

PAUL SCHIFF BERMAN
TAKES THE STAGE
AT GW LAW SCHOOL

A TRANSFORMATIONAL

dean

BY JAMIE L. FREEDMAN

A new era began at GW Law July 1, when Paul Schiff Berman took the helm as dean of the George Washington University Law School. Widely recognized as a rising star in legal education, Dean Berman was chosen from a pool of more than 350 applicants following a yearlong nationwide search.

A creative thinker with a reputation for making things happen, Dean Berman comes to GW from the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, where he served as dean for the past three years—receiving widespread recognition for increasing the national scope, scale, and reputation of the law school and launching a host of innovative programs.

“Paul Berman stood out among the impressively diverse and accomplished group of finalists who emerged from an extensive national search,” GW President Steven Knapp says. “He brings to the position exactly the right combination of vision, legal scholarship, and proven administrative achievement.”

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WILLIAM ATKINS

“Dean Paul Schiff Berman is a renowned teacher and scholar and a proven academic administrator,” concurs Gregory E. Maggs, professor of law, who served as GW Law’s interim dean prior to Dean Berman’s arrival. “He brings new ideas and tremendous energy to our Law School. My colleagues and I greet him with great delight, and are eager to assist him in advancing our institution.”

The award-winning law professor and scholar followed an unconventional path to the legal academy. After earning his bachelor’s degree in anthropology *summa cum laude* from Princeton University, where he directed the main student-run theater, the New York native formed his own successful theater company, Spin Theater, in lower Manhattan. He served as the company’s artistic director while simultaneously working as administrative director of two other nonprofit theater groups in the city.

“As much as I loved working in theater, I wanted to be more engaged in social and political issues facing the country,” says the dean, who enrolled at NYU Law School while continuing to direct shows on a part-time basis. Reflecting that he “loved the discourse of law school from day one,” Dean Berman served as managing editor of the *NYU Law Review* and graduated first in his class.

Law degree in hand, he landed a one-year clerkship with Chief Judge Harry T. Edwards of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in 1995-96, followed by a clerkship with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1997-98. The year between his clerkships, he served as a pro bono associate at Sullivan and Cromwell in New York.

“I’ve always been interested in exploring ideas in the expansive way that academia allows, and I love teaching and interacting with students,” says Dean Berman, who was appointed to the faculty of the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1998. “So many people have stories about a teacher or professor who literally changed their life trajectories or their way of viewing the world. I really love the possibility of truly making a difference.”

The popular professor spent nearly a decade at the University of Connecticut, where he served as the Jesse Root Professor of Law. Along the way, he completed a one-year stint in 2006-07 as a visiting professor and visiting research scholar at Princeton University’s Law and Public Affairs Program.

While the prospect of a law school deanship held great appeal to him, he figured that the opportunity would not emerge for at least a decade. Indeed, when he first received a phone call from Arizona State in 2008 asking him about the law school deanship, he had not applied. “I was just 42 years old, and I was very happy as a professor,” he says. “But the more I found out about the possibility for transformation at ASU, the more excited I became.”

He quickly gained a reputation as a standout dean and visionary leader. “For the last three years, Dean Berman has been a dramatic innovator, fundraiser, and leader as dean of the Arizona State Law School,” says Roger H. Trangsrud, James F. Humphreys Professor of Complex Litigation and Civil Procedure, who led the GW search culminating in Dean Berman’s selection. “Now that he is moving to GW, we expect the same level of energy and excitement here in Foggy Bottom.”

Dean Berman says that while he loved his years at Arizona State, he eagerly cast his hat into the ring when he was recruited for the dean search at GW. “I was approached by 10 or so other law schools conducting dean searches this year and turned them all down because the deanship at ASU was going so well,” he says. “But GW Law School really presents a unique opportunity to help further build a distinctive identity for a law school that already has world-class scope, scale, and quality.

“Everyone knows that GW is one of the top law schools in the country, but it is far more than that,” he explains. “It is a place where students and faculty work every day to help change the world: tackling the crucial challenges facing our society and integrating their academic pursuits with law in action in our nation’s capital. This is

IMMEDIATE *impact*

Here, Dean Berman shares just a few of his top priorities and areas of focus during the first few months of his deanship.



Dean Berman, Professor and Immigration Clinic Director Alberto Benitez, and recent grad Claire Kelly. Ms. Kelly worked in the Immigration Clinic her final year and says it was a defining experience for her.

▲ “I’m excited to begin at GW Law the same year our Clinics turn 40 years old,” Dean Berman says. “The Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics are a core part of the Law School’s past and future because they give our students ideal hands-on training and simultaneously provide them with an opportunity to change the world by helping people in real-life settings.”

Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs Phyllis Goldfarb said that from her very first meeting with Dean Berman, she knew the enrichment and expansion of the clinics was a key priority for his deanship. “It was clear that he has already begun to appreciate the work of the many people and programs that make up our large and energetic Law School community,” she says. “He listened intently, asked astute questions, and posed ideas. He clearly has a hands-on, facilitative style and seems eager to help us become an even better version of the clinic and Law School we are.”



WILLIAM ATKINS

▲ Even before his deanship officially began on July 1, Dean Berman met on numerous occasions with alumni and other community members to build friendships, gain ideas, forge connections, and develop solutions to key challenges facing the school. Collaborating with alumni, creating a more seamless transition for students from law school to law practice, and integrating externships, public policy research opportunities, and career development are top priorities for Dean Berman now and in the future.

(Right) Dean Berman meets in his office with SBA President Nick Nikic.

▶ “This is obviously a large school, but we are committed to engaging with our students on a personalized, one-to-one basis,” Dean Berman says. “I want suggestions on how we can make this great Law School even better, and I look forward to meeting with students informally each week. Students can come without an appointment and without an agenda, and I will stay as long as there are students who want to chat.”



CLAIRE DUGGAN

(Left) Dean Berman discusses faculty priorities with Carville Dickinson Benson Research Professor of Law Paul Butler, former associate dean of faculty research and scholarship, and Elyce Zenoff Research Professor of Law Mary Cheh.

◀ As both dean and Robert Kramer Research Professor of Law, Dean Berman emphasizes the importance of the growth and development of the faculty and their teaching, scholarship, and research projects. He will work with incoming Associate Dean of Faculty Research and Scholarship Peter J. Smith to develop programs and workshops for the faculty in the 2011–12 academic year, and also is broadening the scope of the newly formed Intellectual Life Committee, which Professor Smith will chair.



CHRIS FLYNN

the unique vision that the GW Law School is poised to pursue as we become the preeminent location for 21st-century global legal and policy studies. It is exciting to have the chance to build this vision of the future of legal education.”

Dean Berman, who will also serve as GW’s Robert Kramer Research Professor of Law, comes to GW with an impressive résumé. He is the author of seven scholarly books and numerous journal articles and is a sought-after lecturer, conference speaker, and legal expert for the media. The dean’s scholarship focuses on the ways in which globalization affects the intersection of legal systems; his new book, *Global Legal Pluralism: A Jurisprudence of Law Beyond Borders*, will be published this year by Cambridge University Press.

He is also a versatile administrator, who brings a unique combination of skills to GW, culled from his dual careers in the legal academy and the theater world. While the two occupations may seem worlds apart, the dean says they are not as disparate as they might appear.

“Being a law school dean activates the same parts of me that I loved as a theater director,” he explains. “Both directors and deans strive to create an environment where everyone feels safe being creative, having lots of ideas, and pursuing their passions. Then, when someone brings an idea to the table, you want to put it on its feet as quickly as possible to see where it leads. Finally, I learned as a director that it’s best to build a show around your personnel, not to slot people into preexisting roles. The same applies for law school deans.”

A passionate teacher, Dean Berman taught a wide array of classes at the University of Connecticut School of Law—from conflict of laws to civil procedure and cyberspace law. Earlier in his career, he taught theater classes at NYU and the University of the Philippines.

“I love teaching,” he says, “but what really excited me about becoming a dean was my belief that institutions model the kind of community we must create in society more generally. If you can build an institution that is nurturing, kind, and that enlivens people’s passions and makes them feel self-actuated and fulfilled, then you are doing something real and meaningful for the world.”

At GW, the dean says he is looking forward to taking “an incredibly strong law school with huge numbers of activities, programs, and opportunities for students” and propelling it to greater heights.

“I think we can do more to tell the story of what makes GW distinct from every other top law school in the United States,” he explains. “I want everyone to know about the significant interconnection between GW Law School and the city of Washington, federal agencies, think tanks, and the D.C. public policy world in general so that people think of GW as the place to go to change the world.”

Dean Berman, who places great value on getting to know his students, plans to offer weekly student office hours at GW—a precedent that he started at Arizona State. “I want our students to

know that even though GW is a large law school, it is a nurturing community that cares about each individual person,” he says.

The dean also hopes to establish individualized pathways and capstone courses and experiences for second and third-year law students aimed at “bridging the gap” from law school to law practice. “The core of GW’s curriculum is extraordinarily strong and does what it is intended to do extremely well—teach students how to reason by analogy, question their assumptions, and articulate multiple points of view,” he says. “But beyond that core, the Law

School can do even more to create diverse pathways for second and third-year students based on their individual interests—from integrated courses of study to externships to clinics to intensive scholarly


research with faculty members to international experiences, and so on, all aimed at preparing students to move seamlessly into various real-world practice environments after graduation.”

Another top item on the dean’s agenda is continuing to upgrade the Law School’s physical facilities. “Our goal is to make our buildings more student-friendly and create an even stronger sense of community and place,” he says.

“Following the successful deanships of Mike Young and Fred Lawrence, GW Law School is poised to continue its upward trajectory with Dean Paul Berman,” says Professor Trangsrud. “He has ambitious plans for new academic initiatives, faculty and student recruiting, and fundraising to support new student scholarships, faculty resources, and our ongoing building program. Once he has settled into his new position, I expect the Law School to be off and running in exciting new directions.”

On the home front, Dean Berman and his wife, Laura A. Dickinson—whom he met while clerking at the Supreme Court—are the proud parents of seven-year-old Julien. “Justice Ginsburg actually performed our wedding ceremony in 2000,” he says, “and at the end she said, ‘By the power vested in me by the United States Constitution, I pronounce you husband and wife.’ So I guess that means we have a constitutionally-sanctioned marriage!” Professor Dickinson will join her husband at GW Law School, serving as Oswald Symister Colclough Research Professor of Law (see sidebar).

The family enjoys cultural events, as well as outdoor activities, such as hiking and cycling. The three also love baseball. “We look forward to becoming Washington Nationals fans!” says the dean. A standard poodle, Roji, rounds out the family.

As he opens a new chapter in his career, Dean Berman says he is delighted to join the GW Law family. “I believe this is an extraordinary opportunity and the ideal time to begin a deanship at GW in order to forge a differentiated model for legal education in the nation’s capital,” he says. “I am thrilled to begin work with the exceptionally talented faculty, staff, and alumni of this Law School to invent the future together.” 

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GW LAW WELCOMES *Laura A. Dickinson*

Acclaimed legal scholar Laura A. Dickinson joined the GW Law faculty July 1 as Oswald Symister Colclough Research Professor of Law.

Professor Dickinson, who specializes in human rights, international law, and national security, comes to GW from the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, where she served as Foundation Professor of Law and directed the school's Center for Law and Global Affairs.

Earlier in her career, she served on the faculty of the University of Connecticut School of Law and as a visiting research scholar and visiting professor in the Law and Public Affairs program at Princeton University.

A native of Madison, Wis., who later moved to Palo Alto, Calif., Professor Dickinson earned her bachelor's degree from Harvard College and her law degree from Yale Law School, where she served as co-editor-in-chief of the *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* and editor of the *Yale Law Journal*.

"As a law student, I had the opportunity to work with Professor Harold Hongju Koh, now legal adviser at the State Department, on a number of major law cases involving human rights issues in the United States and around the world," she says. "The law really came alive for me through these cases. Meeting people who had suffered grave human rights abuses and working on their behalf through the legal system showed me how law can make a substantial difference in individuals' lives, as well as affect policy and society."

After graduating, she clerked for Judge Dorothy W. Nelson of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and then landed a clerkship at the U.S. Supreme Court with Justices Harry A. Blackmun and Stephen G. Breyer.

It was there that she met her husband-to-be, Paul Schiff Berman, GW Law's new dean, who was clerking for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

"We used to joke that ours was a relationship of convenience, because when you are working around-the-clock, who else are you going to find time to meet?" Professor Dickinson quips. On a more serious note, she says, "Clerking at the Supreme Court was truly inspiring, and a great way for a young attorney to experience the workings of governance."

She remained in Washington after her Supreme Court clerkship, serving as a senior policy adviser at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor—another experience

that deeply influenced her career. "I spent a year traveling back and forth between Washington, East Timor, and Indonesia," she says. "I worked with the bureau to help foster a peaceful transition to democracy in East Timor and Indonesia, while helping them provide some level of accountability and reconciliation for the massive atrocities and human rights abuses that had taken place," she says.

Academia beckoned in 2001—and, a decade later, Professor Dickinson says she has never looked back. "Teaching is a great way to connect with and influence the next generation of lawyers, as well as to stay engaged in important legal and policy debates," she says. "I love mentoring students and helping to shape their understanding of the law."

One of the many highlights of her tenure at the University of Connecticut was working with a team of students providing research assistance to the U.S. government as part of a unique collaboration between the law school and the U.S. Regime Crimes Liaison Office in Baghdad. The students aided the United States in its efforts to prosecute people before the Iraqi Special Tribunal, which had jurisdiction over war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed during the rule of Saddam Hussein.

At Arizona State, she founded and directed the Center for Law and Global Affairs—a cutting-edge center for research on issues of global governance and transnational and international law that provided unique opportunities for students both inside and outside the classroom. "It's been a tremendous experience," she says.

Another career highlight was her visiting professorship at Princeton, where she worked on a policy initiative addressing the growing use of military and government contractors in the practice of foreign affairs. "I spent a significant amount of time at Princeton writing a book about accountability and oversight of military contractors, which is one of the research topics I've focused on most extensively in recent years," says Professor Dickinson, who is particularly interested in the human rights implications of the increasing use of contractors. Her book, *Outsourcing War and Peace: Preserving Public Values in a World of Privatized Foreign Affairs*, was recently published by Yale University Press. The book explores the risks that privatization poses to public values, and outlines a series of policy reforms for protecting those values in an era of privatization.

Professor Dickinson says that her work in outsourcing and government contracts is "a perfect fit" for GW Law. "I'm really excited to engage with the students, alumni, and faculty of GW's government contracts program, which is the leading program of its kind in the country," she says. "I am equally looking forward to working with GW's national security and international law programs, which are also incredibly strong. The synergy for me is extraordinary."

Steven L. Schooner, Nash & Cibinic Professor of Government Procurement Law and co-director of the Government Procurement Law Program, says that Professor Dickinson will be a great addition to GW. "Laura's background, scholarship, and reputation spans three academic disciplines that are core strengths here at GW—international law, national security, and government contracts," he says. "That's a potent combination, and we're ecstatic that she has joined the team. She brings a fresh, 'outsider' perspective to government contracts, and we expect that to pay great dividends for our program."

—Jamie L. Freedman

