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Our Legacies From Rex

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I have known Rex since the mid-1970s when we were colleagues at the University of San Diego School of Law. We stayed in touch when I moved to Washington University because at that time we both were teaching trial advocacy. In 1984, after he had moved to the University of California at Davis (“UCD”), it was Rex on the phone to ask whether I would be interested in returning to California to teach trial advocacy at UCD. The upshot is that Rex and I were friends for well over forty years. I know that Rex is gone; but when I look at King Hall today, I see his enduring legacies.

First, but for Rex, we would not have the superb addition to King Hall. Every seven years the law school is inspected by an AALS–ABA¹ team. Several inspections ago, the chair of the team was the then dean at Tennessee. During a dinner, the Tennessee dean turned to the UCD faculty in attendance and remarked, “Visiting UCD Law is like going to the circus. When the Volkswagen drives into the center ring, the question is how many clowns will come out of the car.” The point was clear: at that time the law school was bursting at the seams. We were renting offices in downtown Davis to house the clinics. Rex appreciated the humor in the remark, but he was intent on remedying our space problem. While he was dean, Rex enlisted the support of the Chancellor and several allies, notably Lois Wolk, to obtain the funding for a significant addition to King Hall. In all probability, that

¹ The Association of American Law Schools - American Bar Association.

expansion will be the last major University of California (“UC”) graduate school construction project supported primarily by public funds. That fact alone is a testament to Rex’s skill and determination as our spokesperson.

Even without anything else, our state-of-the-art law building would be a major legacy. Still, Rex left us two other legacies that are far more important. His second legacy was a vision for King Hall’s future. In his mind, we had to be a truly public law school with special commitments to teaching and diversity.

Although Rex began teaching at the University of San Diego (“USD”), he was a public law school product. He graduated from Boalt Hall where he was an Articles and Book Review editor for *California Law Review*. After graduation, he spent another year as a Teaching Fellow at Boalt Hall. Years ago, when the legislature began reducing its support for the University of California, UC headquarters began talking about “the Michigan model” — essentially privatizing UC graduate schools and allowing their tuition to rise to fair market value. Some UC law deans were delighted; they saw the change as an opportunity to set their tuition high enough to compete with the foremost private American law schools. Thankfully, Rex was the notable exception. Rex wanted to keep tuition as low as possible to keep King Hall as accessible — to ensure that it was a genuinely public institution serving the needs of all Californians, poor and rich. He took enormous pride whenever we admitted students who were the first in their family to attend college, much less law school. He wanted as many Californian families as possible to have that profound, life-changing experience.

Above all, Rex wanted King Hall to have an exceptional commitment to teaching. It is no secret that in the academy, many schools prize scholarship over teaching. However, Rex was a member of a faculty cohort that included such extraordinary teachers as Jim Hogan, Dick Wydick, Floyd Feeney, Margaret Johns, Bob Hillman, and Alan Brownstein. Rex himself received the Distinguished Teaching Award and was nominated for the award on numerous other occasions. While Rex was dean, he made it crystal clear to every faculty candidate that — whatever might be true at other high-ranking law schools — at King Hall, the primary mission was teaching. You were to pour your heart and soul into every hour of class, and you were to be accessible to students outside class.

The final element of Rex’s vision was diversity in both the faculty and the student body. Again, Rex wanted King Hall to serve all Californians. When students came to King Hall, they would find a

faculty that was as diverse as California's population. The hiring record during Rex's tenure as dean proved that there was no need to sacrifice quality for diversity; under his leadership King Hall achieved both. Rex created the momentum that put us well on our way to becoming "the first majority minority" faculty among leading American law schools.

Finally, we come to Rex's third legacy; the one that means the most to me at a personal level. As a faculty member and dean, Rex set the standard for friendly, decent treatment of fellow faculty, staff, and students. As one of my friends sometimes says, Rex "takes the palm."

Even after he became dean, it was easy to strike up a friendly, low-key conversation with Rex. Rex was not only a product of UC; he was also a devoted UC Berkeley football fan. We often joked about my loyalty to USC. As my daughter, a UCLA Bruin, will attest, it requires a great deal of tolerance to put up with me during football season. Rex always managed to do that with a smile.

Rex treated staff and students in the same decent, kind way that he interacted with faculty. He was on a first name basis with virtually every staff member. For their part, students felt comfortable stopping him in the hallway to chat. I have taught at five other law schools, and by a wide margin King Hall has the most egalitarian spirit. That spirit is a reflection of Rex.

All of us are indebted to Rex. The question is: How do we repay that debt? The best way is to respect the second and third legacies that he left us. Maintaining the third legacy should be a simple matter. All we need to do is to treat each other the same way Rex always treated all of us.