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Subject: Resignation of Dean Steve Easton

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Friends of UW College of Law:

As a result of changes at the University of Wyoming, I can no longer be effective in representing the interests of the College of Law as your dean. As a result, I have submitted my resignation as dean. I will continue to serve as a faculty member, and I look forward to working with you to make the University of Wyoming College of Law an even better law school.

Ours is a very special law school. As I tell prospective students all the time, I cannot imagine why anyone attends a law school other than UW College of Law. Our law school has a strong tradition, plus exciting new programs. In just the four and a half years that I have been here, we have seen many exciting developments, including:

- Continued growth of our energy and natural resources program, an area particularly important in Wyoming, including a rich curriculum that includes a fourth of our elective courses, a new energy competition that sends students to two national competitions (where they have already had substantial success), establishment of the Center for Law & Energy Resources in the Rockies, launching of our joint degree (with the Haub School) in environment and natural resources, a course offering a tour of Wyoming energy and mining facilities, and ground work for the establishment of an Energy & Natural Resources Clinic that will be added to our curriculum in the fall of 2014. Few, if any, law schools can match our extensive energy and natural resources course offerings, even though almost all other law schools are larger, some much larger, than our College of Law.
- Expansion of our experiential education program in response to student and market demands to include new clinic-like courses. Due in large part to generous private gifts, we have added programs in estate planning and international human rights law. Through the support of the Wyoming Attorney General, we will be adding a year-long energy and natural resources clinic next fall.
- Adoption of a “clinic guarantee” that promises each student the opportunity to practice law under a faculty member before graduation. About a dozen of our students brief and argue cases to the Wyoming Supreme Court every year. My colleagues at other schools are amazed at the practice opportunities provided to our students through the generosity of the Wyoming Supreme Court’s student practice rule and the professionalism of the practicing attorneys who oppose our students in litigation and other environments.
- Growth of the Rural Law Center, which sponsors popular CLE seminars attended by citizens from across Wyoming and provides legislative and other assistance to those in Wyoming’s rural communities.
- Adding two new funds to support our experiential education programs, the John M. Burman Fund and the Kepler Fund for Professional Education.
- Establishment of the Summer Trial Institute, a “boot camp” intensive trial advocacy program that is an attraction to prospective students and the envy of those associated with other law schools.
- Creation of the Center for the Study of Written Advocacy, with two of the top five legal writing professors in the nation.

- Initiation of a unique partnership with one of Korea's elite law schools, Kyung Hee University, which has brought both students and professors to our law school and has provided the opportunity for us to teach an International Business Transactions course, via satellite, to students at both campuses and thus provide our students with experience in international transactions that they can put to use in energy and other practices in Wyoming and elsewhere.
- Raising our Wyoming Bar examination pass rates (with pass rates above 80% in the most recent Wyoming bar exam and in all states), after a brief, but difficult period on the Wyoming bar exam, in part via a bar exam preparation class offered for the first time in the spring of 2013.
- Bringing Civil Pretrial back into the active curriculum, to better prepare our graduates for litigation practices.
- Substantial success by several competition teams at the regional and national levels, including several regional championships and national Sweet Sixteen and Elite Eight finishes (including both of our teams qualifying for the Elite Eight of the National Energy & Sustainability Moot Court Competition this year) and two national runner-up finishes (in the National Environmental Law Moot Court Competition and the National Client Counseling Competition, the ABA's largest national competition, with approximately a thousand participating teams).
- Doubling (and almost tripling) our scholarships, including new scholarship programs provided through private giving from alumni and other friends, e.g., the Brimmer Scholarship, the Barrett Summer Trial Institute Scholarships, the Energy and Natural Resources Scholarship, the Loretta Kepler Scholarship, and the Jack and Lynnette Cassari Scholarship.
- Holding the line on tuition increases, so our students can graduate with reasonable debt loads, not the crushing debt experienced by students at many other law schools.
- Increasing our enrollment of international students, who pay full non-resident tuition and enrich our teaching and learning environment by broadening our horizons. During a trip through our law school, one might hear French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, or other languages, in addition to English.
- Maintaining enrollments within our target zone (to provide graduating classes of seventy some students) in an era when most law schools have plummeting enrollments (with a forty percent national reduction in law school applications in the past ten years).
- Expanding our continuing legal education programs and other services to alumni and other members of the bar, mostly in Wyoming but also in Colorado and other states.

None of these is "my" achievement, of course, and I do not mean to claim credit for them by listing them here. Rather, all of these accomplishments were made possible through the dedication of you -- the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other supporters of the College of Law. To take just one example, I will always be amazed that seventy or so top attorneys, judges, and court reporters volunteer to come to Laramie at their own expense to teach in our Summer Trial Institute every year. I personally want to thank you each one of you for all of your efforts on behalf of the College of Law and its students.

Special mention must be made, though, of the hard work of the staff and faculty of the College of Law. During my four and a half years as dean, I have never been able to distribute raises to our staff and faculty. Also, during that same

period of time, the University of Wyoming has managed budget cuts by reducing staff positions. As such, the College of Law staff, which was incredibly small when I accepted this position, has decreased dramatically during those four and a half years. Despite a long period of no raises and decreased staff, the staff and faculty of the College of Law have added the new programs noted above. Through their incredible efforts, the College of Law is an even better institution than it was before almost half a decade of flat salaries and reduced staffing. I am confident that it will be an even better institution five years from now, if we are able to provide additional support to the staff, faculty, and students.

The strength of the law school, despite severe resource limitations, was recently confirmed. As many of you know, the ABA/AALS site visit team recently concluded its visit to the College of Law. Based upon my exit interviews with the site visit chair and the entire site visit team, I expect the report to be quite favorable. Based upon the exit interviews, though, it is likely that the site visit report will express substantial concern over the limited resources, especially staff and administrative resources, provided to the College of Law by the University. We are almost certainly trying to run the law school with the smallest administrative staff of any law school in the country. Several site team members noted that the staffs at their home law schools were much larger than the staff at UW, even though their law schools were only moderately larger than UW. The site visit report is also likely to express concern about the law school building (other than the William N. Brimmer Legal Education Center, including the two new moot courtrooms, which are extraordinary facilities), especially the lack of facilities for our three centers and the remote offices for our clinic programs. Quite simply, we are in need of either a new building (other than the William N. Brimmer Legal Education Center) or a substantial addition to the current building to house our centers and clinics within the main law school complex. The site visit report could note other, more minor, concerns, but overall the site visit team was very impressed with our integrated approach to legal education that teaches our students about the theory of law and provides them with the skills they will need in practice. They were also impressed with our faculty and its scholarship and teaching, with the students, and with the staff -- though the small size of the staff is a major concern.

It is crucial for the College of Law to continue to offer a comprehensive legal education, not an education that is overly focused in one particular area of the law. This helps us attract students who have a wide variety of interests, which we must do to thrive in a very competitive environment for law students. It also helps us prepare these students for practice in a wide variety of legal specialties. We cannot allow an emphasis on one area of the law to detract from our duty to prepare great attorneys for the citizens of Wyoming. As such, it is incumbent for the College of Law to provide a comprehensive legal education.

It is also crucial for the College of Law to comply with the ABA Standards for Approval of Law Schools, including Standard 205(b), which provides that the "dean and the faculty shall formulate and administer the educational program of the law school, including curriculum [and] methods of instruction." In executing this important responsibility, we have always welcomed the suggestions of others who have the law school's best interests at heart. This is reflected by our active Advisory and Alumni Board, by holding regular Town Hall Meetings with students, by my frequent attendance at Board of Trustee meetings and conversations with individual Trustees, by a meeting we held with general counsel from several energy corporations, who provided advice about how best to prepare students for energy practice, and by the open door policy of our administration, which is always receptive to suggestions for improvement of the College of Law. However, the faculty and the dean must govern the College of Law, if it is to continue to enjoy the accreditation that allows the College of Law to maintain its reputation, allows its graduates to take the bar exam in Wyoming and in every other state, and allows its alumni to take advantage of opportunities available only to graduates of ABA-accredited law schools.

Recent events cause me concern in this regard. Important decisions affecting the College of Law have been made without meaningful consultation with me or others on the faculty. If the concerns that have led to this lack of consultation are with me, my resignation will remove this impediment and clear the way for the effective faculty governance of the College of Law that the accreditation standards require. I cannot continue to serve as your dean

while critical decisions are made about the College of Law without the input of the administration and faculty of the College.

Let's pull together to defend and build the law school that we all love. With your help, we can continue to make the University of Wyoming College of Law an even better law school for its students and for the state of Wyoming.

Thank you for your support of the College of Law and of me. The work you have done for the College of Law is amazing. It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as your dean. I look forward to continuing to work with you as a member of the faculty.

Sincerely,

Steve

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