

Iowa Law Review: A Century of Work Worth Doing

Todd Pettys*

Unlike many other institutions, student-edited law reviews never have the luxury of operating over a period of years with one increasingly experienced leadership team standing steadily at the helm. Rather, the students who run our journals are akin to participants in a decades-spanning relay race: they dash ahead at a furious pace and then—right about the time they hit their stride—they must pass the baton to eager but less seasoned successors. The *Iowa Law Review's* national prominence at the close of its first century is a direct result of the skill and determination with which generations of editors and student writers have individually risen to the challenges that await them when the baton hits their hands.

Most domestically trained law professors in the United States were themselves editors once upon a time, and so they know first-hand the rich educational benefits that the experience affords. That does not mean, of course, that the system always works perfectly at all journals and at all times. Depending upon the law reviews with which one publishes, for example, one sometimes finds editors whose attachment to footnotes borders on the fetishistic, fueled by a newly found conviction that readers need to see support for even the most banal of factual declarations, and that readers are unable to follow the flow of a multi-paragraph discussion without a series of “*see infra*” and “*see supra*” citations to tie the sentences together. Of course, student editors across the country have their own stories to tell—stories about authors whose self-appraisal does not stoop to the mundanity of deadlines, stories featuring authors who jettison their skepticism about *U.S. News's* law-school rankings when evaluating multiple publication offers, and so forth. All in all, however, the arrangement that unites law professors and law students in the publication enterprise has proven to be wonderfully beneficial for authors and editors alike.

Those who first envisioned the possibility of student-edited law journals more than a century ago certainly find vindication in the *Iowa Law Review's* first one hundred years. Volume after volume, the *Review's* editorial seats have been filled by smart and energetic students, the editors have filled their issues

* Associate Dean for Faculty, H. Blair and Joan V. White Chair in Civil Litigation, and Faculty Advisor for the *Iowa Law Review*, The University of Iowa College of Law.

with scholarship of admirably high quality, and student writers have usefully contributed to the editorial process while authoring valuable content of their own.

Publication norms and technologies—not to mention the law itself—have changed enormously over the *Iowa Law Review's* past century. What ties all of those years together into one celebrated whole is the students' determination to produce a first-rate collection of useful writings about the law. What a privilege it is for me as their faculty advisor to join them on part of that journey.