel came the beginning of what is now Hamline University School of Law.

From the start, the founders of this school meant business. They possessed the very qualities they wanted to see in the school's future students – experience, motivation and maturity, and they brought their skills to bear on the monumental task at hand – founding a school.

Instrumental to the school's early momentum were three students—Robert J. Polzak, Leonard F. Biernat and Rodney O. Larson; Richard T. Oakes, who was appointed acting dean at the age of thirty-one; James Polzak, vice-president and trust officer of Midway National Bank, who became the first chairman of the board of directors; and Larry Bakken, the only member of the faculty with prior teaching experience.

Things moved quickly. First, the ties with Metropolitan were severed. “We left everything behind,” said Oakes, “to make the break absolutely clean.”

Then there were the logistics: Where would classes be held? What about a library? A budget? Students for the fall quarter? Trustees? Financial support?

Students wanted the school to begin immediately, so on January 2, 1973, classes got underway. The handful of instructors included Harry H. Peterson (a former Minnesota Supreme Court Justice), Oakes and John Graham. Bakken joined the faculty in February as instructor and librarian.

The school's first home was the People's Church (1001 Penn Ave. N.) in Minneapolis. Classes met there for two weeks while Oakes, who gave up his practice as a criminal defense lawyer to become dean, scouted for a more appropriate and permanent location. By February, the school had settled in its second home, the second and third floors of a towered, red sandstone mansion (2116 2nd Ave. S., Minneapolis) above an art gallery. (The mansion, now listed on the National

Register of Historic Places, was built in 1884 by a Minneapolis attorney.)

During the two months at this location the essential groundwork of the school was completed. On March 12 the school was formally incorporated under the Minnesota Non-Profit Corporation Act as Midwestern School of Law. “We adopted that name because it was so easily forgettable,” said Oakes. “We had in mind eventually becoming linked with a college.” The school’s tax-exempt status was approved, the curriculum set up, and the catalog developed for the 1973-74 school year.

With these things done, the school began to publicize its existence, through newspaper stories, advertisements and aggressive recruiting, to attract students for the fall quarter. Bakken called 25 law schools around the country, asking for names of people those schools had rejected. “All but one helped us recruit,” he said. “Within 30 days we had 150 students from roughly 30 states. So we had tremendous success recruiting.”

Meanwhile, the first class of students, who were working during the day and attending school at night, pitched in to paint, plaster and plumb the space in the mansion. “We brought it to a usable level,” Oakes remembered, “and then informed the bar of our existence.”

“There was a spirit that kept us together,” said Len Biernat, a full-time student who also served as assistant to the dean. “We wanted this thing. It became almost our baby; and we wanted to see it through. It was a dream we all had—a dream that said we’re gonna beat the system. We either had great foresight or we were very stupid and naive. We were totally convinced we were going to make it.”

Nonetheless, the obstacles were immense. “Early on,” Oakes said, “we had sent for a booklet from either the ABA or AAIS and the gist of the booklet was you can’t start a law school without having about two and a half million dollars in unrecoverable investment. We had none. We were cutting against some conventional wisdom.”

In April the school was evicted from the mansion for zoning code violations, and students loaded the growing collection of tables, books and office equipment into a trailer for the move to the large and spacious Ramar Building (111 E. Franklin Ave., Minneapolis). Midwestern remained in its third home for the next 15 months.

Before moving, the school had formed a committee charged with putting together a library. Larry Severson, a student, was its chairman and he sent a letter to every attorney registered in Minnesota asking for book donations.

The library, which had been housed in the trunk of Biernat's Camaro, became full-fledged when Midwestern was named the recipient of a gift of 6,500 books from Burlington Northern, Inc., which received one of Severson's letters. The gift was the result of the merger of two railroads, each with its own law library, and it was crucial. These were books that would have been extremely difficult to come by. "We wanted to find a worthy recipient," said Frank Farrell, Jr. "It was all Midwestern could do to put together a faculty and students. It was essential that they have a library, and we felt this gift would make it possible for them to succeed."

Indeed, it did. Bakken, then librarian, stated, "It was a turning point. I was optimistic before, but after the gift, I was convinced we would succeed. That gave us the core library that almost by itself met the ABA minimum requirements."

The school also bid successfully against a paper scrap company on several thousand books that the state law library was discarding.

Soon book donations were pouring in. Severson organized students to drive to the far corners of the Midwest, and as far away as Florida, to pick up books. One group went to Iowa and Illinois, but broke down two hours from the Twin Cities in a U-Haul truck full of books. "My wife and I drove down to get the stranded students," said Steven Kirsch, a member of the second class, "and somehow we had the truck towed in and got the books. We did a lot of things that normal students wouldn't do, but we realized that this was an unusual situation, and that we were in on the ground floor of something that was going to be great."

To hold the books, the school ordered 8,000 feet of industrial shelving, and when students arrived for orientation that fall in 1973, they were directed to boxes of nuts and bolts and screwdrivers. Their first job was putting up shelves and organizing the library.

Some 60,000 books came in that first year, thanks mostly to donations. The 1973-74 catalog had projected a library of 30,000. Instead there were twice that number, enough to be in apparent compliance with the standards of the American Bar Association.

Kirsch, who had planned to go to law school in Missouri, heard about the school via the grapevine, from a friend whose mother spotted an article in a Chicago newspaper. "I packed up everything I owned in a U-Haul," Kirsch said, remembering his anticipation and excitement. "My wife and I drove up to Minnesota, we entered the Ramar Building, and we saw about 1500 books in the corner of a big room. Then we wondered, 'What have we done?'"

Initially hesitant, Kirsch changed his mind quickly after meeting the school's movers (literally) and shakers. He decided to stay. "About a month later I was elected vice president of the student body and one of the things I tried to do was keep the morale up, that we would eventually get accredited."

For \$25 a month each, Kirsch and another student, James Wright, were the school's janitors. In addition to regular maintenance, they organized cleaning parties before ABA inspections. "We would get a group of wives and husbands together to mop and wax the floors and clean the blinds. We always used to say, 'The students at Harvard don't get to do this.'"

From the outset, the school actively sought a good relationship with the Minnesota bar associations. As a result, in August of 1973, the Hennepin County Bar Association appointed the "Special Committee to Critique and Advise the Midwestern School of Law." Allen I. Saeks was chairman of the committee. In an article for *The Hennepin Lawyer* (March-April 1974) he wrote that it was clear, from the committee's first inspection in September 1973 "that the students, faculty and administration of this new law school were taking their responsibilities

seriously and fully intended to take all the necessary steps toward obtaining ABA accreditation at the earliest possible time.”

Saeks, 1983-84 president of the Hennepin County Bar Association, said recently, “Today it’s quite a good school. I’m impressed and surprised. It’s a neat success story.”

A decade ago, however, success was still a long shot. The school faced its biggest hurdle yet, accreditation, knowing full well that one factor, while not essential, would swing the pendulum in its favor—affiliation with a college. Northwestern went courting.

In late 1972 there had been a brief flirtation with Antioch College, but both sides had withdrawn. Now the school methodically and hopefully approached Hamline University, Concordia College in Moorhead, Macalester and Augsburg. Negotiations with Augsburg went all the way to the trustees, Oakes remembered, and then fizzled out. Concordia remained interested, and Macalester returned the school’s materials.

Hamline was lukewarm. At first no one could figure out why, because in March Oakes had sent a two-volume set of notebooks about the school and its long-range plans to then-President Richard P. Bailey. “Someone thought it was supposed to go to Bush Library and it got shelved,” Oakes later found out.

Meanwhile, on May 2, 1974, Bailey gave an Honors Day speech at Hamline entitled “If I Had Three Wishes.” In it he suggested that Hamline start a law school. “The only available law school in Minnesota, Northwestern School of Law, was. . . listening, and began talking to me about coming to Hamline within only a few days,” Bailey mused one year later in his commencement address for Hamline University School of Law’s first graduating class.

Indeed, Bailey’s speech did give the school incentive to approach Hamline again, and on May 14 Hamline and Northwestern talked. “When we finally sat down with Bailey, he said, ‘You’ve got yourself a deal.’” remembered Oakes.

On June 4, James Polzak, chairman of Midwestern's Board of Directors, wrote to Dean Oakes, "Of the several area liberal arts colleges presenting themselves as prospects for affiliation investigation, Hamline is unquestionably our first choice for further consideration."

Polzak had come to the school in 1972 with a chip on his shoulder about his own legal education: It hadn't taught him the how-tos he felt were essential to being a lawyer. When the founding class, which included his brother Bob, asked him to get involved, he did so with great enthusiasm. Their ideas meshed. Here was a chance to build a practitioner-oriented school. Early considerations had included building an image for the school, assembling a good board of directors, recruiting students and putting together a library. Visually it was impressive to walk into the Ramar Building and see stacks and stacks of books, Polzak said, but to be honest, many of them were obsolete." He spoke candidly about recruiting for the second class. Obviously, to survive and grow, the school needed students. "From the vantage point of board chairman," said Poizak, "the policy guidance was 'Take anybody who breathed.' If they had a checkbook and could walk, by god, they were in our school." (A total of 163 students, 77 percent of the total who applied, were accepted.) By the third year, though, things had turned around. "It was clear two or three hundred people wanted to come to the school. We could now afford to be selective." At that point, he said, "it became an unstoppable engine."

The second and third classes were very important to the school. They're the ones who believed, said Bakken. "They're the ones who came from all parts of the United States and paid higher tuition. They were reading our literature that we were new and different and they were buying into the idea."

By 1974, Bakken continued, "we had the community starting to buy into us, students wanting to come, corporations saying 'You have enough credibility that we'll let you have these books,' and Hamline University saying 'We're not sure we want to merge with you yet but we'll rent you space.'" "That support secured the foundation of the school.

Thomas B. Courtice, then assistant to the president at Hamline and now president of Westbrook College, was impressed by the young law school administrators who came to President Bailey's office. "They were bright-eyed and full of enthusiasm with a dream they had. . . that included the establishment of an alternative to what was available in legal education in Minnesota." They ignored the why-nots and dealt with the possibilities, he said. "Their vision of the future fell right in line with Dr. Bailey's constant vision of what could be for Hamline." Through these entrepreneurial and innovative school-builders, Bailey envisioned making Hamline a university again.

Those first students, involved in all aspects of the school, from administration to fund-raising, were particularly able. They were skilled in "everything from accounting and marketing to management and consulting," said Bob Polzak of his fellow founders, and their expertise contributed to the school's early momentum. Still, it took perseverance to see the merger through its early bumps and bruises, Courtice recalled, as the undergraduate student body and faculty judged the new kid on the block, and the law school adjusted to not getting everything it dreamed about right away.

It was a risky venture, "but risk in terms appropriate for Hamline," Courtice continued. "And to see Hamline grow and flourish in the broadest sense of the word, it was probably a prudent risk. There was a chance for some failure but also chances for great success."

And should it succeed, Hamline stood to gain.

The Hamline Board of Trustees had serious and protracted discussions about this fledgling law school that was looking for a home. One member of the board who argued in favor of Midwestern was Minnesota Supreme Court Justice James C. Otis (who retired in 1982). "Since I was on the court," said Otis, whose grandfather was an influential force in the early history of Hamline University, "and had a feeling that anyone who qualified and wanted to be a lawyer should have an opportunity. . . I strongly argued for support."

There was concern on the part of the university faculty as well as the board that the law school would be a financial burden. Was this the

step that a small undergraduate college ought to be taking? On the positive side, the law school would help to broaden Hamline's educational base, attract more students and bring additional recognition to the school.

Midwestern moved to its fourth home, on the campus of Hamline University, at the end of August 1974. In its 15 months at the Ramar Building the school had grown so much that, according to Len Biernat, "it took the equivalent of 14 semi-trailers to make the move." Hoerner Waldorf loaned the trucks and the students again pitched in to transfer the school to its new home.

"On Friday, we were Midwestern School of Law," Bakken said. "On Monday we were Midwestern School of Law at Hamline University. There was a 180 degree change in attitude from lawyers I was calling for support."

At Hamline, Midwestern settled its offices and library in a dormitory and erected a \$30,000 Butler building for some classes. The building was heated with noisy gas burners that had to be shut off during class; by the end of class the room would be chilly. And when it rained, said Joseph Olson, who joined the faculty in 1974, the rain on the metal roof sounded like machine guns.

But no one complained. "It was a warm feeling to be on the campus," said Rodney Larson, a founding student. "We didn't really care what the rooms looked like. We were so busy thinking 'Hey, we're really going to graduate—we better buckle down and know what we're doing.'" Above and beyond their studies, the students had to put in time to build the school, meeting typically two nights a week to discuss problems and potential solutions. Once the school was on the Hamline campus, Larson said, "we completely let go of the reins."

The school had three ABA inspections prior to being granted provisional approval by the ABA. The first one, in December 1973, pointed out the small faculty, low faculty salaries and dependence on tuition for operating expenses. But it praised the quality of teaching, the library and the unique courses in the curriculum, including "Products Liability" and "The Law of Discrimination," which included

practical, hands-on experience. Among the recommendations the inspectors made were these: that classes be scheduled during the day, and that the Articles of Incorporation be amended to avoid “the danger of student takeover,” as students would eventually have a controlling interest in the school (The amendment was made on January 10, 1974.)

A summary of that first inspection report read:

The progress of this law school since its birth a year ago is amazing. It is attributable to the dedication of a group of students, a devoted dean and faculty, and a far-sighted, hard-headed enthusiastic Board of Trustees. There would be no question whatsoever as to the determination of these people to build a quality law school.

The school did not receive provisional approval then, but was the only one of six rejected schools invited to apply again that summer. The chief inspector felt the biggest weakness was long-range stability, and that either outside affiliation with a college or outside funding could remedy that.

In July of 1974, after its second inspection, the school again failed to receive provisional approval. This time the report suggested that the school search for faculty members with several years of teaching experience, and obtain more community support.

After its third inspection, in November of 1974, when it was on the Hamline campus, the school met with success. It was granted provisional approval on February 25, 1975, in time for the first class to be able to take the state bar examination after graduation.

By the spring of 1975, just three years after its beginning, the school had a proposed budget for the 1975-76 academic year of \$1,000,000.

It also had a new board chairman. Jim Polzak stepped down in November 1974 and was succeeded by James Nystrom, president of Nystrom, Inc., who had been involved in the school from the beginning.

With any group of strong-willed, strong-minded individuals disagreements can happen, and the law school had its stormy sessions. The remarkable fact is that its early leadership kept it moving ahead. There were necessarily concessions and compromises. But one essential fact was unanimously agreed upon: The school's future was bigger than any one person.

More than once, people went out on a limb to make the school success, and at two crucial moments they pledged their own assets as collateral. The risks were personal and substantial, even heroic.

When a crisis threatened the school, said Howard Alton, Jr., one of the founders, someone would step into avert it—different people at different times. It was this philosophy that brought the school through its first phase, to provisional approval.

In May of 1975, applications for the evening program were suspended, and the school decided to concentrate on a day program.

On June 8, 1975, commencement exercises were held for the school's first graduating class.

Dick Oakes resigned as dean on July 25, 1975, to become a member of the faculty. The school had met its initial goals and the time had come for management and leadership from an individual experienced in the workings of the academic world.

What Nystrom affectionately called "a scavenger operation from the beginning to end" built by "students who worked their hearts out" was, in a sense, over. "The school," Nystrom said in summary, "was built by blood, sweat and tears."

II

Richard C. Allen came to the school as dean in 1976 from George Washington University. Initially, he said, “I was most impressed with the dynamism of the faculty and the interest of the student body in organizing a law school and moving toward accreditation.”

On the negative side he recalled that “law professors were bending over Bunsen burners to teach in borrowed classrooms” on the Hamline campus and that leaking pipes in the makeshift basement library had damaged books.

On top of that, he said, the school had just had a negative report from the ABA, stating that the faculty had to be upgraded in quality, the physical facilities improved and the academic standards toughened. “We were within a whisker of having provisional accreditation withdrawn,” Allen said.

Nonetheless, he felt it was “a school that ought to make it,” and he wanted to play a part. He wanted to see the law school receive full accreditation.

In October of 1975 Midwestern became Hamline University School of Law, and in February of 1976, the merger between the law school and the university became effective—both as scheduled.

The law school, with its 600 students, taxed Hamline’s facilities, from its parking spaces to its bookstore, and Allen faced the continuing problems of integrating the school into the university.

His tenure as dean brought more than a two-fold increase in library volumes, higher admissions standards and, most importantly, plans for the construction of the school’s new home.

The building, of course, “was a clear and absolute requirement if the college of law was to receive accreditation,” said Jerry E. Hudson, Hamline’s president from 1975 to 1980. Raising money, however, posed a problem because the law school had virtually no alumni. “Our

decision,” Hudson continued, “was to include the law center as an integral part of the capital campaign.”

The result was a \$5 million award-winning law building. “It’s a magnificent law center,” Allen said. “The facilities are absolutely superb.” The building’s design, in terms of practicality, accessibility and function, brought comment from his colleagues at other schools who “believe the building at Hamline will be a standard for construction of law schools for some time to come.”

The reason for that was not serendipity, but months of careful planning and deliberation. The members of the building committee (which included Hamline University administrators and trustees as well as the architect and Dick Oakes) toured law school buildings at Creighton, the University of Chicago, Brigham Young and several other universities.

“It was research you couldn’t have bought,” said William Anderson, the architect, who was then with Hammel Green and Abrahamson. “Their law deans and faculty members spent a lot of time with us. They were willing to sit down. It was invaluable.”

The committee had a law-school prototype in mind, and even met several times with members of the ABA accreditation teams for direction and advice.

The result is a building that works well, and reflects the philosophy of the school. It’s designed for interaction: The door to the faculty offices faces the entrance to the library, a layout that contributes to warm faculty-student relationships. Faculty member Joseph Olson, who has a law degree from Duke University, said, “The faculty is more accessible than you would ever find at major law schools. When I was at Duke, students simply did not take up the great man’s time.”

In addition, there is easy access to administrative offices, and the extensive use of glass windows inside instead of walls lends a feeling of openness. “The building creates a sense of community when learning law is an alienating experience,” said Stephen Young, the dean since 1981.

On February 28, 1979, ground was broken for construction and 18 months later the building was completed. For the first time, students didn't help with the move. "It was too much to ask," said Oakes.

At the dedication ceremony for the building in October 1980, Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun said in his address:

Bricks and mortar do not make lawyers or leaders of the legal profession. New buildings may not even be essential for the development of good lawyers. But one cannot deny that buildings of this kind help to provide incentive and an appropriate atmosphere for the flowering of those talents that are peculiar to the legal profession.

The school continued to grow in the five years Allen was dean. Advanced Legal Education, offering courses for community professionals, began in 1976. The Lawyering Skills program was expanded. And the Community Law Program, with law students teaching practice skills to secondary school students, got underway in 1978. By 1981-82, there were 21 full-time and 25 part-time faculty members.

Things had grown and diversified since the first years when everyone did everything, as Carolyn Oakes, one of the first members of the administrative staff, remembered. Essential tasks, once done by hand, were computerized. "It was a blessing when the computer came along," said Donna Paron, the registrar, recalling the summer when a mathematician, hired to calculate grade point averages for transcripts, made several mistakes in his tabulations. When the dean's assistant, Coy Perry, was hired as secretary in 1978, she noticed the cooperative spirit. She chipped into shop for drapes for faculty offices and typed the first *Law Review*, 470 pages long, well into the night.

Accreditation inspections continued on an annual basis after provisional approval. "At one point, we were the most-inspected school in the country," said Dick Oakes.

Emotions, and hopes, ran high. On one occasion when the school was told it was still not ready for approval, Oakes remembered the entire staff was weeping. "But you'll make it," the inspector said.

And they did. In 1980, its seventh year and the year it moved into the completed law building, Hamline Law School was granted full approval by the ABA.

Shortly after, having succeeded in meeting his goals, Dean Allen resigned to become a Fulbright Visiting Professor at the University of Swaziland, and Stephen B. Young, the third and current dean, came to Hamline.

III

If Richard Oakes was the frontier dean who helped shape the upstart school with bold tactics, then Richard Allen tamed it, imposing the order of academe. Stephen Young, a graduate of Harvard University, has brought momentum and direction.

In 1981, when Young arrived, the school was in limbo. It was accredited and established in its new home, but needed to go forward with a renewed sense of energy and purpose. “It needed to define itself intellectually as a law school” without forgetting its history,” he said. “The only reason to have a new law school is to achieve something different, and presumably better, than what the older law schools can offer, and that was my interest in taking the deanship.”

He has centered his energies on refining the curriculum, broadening the ties with the Hamline University administration and undergraduate faculty, and extending the school’s community involvement.

“What can Hamline do in the way of curriculum,” he asks, “that is different and meets needs which are not being met?”

As he wrote in the school’s 1983 *Self-Study*, one of his goals was to reshape the curriculum by “combining the vigorous analytical learning of the traditional law schools with integrative, clinical experiences similar to the skills training once provided by the older practice of apprenticeship.”

“I’m interested in this notion of an integrated curriculum where you have jurisprudence, doctrine and lawyering skills taught as part of a larger whole,” he says. “A good lawyer is a complete lawyer, with the skills necessary to be effective.”

With Hamline University as a whole, he has worked to establish a synergetic relationship: He wants not merely tolerance, but excitement.” As a result, he’s encouraged the introduction of interdisciplinary courses that involve both the law and undergraduate faculties.

He also has a keen interest in making the school a part of the society at large. “We’re not ivory-towered,” he says. “We understand law as part of a complex human process. We can teach law with a sense of vision and outreach, and help people understand how law helps maintain a civilized form of community.”

He wants to preserve Hamline’s uniqueness, yet keep it open to change. He wants to foster its vitality and establish its reputation solidly so that other schools will look to it for ideas. The University of Detroit Law School recently went to work on a mission statement similar to the one the Hamline faculty adopted in 1982.

Young has addressed the problems cited in the school’s 1980 ABA inspection report head-on. These included the lack of senior, experienced faculty members who could offer guidance to younger members of the faculty; faculty salaries that were still too low; and an undefined sense of mission.

Not only has the faculty itself continued to work on advanced degrees, but several adjunct professors, Mulford Q. Sibley among them, have come to teach. The mission statement, which unified disparate approaches in the curriculum, stated in summary that Hamline’s students would be given a challenging legal education, one that equipped them with both practical and theoretical skills, and that emphasized the relationship between law and society.

The statement sees service to the community in a broad sense, that of training practitioners who will serve the community ably and professionally, and of providing continuing legal education to the public.

This is a departure from the school's first statement of purpose, yet one that shows not only a process of maturation but an admirable willingness to achieve its goals within the structure of higher education and the American legal system.

"We were never bucking the system," said a student from the first class. From the beginning, the school worked toward accreditation.

The cover on the first catalog reflects the idealism and altruistic philosophies of the students, with its depiction of a prisoner from Wounded Knee.

On the second catalog, for 1974-75, the words "Wounded Knee" have been scratched from the picture, revealing the school's beginning shift toward broader goals and a more traditional stance. Both catalogs describe the school's original purpose: "To serve the community at large by producing practitioners with a sense of service to that community" and "to foster legal practitioners from the very communities and groups which find legal services, for one reason or another, unavailable or very nearly so."

"The basic idea was that we were not going to strive to be a regular law school like everyone else," said Joseph Olson. "We were not going to be involved in bringing legal education to the brightest and richest. We were going to look beyond the grades."

But the ABA, he recalled, said it was not going to let Hamline be different.

The 1976-77 catalog states simply: The founders' objective "was to create a law school that would produce graduates equipped with a sense of professional duty to their individual communities."

Bakken's initial goal was to have the school "be a real alternative to legal education in Minnesota. But my opinion, and I think it's a different opinion, is that we were never an alternative law school in the social sense. Our students (in that first class) were white middle-class males. That goes contrary to our history that we talk about but that's a reality."

If the school has stepped away from what it set out to be, it has done so with one eye on its history, the other to its future. It has grown from 33 students to 500, from 4 teachers to a faculty of 23 full-time and 20 part-time members, from an operating budget of \$33 to one of \$3,330,000. A lot has been achieved in a short period of time, said Young.

It's a school that's still growing, in philosophy and spirit, in stature and financial stability.

The school has worked to enhance its public profile. The Dean's Council, comprised of members of the legal and professional community, was formed as an advisory committee to the school. Hamline, said council member James Otis, "is, perhaps more than any others in this part of the world, sensitive to its role in the community. I think that's great. I think it's long overdue that those who are in the legal profession be consulted and tapped for direction in where a law school should be going."

Last year [1983] nearly 7,000 attorneys and judges registered for continuing education courses, through the self-supporting Advanced Legal Education program.

Innovative curriculum changes have brought about programs in jurisprudence, agricultural law, law and religion, and public law. The *Journal on Law and Religion*, the only one in the country, began with its first issue in 1983. Faculty member Michael Scherschlight is co-editor. (The journal is co-sponsored by the Council on Religion and Law.) Through the journal, Young said, "Hamline is providing a forum for a new dialogue about the ends and purposes of legal orders. This journal, if it is successful, will have a national and international reputation."

"We've always had a relaxed attitude about innovation. . . that is a real plus for the school," said Cathryn Deal, a faculty member who coaches Hamline's award-winning Moot Court Team. "We're not rule-bound by tradition."

In 1982 a new three-year legal writing program was begun. It's a rigorous program, said Larry Bates, a legal writing instructor in his first year at Hamline. "When students leave here, they will have the skills and abilities necessary to produce written legal material of a quality that any firm would find acceptable from an associate member of the firm. We're trying to push people towards writing in the legal style at an advanced level, not the level of a law clerk, but the level of an actual practicing attorney."

As standards have increased, so have applications to the first year class. In 1973, there were 212; in 1982, over 1300. Last year, the school had its largest graduating class, with 181 students. Eighty-six percent of them are employed in law-related professions: 64 percent in the private sector, 10 percent in government-related work, 9 percent in judicial clerkships and 8 percent in the business world. These figures are typical of the last few years.

Young, who feels there's not a surplus of attorneys, says "The nature of the profession is changing. New areas of opportunity are opening up. Corporations, small and medium-sized firms increasingly are looking for lawyers when in the past they did not." Hamline has shifted from its original purpose, he says, "in the sense that the school no longer has as its overriding goal setting people up in small practices. Our graduates do all kinds of things. I feel a law school needs to train people to do a variety of things with their law degree. Law shows up in many ways in society."

Tracy Peck, director of the placement office, came to Hamline after nine years at the University of Minnesota. "It was quite an eye opener," she said. "There were only seven law firms that would consider recruiting at Hamline four years ago. Now it is up to 30 firms. Certainly there is a big increase in the acceptability of the school. There has been an increased number of alumni out there proving themselves—that's been a significant factor in our acceptance."

In January 1984, the law school was accredited by the Association of American Law Schools (AALS). "For Hamline AAIS membership is recognition that in only 10 years a pioneering vision in legal education

has become an achievement of excellence,” Young said. “Hamline now ranks with the best in American law schools.”

And as the school’s reputation grows, so do the reputations of its graduates.

For some of the founders, it’s been hard to watch the school grow up, and away from what it was. Many of the first students voice concern that higher admissions standards and the loss of the night school make it difficult for people like them, who’ve gone on to successful careers, to have the chance they did.

Thomas O’Connell, a member of the second class, whose brother, sister and cousin were all enrolled in Hamline Law School at the same time, worked to put himself through school at night. “I’d like to see people have the same opportunity I had,” he said.

Joel Thieson, who walked into the meeting at the Normandy Hotel cold, and decided to “take the risk” and build a school, said Hamline now “is not exactly what we had intended it to be, but maybe what we intended would never have survived. I don’t know that. It would be interesting to find out.”

For a time during its first 10 years, the school forgot its history, Oakes said. “We wanted to be conventional. I’m glad we can be unconventional.”

Going into its second decade, Hamline Law School faces the problems that confront schools nationwide—increasing costs and decreasing enrollments. But the school is young and flexible and creative. It’s not bogged down by tradition, Biernat pointed out. “It can change swiftly to meet current needs.”

Bakken, looking toward the future, said, “I would like to see a high-quality law school with regional and national recognition. . . .I’d like to maintain the interdisciplinary relationship with the university. And I hope that we could ultimately develop several programs of national quality, like law and religion and public law.”

As for the present, he says, 'This is one of the best places I could have ended up. It's still exciting. We're here doing the things we wanted to do.'

As for the past, and how it can affect the future, maybe the words of Bob Poizak are best. "Those first three classes," he said, "have a huge debt to repay to society as a thank-you for what they were given. They have an obligation to continue the philosophy that caused the law school to be created in the first place, that says, 'we should let anybody who has an idea, who's inspired to do good, have the chance.' They have an opportunity to help someone who walks into their office with a dream and says, 'help me.'

"My message is 'don't forget our past.' There are people who had no reason to help us who did. Maybe the reason is the theory and belief that we would go and help other people as the opportunities came about. The positive result is that we continue in this country to encourage people to be inspirational, entrepreneurial and creative."

In working to give the school a strong community identity, a more solid financial base, a diverse, enthusiastic and experienced faculty and an innovative interdisciplinary curriculum, Young, a man who values both tradition and change, has tried not to lose sight of the school's history

"I would like to think that we remain true to the initial impetus to have a law school which is responsive to community needs, and has a more engaging approach to legal education than the traditional approach," he said. "We have grown, we have added maturity, we're established, we have won community respect and interest in our venture. And I think we've added to the educational experience."

Young is excited and optimistic about Hamline's future. "Given the past successes of the school in overcoming obstacles," he says, "a commitment to excellence in an exciting, disciplined program of legal education and a responsiveness to the needs of the community should always attract enough people to enable us to select good students."

As the school's reputation grows, he says, so will the geographic areas from which it can recruit, thus increasing the pool of potential students.

Hamline, he adds, is now competing for students with law schools at the Big Ten universities. “Their tuition is lower than ours and they’ve had 80 to 100 years to establish national reputations,” he says. “They are going to be very tough to compete against.” But he feels that Hamline’s program can offer students what they want with its strong, integrated curriculum and enthusiastic, responsive faculty.

“We have a firm sense of where we are going as an institution and most law schools do not.”

He believes that “we’ve come to the end of a very great era in American legal education, a period of roughly 100 years when the Harvard model was predominant. But that era is behind us.” Hamline, he feels, has articulated a vision for the next era.

“What we’re talking about is what legal education will come to—integration of jurisprudence, doctrine and skills. We’re going to be there first.”

He also points out that Hamline is emphasizing basic skills, when other schools are not. “That will give our graduates a leg up in the job market,” he says.

“I have a sense that Hamline is something special and unique. I would feel, I hope, at the end of my career looking back that I really made a difference, staying with the school long enough to help it achieve national success. Hamline has a chance to blaze a trail.”

In looking at what he would like to see improved, he says, “I’d like to see the lawyering skills program strengthened with internships in which students get credit for working. I’d like to see us involve second- and third-year students more directly with the practice of law. I’d like to see the program in agricultural law endowed and recognized as making a contribution to revising our agricultural policy in this country.”

Enormous gains have been made since the school’s first year, Young says. “If the school has come this far in 10 years, think about what it can do in the next 10 years. The 10 years gone are really a prologue to

more significant achievements in the future. We're not going to rest on our laurels. This isn't the end of the story."

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A school doesn't 'bang' become a school. It is an evolutionary process, one that requires daring, persistence and, above all, vision.

At different times in its life an institution has different needs, and whether or not it is able to respond to those needs well depends on its leadership. The sure and able directions that a new school requires come from the right combination of strong personalities. It also depends on its faculty and advisors and trustees possessing a keen awareness of what is needed and when.

For the Law School, this has meant deans whose leadership has been distinct and dramatically different. There was not empire building here, but attention to the details, the demands, the growing pains of a burgeoning school of law, and to the lives of the faculty and students who became and have been a part of it.

The founders were naive. In a sense, they didn't know enough not to try it. But they were also determined to move mountains. They felt it could be done, they did it, and what's more, they swept others up in their enthusiasm as they went.

Hamline University School of Law did not arrive full-blown. It grew book by book, until a trunkful of books became a 160,000 volume library and a church basement an 80,000 square foot law center. It's a success story, pure and simple.

The school was built by pioneers and guided by the realization that not only education makes a successful man or woman, but culture, background, experience and determination do too.

This is more than history. It is the stuff of legends and dreams. ■

