



The James E. Be

# Leaving *His* **MARK**

*Temple Law School's Longtime Dean Robert J. Reinstein  
Steps Down After Two Decades*

BY ARLENE RIVERA FINKELSTEIN



**M**y high-speed drive through North Philadelphia triggers memories of many such travels to Temple Law School when I was a student there more than a decade ago. The car is different. The hair is different. But the lateness is very much the same.

When I call on my cell phone to alert the Dean's assistant that I will be late, Dean Reinstein himself answers the phone, "Oh, hi, Arlene. It's Bob Reinstein," and assures me that my delay is no problem.

That *definitely* would not have happened fifteen years ago when I was a student in Reinstein's Constitutional Law Class. I was terrified of him! But my fear as a first-year law student was in no way inspired by the demeanor of this pleasant, soft-spoken man. Rather, it was the sheer intimidation that came from knowing that not only was he the dean of my law school, but that he was also an accomplished legal scholar who had a long history of distinguished public service both in the Department of Justice and as a contributing attorney for the NAACP (working on litigation that succeeded in integrating the Police and Fire Departments of Philadelphia).

Reinstein's deanship, which began in 1989, was in its infancy when I was a student at Temple Law School in the early nineties. This gentle giant would spend the better part of two decades quietly moving mountains — bringing millions of dollars, even more exceptional faculty, and extraordinary renova-

tions to the law school — catapulting what is now the Temple University Beasley School of Law into the new millennium and up to its most recent 59th spot in the *U.S. News and World Report* Law School Rankings (higher than any law school in the region except for the University of Pennsylvania Law School).

As I make my way across the marble floors of the law school entrance and past a number of trophy cases (courtesy of Temple's award-winning National Trial Team), to the elevators that carry me up to the dean's office, Reinstein's mark on the law school is tangible. It is clear that this is not the same law school I attended, and I greet Dean Reinstein by blurting out that sentiment. Reinstein smiles. Clearly he has heard this on more than one occasion. Then, grinning like a kid who wants to show off a new bike, Reinstein says, "Want to see the new library?"

Thus begins my VIP tour of Temple Law School, through a bright and airy library that's a far cry from the dungeon I once avoided. Reinstein, who can now add tour guide to his impressive resume, expertly points out the architectural details and describes how the project spanned only two summers. As we walk, he smiles and waves at many students in the crowded library.

"How did you do it?" I ask. Again, he smiles and modestly details the success of the law school's first capital campaign, launched at the school's centennial in 1995. "We raised a lot of money," he says in characteristic understatement.

The school raised enough money to acquire and renovate two historic buildings on the University campus (now named Bar-

rack and Shusterman Halls). In addition, countless changes were made to the main law school building, Klein Hall — an overhaul culminating in the recent renovation of the library.

"There really has been a tremendous impact beyond what I thought," Reinstein says regarding the effects of the physical transformation, "Because a good working environment really does affect how people feel about themselves and view the institution."

Reinstein says making some "much-needed changes in the physical plant" was one of his primary goals when he took office. He also aspired to expand and improve the faculty and to improve the quality of the student body. Most importantly, he set out to build the endowment. At the onset of his deanship, the school reported a \$4 million endowment. Today, the school's endowment is estimated at close to \$60 million.

Though he hesitates to say outright what is his proudest accomplishment ("It's like asking me which of my children I love more!"), Reinstein does acknowledge that building the endowment was "probably the most important thing that was done while I was dean." This, he explains, is because the endowment is "really critical for us to maintain our historical mission — that is a combination of providing a very high quality legal education while being accessible to students of modest means."

The crowning achievement in his successful fundraising campaign was receiving the highly publicized \$20 million gift from James Beasley in 1999 that resulted in the change of the law school's name. It was, at the time, the second-largest gift ever given to a law school.

"The gift," he says, "has made an enormous difference. We have in the entering class of 300, forty-one students who are getting full tuition scholarships for three years — just as a result of that endowment."

Ordinarily not one to brag, Reinstein boasts that in his deanship, seventy new endowment funds have been created — with Beasley's of course being the largest.

Although Reinstein acknowledges that a few feathers may have been ruffled when the law school's name was changed in honor of the gift, he is confident that public opinion has come around.

"Because of [Beasley's] generosity, we've given scholarships already to several hundred students. And it's going to continue. So, I think it's a wonderful thing. And I think that some of the alums who were originally upset about the name change now have a better appreciation for how much good his contribution has done."

In fact, if this is what Reinstein is most remembered for, he won't mind. It did, after all, take ten years of his deanship to secure this gift.

Keeping the law school affordable, even while raising the quality and profile of the school, has been a particular priority for Reinstein. This not only because it's the mission of the school, but because he, who has been putting a son through his alma mater, Cornell University, has a front-row seat to what has become his biggest concern as dean of the law school.

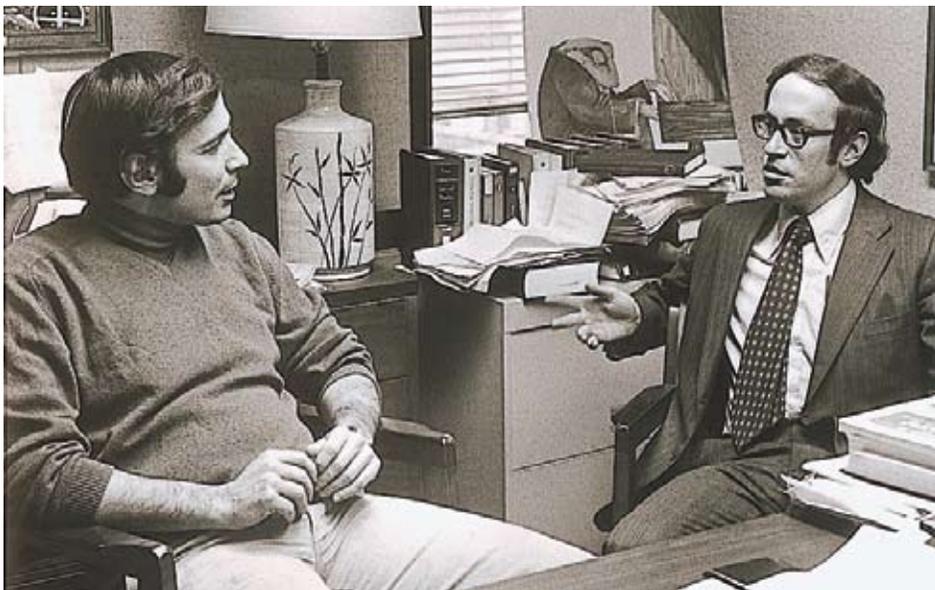
"I think we're heading for some kind of crisis in higher education because the tuition levels have gotten so high," he says.

As he speaks to this, Reinstein's concern is palpable. He applauds efforts made by the wealthiest schools (Harvard and Yale) to provide more scholarships, but laments that most schools can't afford to do that.

"We're seeing in the economy a huge divide between the top 20 percent of income earners and the rest of the country, and that can become exacerbated by what's happening in higher education as the tuition levels go up. And as at public universities state support is down, forcing the public universities also to increase their tuition, it's not clear to me what's going to happen for the bulk of the population — people of modest means."

It is because of this concern that Reinstein takes such pride in having multiplied the law school's endowment fifteen-fold — half of which is dedicated to student scholarships and financial aid.

"We've tried very hard to keep tuition at a reasonable level and also to provide finan-



Temple Law School Dean Bob Reinstein (RIGHT) counsels a student in 1976.

cial aid to our students so that law school can be affordable and also so students are not graduating with crippling debt.”

A benefit of this lower debt burden, Reinstein says, is that many of Temple’s graduates feel better able to take positions in the public sector. “Every law school has a lot more graduates who want to do public interest work than can afford to do it,” he says. “We’ve been fortunate to get the kind of support that we have to enable them to do the kind of work they want to do.”

Reinstein is apt to attribute his success to fortune rather than skill. “I’ve been very, very lucky. I’ve received tremendous support from the faculty, from alumni, from students, and from central administration. I’m very grateful for that. That’s enabled us to collectively move the law school forward.”

While he does not directly take credit for the exceptional people skills that have been such a part of his success, Reinstein does acknowledge that they are fundamental to success as a dean who must work with so many constituencies. “A lot of the job is interpersonal relations, really dealing with people,” and he adds, “dealing with them fairly.”

Reinstein views having been Temple’s chief counsel from 1982 to when he took over as dean in 1989 as a “big advantage” to him. “I understood the central administration, and I had also worked with a lot of deans. I saw a lot of things that some did well, and a lot of things that some did poorly.”

“But nothing really prepares you for a job like this,” he says. “A lot of it is just learning from your mistakes.”

He laughs as he recalls one of his earliest missteps. Reinstein, who as university counsel had much work related to Temple’s overseas programs, says that from the beginning of his deanship he had “a general idea about the importance of an international law school.” To that end, he made a proposal that the school develop a program in Japan. “I even wrote it out and presented it to the faculty,” he says, shaking his head. “That led to a faculty meeting where the weaknesses in my proposal were *illuminated*,” he says, emphasizing his deliberate understatement.

It was a time that forced Reinstein to rely on what he calls “fabulous advice” he once received from a very successful dean: “No matter how bad the situation looks, always find the humor in the situation.”

Ultimately, “a couple of [faculty] supporters of the idea came to see me and they told me that they thought it best that a vote

not be taken, because we would lose. They suggested that I pull a faculty committee together to work on the proposal and do it right. Which I did, and they did it right.”

“I learned a lot from that experience about how to be dean. ... You always have to maintain a sense of patience and a sense of humor.”

Reinstein, who in 1997 also was named vice-president for international programs for the university, says the faculty is to be credited with Temple’s success in creating strong international programs — programs that he says are essential for the school, the faculty and the students as the practice of law becomes increasingly global.

While he is proud of accomplishments abroad, Reinstein expresses some regret that he was not more active closer to home.

“I think one thing I should have done is be more active with the Philadelphia legal community ... because I think that our future, and the future of the legal profession in Philadelphia, are so closely bound together.”

Reinstein says the interactions he has had with the Philadelphia legal community over the years has been fruitful — resulting in “big changes” to the curriculum, including an overhaul of the legal writing program, the creation of a new concentration in the business of practicing law and the increased focus on skills training for law students. “Those are the kinds of things that were are starting to do. We probably should have started it longer ago, and I think that we would have if we had had closer connections to the bar,” he says.

Reinstein laments that there were simply not enough hours in the day to do even

more. “This is a job where you don’t have enough time, so there are some things that you would like to do that you end up putting to one side.”

Reinstein says he has accumulated quite a to-do list throughout his deanship and plans to tackle it when he steps down as dean at the end of June. Longtime Associate Dean of Academic Affairs JoAnne Epps will take over for Reinstein on July 1.

Reinstein’s first order of business will be a sabbatical. He then plans to remain on the law school’s faculty as a professor. “I love teaching. So, I’m looking forward to teaching full time,” says Reinstein, who managed to teach a course for all but two years of his deanship.

Reinstein also says he is ready to resume his work at a legal scholar. “I’ve written a few law review articles while I’ve been dean, but it’s been hard — you really need lots of time.” He points to a forthcoming publication that he is already planning to expand. “There are a lot of projects I’ve put on the back burner that I’m looking forward to doing.”

Skeptical, I ask Reinstein if he really can leave all the work of the dean behind. He assures me that it’s time. “For me, it’s been a great run, but it’s time for a change. It will be good for the law school too to have a change in leadership.”

“Change is good,” Reinstein says, and we end just as we began — with a smile. ■

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*Arlene Rivera Finkelstein is assistant dean and executive director of the Toll Public Interest Center at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Her e-mail address is [arfinkelstein@law.upenn.edu](mailto:arfinkelstein@law.upenn.edu).*



Reinstein (RIGHT) with Benjamin Levy and Hon. Clifford Scott Green in 1999.

  
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