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O'Kelley's law school 'on the move'

■ **FUTURE:** Law dean says technological and physical expansion will mark the coming years

By Sean M. Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

The University School of Law is preparing itself for a new millennium, and Chuck O'Kelley, school dean, said new and returning law students will be "uniquely qualified" for the American law of tomorrow.

The cornerstone of the school's future will be the approximate \$18.4 million remodel and expansion of the 24-year-old building, tentatively scheduled for ground-breaking in the spring of 1997. The project will require between \$9 and \$10 million in private funds and donations in addition to the slated \$4.7 million in state funding for the project. The new school will be designed not only for the present, but for the future of the institution and the changing face of modern law, O'Kelley said.

"We should be able to build a building that will last 50 years" without the need for additional renovations, he said.

Since O'Kelley assumed the position of school dean in July 1994, the institution has stayed the course of its five-year goal to achieve national recognition for its programs and move to the forefront of technological advancements.

"In the last years we've made a commitment to upgrading technology, and we have been leaders on campus in that respect," he said. "Our interest in computer technology and our support staff assigned to that area really set us apart from a year ago."

This year, for the first time,



O'KELLEY

U.S. News and World Report ranked the school 40th overall in the nation, and its environmental law program ranked in the top 10 of all such programs.

The struggle to achieve a high national ranking has been particularly arduous because of budget constraints on faculty salaries and other areas. Even with those obstacles, law school faculty volunteered to serve as advisors for first-year students, resulting in a more open and accessible environment, O'Kelley said.

"Sometimes we forget that most first-year students don't know what law is," he said. "To them law is just an idea."

The commitment of each faculty member to mentor approximately 8-10 students resulted in a drastic reduction in drop-out rates last year, he said. Out of approximately 160 new students, only four voluntarily left the program. That reduction, he said, speaks to the personal interest that faculty members take in their students.

In addition, the school has seen "steady, upward success" for its students in job placement after graduation. More students from the classes of '94 and '95 are finding more jobs in judicial clerkships, with Wall Street firms and in environmental law than classes before them, O'Kelley said. Reviews of student performance in those jobs indicate that the caliber of students the school is producing is of "extremely high quality."

"This school is on the move," he said. "Our students know that,

and they will be able to participate in the continuation of that movement."

The school will be seeking 60 students to work with the student bar president in reinvigorating student government. As always, O'Kelley said, the School of Law is committed to providing students with informative symposiums and lectures on a regular basis. This year, students can expect some type of extracurricular activity two or three times a week.

Each spring the school hosts the environmental law conference. This year, in addition, the school will host four "Law and Entrepreneurship" symposiums. And every 10 days students may attend a brown bag lunch with a legal practitioner or scholar in an informal setting.

"There's always something happening; there's always something in the air," O'Kelley said.

O'Kelley has served as interim dean of the law school since then-dean Dave Frohnmayer took over as University President in 1994. O'Kelley says he intends to apply to the job when the search for a permanent replacement for Frohnmayer begins this fall.

A former Atlanta lawyer, O'Kelley has said he entered the teaching profession to stay in touch with the needs of students while continuing to practice business law. He has published numerous articles and co-authored several books, including the widely used casebook, *Corporations and Other Business Associations*. He chaired the admissions committee for five years, and continues to teach courses at the school, including Partnerships and Corporations, Corporate Mergers and Acquisitions, and Law and Economics.

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