

Law School Notes

Gardner named U of C dean of students

By Jerry Crimmins
Law Bulletin staff writer

Amy M. Gardner, a partner at Ungaretti & Harris LLP, has been chosen to be the new dean of students at the University of Chicago Law School.

"If I'm still there 30 years from now, that would be fine with me," she said Friday. "It sounds hokey, but this is really my dream job."

Gardner, 35, is "one of our most active young alumni," said U of C Law's Dean Michael H. Schill.

"She truly understands our school and our students," he said. "She will be a tremendous asset to me and to our entire community in advocating for students' needs and supporting them during their time at the law school."

Gardner said her law school experience was "sort of daunting at first." She came to the U of C from Ames and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.

"It certainly was challenging to move to a new city where I didn't know anyone," she said.

Her first year in law school was especially tough, she said.

She fondly recalled student orientation, handled by then-Dean of Students Ellen Cosgrove. "That was how you met so many people. It helps you make friends and figure out how everything worked at the law school. One of my best friends, Leslie Danks-Burke, I met on the bus going to Second City," Gardner said.

"I think all the things Ellen did as dean of students made such a difference in my

career," she said. "It really is a neat thing to get to return in that capacity."

Cosgrove is now associate dean and dean of students at Harvard Law School.

In law school, Gardner said she "had a chance to learn so much and grow, not just in the classroom, but in conversations in study groups and outside the classroom. People would sit in the Green Lounge trying to understand everything we were learning. It was a phenomenal experience for me."

She received her law degree in 2002.

While she has been a practicing lawyer for eight years, with a concentration in general commercial and intellectual property litigation, Gardner never cut her ties with the her law school.

"A group of friends from law school, we still have dinner together once a month," she said.

She has long been a mentor for the law school's Women's Mentoring Program. "Every year I get to know a 1-L woman," Gardner said.

She has also been a moot court judge and served on the Alumni Admissions Committee and as gift chair of her class's fifth reunion.

For the larger university, she was chair of the U of C Alumni Club of Chicago from 2008 to 2010 and a member of the university's Alumni Board of Governors.

"I'm really grateful to the University of Chicago for the opportunities it's given me," she said. "I really enjoy alumni activities. ... It's a great opportunity to still feel connected to the university."

"When I heard the dean of students



Amy M. Gardner

[Michele Baker Richardson] was stepping down, I decided to apply for it."

She applied the week of June 7 and accepted the job July 8. In between, she had to do a day of interviews, give a writing sample and submit references. The school called references who weren't even listed.

As dean of students, she will advocate for the students and "help them have the best possible experience at law school," Gardner said.

She plans to attend classes to learn about professors she doesn't know, and "to stay in touch with what the students are experiencing."

She starts the job Aug. 1.