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## Reflections on the Law Review's Twenty-Fifth Year of Publication

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## REFLECTIONS ON THE LAW REVIEW'S TWENTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

*Regina M. McCrea* \*

When the incoming editorial board asked me to write this reflective essay, I humbly accepted while wondering what thoughts I could impart to the readership. It was an honor to oversee the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law Review ("*Law Review*") during its twenty-fifth year and the seventy-fifth year of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). I must admit, though, that I was a little naïve as to the task ahead of me: carrying on the excellent quality of legal scholarship that this journal had enjoyed and managing the problems that were sure to come. Accompanied by a highly competent board of editors,<sup>1</sup> I embarked on my law review journey.

During training with the outgoing editorial board, the new editorial board attends the annual National Conference of Law Reviews. For 2002 the conference was held in Newport Beach, California. While enjoying the balmy California weather, our board learned of the exceptional legacy of our *Law Review*. First, suggestions like having a publication schedule and attempting to print on time were already fixtures of our journal. Second, a majority of the law reviews present had a staff larger than fifty, which is the size of the *Law Review* staff, and encountered similar problems in staff motivation and discipline. Third, very few law schools gave editors credit for their work and fewer still awarded scholarships for tuition. The William H. Bowen School of Law does both for all eight editorial board positions. Thus, we realized how fortunate we were to have a supportive administration, and I hope the law school is able to continue this support in the future. We returned home eager to continue publishing legal excellence and to add a few innovations of our own.

We set a goal to improve staff morale. This task did not prove to be very easy. After taking on a new group of about twenty apprentices, six resigned within the following months. From the previous group of invitees, only one person remained. The editor-in-chief has the difficult task of speaking with these apprentices before accepting their resignations. This past year, a seemingly greater than usual number of apprentices sought to resign.<sup>2</sup> Their reasons varied, but one constant surfaced: the students did not

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1. The editors with whom I served appear on the masthead of this publication. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Staci Carson for the untold number of hours she put into this publication over the past year and for the well-reasoned counsel she provided me on numerous occasions.

2. I need to distinguish between students who resigned their apprenticeships and those

see law review as something vital to their future career. I tried to explain otherwise, but by the time a student would come talk with me, he had already made up his mind. Law review truly may not have been essential to some of these students' careers, and the choice ultimately rests with them.<sup>3</sup> The editorial board can only do so much to influence the choice made. This year we held more informational meetings, hoping to educate students about the decision they face upon receiving an invitation, and spoke with professors about encouraging students to join the *Law Review*. The legal community's continued support of the *Law Review* is also needed. Employers should allow their law clerks the freedom and flexibility to pursue membership, explain to first-year students the value of doing law review work, and support the current staff through hosting receptions to get to know the students who have toiled to publish a high quality product that reflects the capabilities of Arkansas lawyers.

A second goal for the 2002-03 editorial board was to continue the pursuit of excellence that the previous editorial board had left us. This goal included ensuring that staff completed the editing steps on time and adding innovations to the publishing process. Because the law review frequently receives articles a little later than hoped (both initially and later on in the process), editors must work to catch them up. Unexpected problems can also arise, and these problems take time to resolve. Thus, publishing the issues on the day fixed by the schedule is a challenge. When that day could not be met, we strove to send the issue to the printer as close to that date as possible, even if it meant not including a particular article. The dates set forth on the publication schedule did not represent mere wishful thinking but were the deadlines we sought to meet.

We also instated a couple of innovations to the publication process. The previous editorial board had worked to create a "redline" of the article to send back to the author. It is called a redline because when viewing the document on a computer screen changes that editors have made appear in red. This year we refined this process by teaching assistant, associate, and

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who never accepted the initial invitation to become an apprentice. Many part-time students and some full-time students simply do not have the time to devote to law review endeavors and, therefore, decline to join the *Law Review*. My discussion here centers on those students who accept their invitation, thereby filling a slot, and then resign before becoming a full member.

Apprentices face no consequences upon resigning; members, however, receive a notation on their transcripts unless the editorial board determines the member has shown just cause for their resignation. Thus, the apprentice phase can be a weeding process for both the apprentice and the *Law Review*.

3. The editorial board recognizes that students who discover *Law Review* is not what they thought and who no longer want to be a part of it should be allowed to resign freely. The point I am seeking to make is that often students base their decision on a false perception that the work they are putting in is not helping them get anywhere.

board editors who worked on the documents to track their changes. To create the redline, the research editor simply compared the documents; because the changes had been tracked, the comparison produced a better compilation of the changes, saving the research editor time.

In addition, we added a second substantive editing stage. When the *Law Review* first receives pieces, the articles editor<sup>4</sup> and the editor-in-chief substantively review them and make suggestions to the author. Then, the article would be sent back to the author for changes and would undergo further staff editing for technical accuracy. This past year the board implemented a second substantive edit that occurred simultaneously with the research editor's bluebook work on the article. At this stage the articles editor looks at the piece again to determine if any further changes are needed. This edit enables the research editor to focus more on the technical aspects instead of potential substantive problems and to alert the articles editor to those problems. The additional edit also allows the articles editor to see what suggestions the author accepted and which he or she rejected. This change proved to be most useful over the course of the year.

By adding these changes and still keeping the core of the journal the same, our board accomplished the goals we had set. Because of the strong foundation the *Law Review* has, it continues to improve with each passing year due to the endeavors of its members. The administration of the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law must, therefore, be thanked for making it possible to have a student-run publication. Working on the *Law Review* editorial board not only taught me a great deal about legal scholarship and writing but also gave me the chance to work with highly motivated and talented people. With the combination of willing authors and capable editors, the result is something that makes everyone involved proud. The legacy that has been built over the past twenty-five years continues to be passed on to each new board and will stand for many more years to come. I urge the readership to continue supporting the *Law Review* through submitting articles to be published and reading the finished product.

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4. For articles submitted by symposium participants, the symposium editor acts as the articles editor and completes the substantive edits on those articles.

