

**FYI** — May 2006 Dean's Letter

Though the 2005-2006 academic year is drawing to a close, we're currently very much involved in competition with other top law schools to attract the best students for next year's entering class. I thought you might be interested in an abbreviated version of the remarks I delivered to admitted students who were visiting our campus:

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I want to start by mentioning six names to you: Theodore Roosevelt; Franklin Roosevelt; Ruth Bader Ginsburg; Bob Shaye, who is the founder of New Line Cinema, the company that made *The Lord of Rings*; Ted Shaw, who is the head of NAACP Legal Defense Fund; and Wei Christianson, a leading investment banker in Beijing.

I am sure you have guessed what they have in common. All were students at Columbia Law School. Each one faced the same decisions that you face – should I go to law school? If so, where? After all, they were not born famous and successful. Each went through a process of self-discovery, much like the one that lies ahead of you, in which you will face a truly fundamental question: What kind of lawyer do I want to be? You certainly should not expect to know the answer to this question today. You have many pleasant surprises ahead of you, and your future is hard to plan. But you need to go to a school that can prepare you for the winding road ahead – a school that will prepare you for a lifetime of leadership in whatever you want to do.

Columbia is that school. We offer the finest legal education in the world. We are located in a global city, a capital of finance, media, and civil rights advocacy. There is a youthful energy, diversity, and vibrancy about New York, and also about Columbia Law School. Specifically, I will mention seven unique qualities of this great law school:

1. In the New York tradition, we are connected to cutting-edge issues. We don't teach theory for its own sake, and our students are taught to understand the facts

on the ground. For example, you can study securities law with a former S.E.C. commissioner or criminal law with a sitting federal district judge.

2. Also in the New York tradition, we are diverse and international. We started training foreign students in the 1880s, and one in five of our students comes from outside the United States. In addition, 36% of our students are people of color.
3. We have been a great law school for nearly 150 years, and that tradition of excellence has fostered an international reputation and a stunningly accomplished group of alumni.
4. Our great scholars care deeply about teaching. This may sound obvious, but it's not the case at all top law schools.
5. Since we are part of a great university (and our campus is geographically small), we offer unparalleled interdisciplinary opportunities. It is easy to study with top scholars at Columbia's Business School, School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), the History Department, and many others.
6. At about 365, our entering class size is ideal. Some schools have 500 – too big to meet everyone. Others have 175 – too small, because you meet everyone right away, and life can get stale (especially if you're in a city that does not have the excitement of New York).
7. Columbia Law students enjoy the pleasures of New York City. Broadway and Lincoln Center are a subway ride away, and it's easy to meet people working in the arts, publishing, finance, and international affairs.

Through the literature we sent to admitted students, you may already have a sense of these unique strengths of Columbia Law School. But the problem with our brochures is that, as soon as we print them, they are out of date. In the time we have left, and with apologies to David Letterman, I will update you about "The Top 10" recent developments at the Law School, so you can make an informed decision.

1. Since New York City is the media capital of the East Coast, we know it's important for us to be a leader in intellectual property, a field of singular importance in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st Century. In the past two years, we've added three people to an already strong department. Our newest faculty member, Scott Hemphill, clerked for Judge Posner and Justice Scalia and has graduate training in economics. He joins two other intellectual property experts who came this year from the University of Virginia: Clarisa Long, a trained microbiologist, and Tim Wu, a former clerk to Justice Breyer who is fluent in Mandarin.
2. New York is a center of civil rights advocacy. We are in the process of launching a new research institute on social justice. We've also just hired Olati Johnson,

who used to work at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund after clerking for Justice Stevens, and then worked as a staffer for Senator Kennedy.

3. New York is the financial capital of the world, so it is appropriate that business law is a great strength of this school. In this proud tradition, we've just hired Bob Scott, a former dean of Virginia's law school and perhaps the best-known contracts scholar of his generation. He's going to run a joint program with Columbia Business School, called the Center on Contract and Economic Organization.
4. New York offers an array of cutting-edge public interest opportunities. We are adding a new clinic on gender and sexuality, the first of any law school to announce a clinic on gay rights issues. The person who's going to teach this, Suzanne Goldberg, was one of the lead lawyers in *Lawrence v. Texas* – that's the case where the Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws a couple of years ago. She's a terrific teacher, and this is going to be a very exciting project.
5. To bolster our already-strong family law faculty, we've hired Elizabeth Scott, a leading scholar of family law, juvenile justice, and property. She will help lead a joint initiative with the Columbia Psychiatry Department on juvenile justice and a range of other issues.
6. This year we launched a partnership with a leading public interest organization, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem. In this externship, our students have the opportunity to represent criminal defendants.
7. We've implemented a new first-year curriculum. A central feature is that you will get to take an elective in the spring of your first year. The choices include Introduction to Comparative Law, Law and Economics, Introduction to Critical Theory, Legislation, and Law and Social Science. You should ask students here how it's going. My sense is it is very popular. Also, this year all students got their first choice.
8. Another effort here has been to reduce the student-faculty ratio. One of your classes in the fall will be small, and in the past, a small section here was 45. We brought that number down to 25, and we hope to make those sections even smaller in the future. Over the next few years, we're going to grow this faculty substantially.
9. It is appropriate in an international city like New York that our international programs are sizzling. I'm proud that our student team won the Jessup Moot Court Competition, an international competition involving hundreds of schools from all over the world. Our faculty has deep strength in international and comparative law. For example, Jose Alvarez is the new president of the American Society for International Law, and Lori Damrosch is the editor of the

*American Journal of International Law*. We have also launched a joint program with Columbia University's Earth Institute, focusing on international investment.

10. Last thing to mention ... summer funding for public interest work. We guaranteed summer funding for 2Ls for the first time. And I'm happy to say, we also were able to get funding for every 1L who applied. So every student who wants to do public interest work this summer will get funding from the Law School.

Columbia Law School has been a powerhouse for 150 years. I think we are better than ever. I am so glad to have all of you here with us today, and I look forward to teaching you.

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I'm confident that most of the students who listened to this address will decide to become members of the Class of 2009. They will follow in the footsteps of the extraordinary graduates who came before them. We are deeply proud of our graduates, and hope to see you back in Morningside Heights sometime soon.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Schizer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David M. Schizer  
Dean and the Lucy G. Moses  
Professor of Law