

Law center dean multi-faceted

■ Author, lawyer, legal historian and dean of the law center, Rennard Strickland is deeply involved

By Tonya Alanez
Oregon Daily Emerald

Rennard Strickland, in his fourth year of his fourth deanship as dean of the William W. Knight Law Center, is a self-confessed "serial dean."

His administrative path has taken him from the University of Oklahoma at Tulsa, to Southern Illinois University, to the Oklahoma City Law School to his current appointment at the University.

Strickland brings a fresh perspective, a unique vision and individualized, as well as collective goals to the position.

In addition to his administrative experience, Strickland is an attorney, former president of the Association of American Law Schools, a legal historian of Osage and Cherokee heritage and author or co-author of nearly 30 books on Native American issues, including the 1997 publication "Tonto's Revenge," a collection of essays which aim to reassess the Indian world view.

"The heart and soul of Strickland's book is his fiery belief in the worth and dignity of the Indian way," says Charles F. Wilkinson, Moses Lasky Professor of Law at the University of Colorado, in the book's foreword.

As a youngster growing up in Oklahoma, Strickland developed an interest in American Indian law early on, eventually working for Indian tribes in the region.

"Indian people are in a substantial transition in their life and economic ways," Strickland said. "There is great difficulty getting the courts to deal with 21st century Indian ways and life as opposed to 18th or 19th century ways. One difficult task is getting the courts and legal system to understand the needs and interests of Indian people."

And at the University, his focus is understanding the needs and interests of the students.

"Our real hope is to provide an education broad enough in scope that it opens doors for students to deal with change," Strickland said. "Our goal is achieving a law



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Dean Rennard Strickland has worked as an advocate for Native American issues.

school so that no Oregonian need leave the state to have as fine an education as anywhere.

"Any kind of education has to be individualized and focused. If I were to have a goal [it would be that] each of our students is so well educated that they are prepared to take advantage of the opportunities of the legal profession that they choose [whether it be] starting out in a law firm, or as vice president of a manufacturing company, serving on a court, or as an elected officer serving in the government."

Students' impressions of, and encounters with, the dean have

been, for the most part, positive. Second-year law student Brooke Hofer recalls meeting with the dean in regards to a problem with a professor.

"He was very attentive," Hofer said. "He gave me the impression that he was definitely going to act on my complaint right away."

Brett Mersereau, another second-year law student, has not met personally with the dean, yet regards him highly.

"The general idea among students is that he's a very good representative of the law school in the national community,"

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