

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

## Law school opens dean search

**By: Steve Orbanek**

**Posted: 10/8/09**

Nearly 10 months after Duquesne University President Charles J. Dougherty demoted Don Guter from his position as dean of the School of Law, the University will begin the search for a permanent dean.

Last week, the University issued a press release announcing that it formed a search committee for the position. Since Guter's dismissal in December 2008, Ken Gormley has served as the law school's interim dean. At the end of last semester, Guter left Duquesne to take a job as president and dean of South Texas College of Law in Houston.

According to Provost Ralph Pearson, who Dougherty appointed as chair of the committee, the group will likely meet for the first time in mid-October.

"At that first meeting, the President will charge the committee in terms of responsibilities in the search and in terms of what he is looking for in the next dean," Pearson said.

Pearson explained that the search will be national and international. He said the University plans to advertise the position in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other media outlets.

"We want to make it as open as possible and invite candidates of all races and ethnicities," Pearson said. "We encourage members of the committee and members of the law school faculty to encourage strong people they know to apply."

The University's Faculty Handbook provides mandatory criteria for search committees. According to the handbook, a committee must be made up of seven voting members and one non-voting student member.

At least four of the seven voting members must be full-time, tenured law school faculty, and at least three of them must be elected by their peers. Dougherty will appoint the remaining committee faculty member. He will also appoint three other members, which may include deans of other colleges or schools within the University, law school alumni or the community served by the law school.

The non-voting student member, who has not been chosen yet, will be appointed by the committee's seven voting members.

In addition to Pearson, Dougherty appointed Judge Joy Flowers Conti, former Judge and Justice Cynthia Baldwin and Duquesne law professor Mark Yochum. The law school faculty appointed University Chancellor John Murray, Associate Dean of the law school Nancy Perkins and law professor Alfred Pelaez to the committee.

Murray said dean searches are nothing new to him. From 1988 until 2001, he served as President of the University.

"Every search committee is always looking for the perfect person. You obviously want a person of total integrity that fits in with accordance to the school's mission statement," Murray said.

But according to Murray, it is also important that candidates understand the time commitment and responsibilities that go hand-in-hand with being dean.

"Having been dean at three different law schools in my time, I can tell you it's a difficult job," he said. "One of the most important things of finding someone is finding someone who really wants to do this. Trying to coerce someone into being dean is not a good idea."

Gormley said he plans to apply for the full-time position and does not mind the time commitment that comes with being dean.

"I've planned all along," Gormley said. "It's more than a full-time job, [but] I'm used to juggling a lot of balls. This is by far the most time-consuming and demanding job of any job I've had. I've always enjoyed multitasking."

When Gormley was appointed interim dean last year, he was finishing his book, *The Death of American Virtue: Clinton vs. Starr*, which will be published in February.

"The one real challenge in [serving as interim dean] among other things is that I had a book to finish. To finish that was a real challenge. Frankly, I feel more in control at this point because that one big project is completed," Gormley said.

Despite his run for permanent deanship, Gormley said he is focused on the short term for now.

"The proper role for myself is to try to do my job as best as I can while I'm in this interim position," Gormley said. "I think that most people will assume that I will be a candidate. At this point, I don't think there's any need to do any lobbying or campaigning. I plan on just doing my job."

Regardless of the candidates, Murray said the ultimate goal of the committee is to narrow the list down to a small number of candidates and present the list to Dougherty.

"You try to do [the search] as openly and fairly as possible," he said. "But I'm confident that we will end up with a very good dean because we have a very good law school with a lot of promise for the future."

---

© Copyright 2009 The Duquesne Duke