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In Memoriam

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JENNIFER MAILLY

These remarks honor the memory of Richard W. Parker, Professor of Law, Director of the Semester in DC Program, and Policy Director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Law at the University of Connecticut School of Law.



Richard Parker's Vision: UConn Law Students Living, Working, and Learning in Washington, DC

JENNIFER MAILLY *

The Semester in DC Program was Richard Parker's brainchild. At the time of its inception, few other law schools ran Washington, DC-based programs, and those programs generally did little more than send students to DC for full-time internships. Richard's vision was grander. His program would include full-time placements in federal government legal offices, and students would also take classes with a UConn Law faculty member, Richard, who would be in DC with the program participants. In this way, UConn Law's Semester in DC Program would combine clinical fieldwork with doctrinal coursework designed to help students understand their work in context and to enhance students' overall educational experience.

I first became involved in the Program—and hence began working with Richard—in 2010, shortly after Dean Jeremy Paul asked me to oversee what was then called the Externship Program, a program by which students would earn academic credit by doing volunteer work under the supervision of a lawyer in practice. Jeremy mentioned that my duties would include facilitating and supervising placements not only locally in Connecticut, but also in DC for the year-old Semester in DC Program. Until that time, I had been teaching in the 1L Lawyering Process (now Legal Practice) Program and knew next to nothing about externships. Despite my lack of experience, Richard welcomed me warmly into the Semester in DC Program, and we formed a strong partnership that sustained the Program through thirteen years of cherry blossoms and an occasional storm.

In the academy, Richard and I inhabited different worlds. Richard was an internationally renowned scholar with impeccable academic credentials, a towering intellect, and a keen understanding of the workings (and failings) of the administrative state. I was a former employment litigator who had joined the faculty relatively late in life to teach legal writing, research, and lawyering skills. Administrative law hadn't been taught when I was in law school, and I thought

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Chevron was a gas station. Yet, we respected each other's strengths and perspectives, and we were bound by our mutual commitment to providing UConn Law students with DC-based practice and classroom experiences, which would expand their knowledge and understanding of how the federal government works and plant a foundation on which their careers in public service could flower.

The Program launched in the fall of 2009 with five students. Their placements included the National Archives and Records Administration, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Department of Energy. From this modest beginning, the Program took off. For many years, enrollment climbed; there were larger classes and a wider array of placements. While most students continued to work at administrative agencies, some found fieldwork in House and Senate Committees and public interest legal organizations. As of the spring of 2021, 125 students had participated in the program, working in more than eighty different legal offices and departments. Agencies like the SEC, Department of Justice, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Energy, and the Senate Judiciary Committee have hosted UConn Law students year after year. The list of hosting agencies and offices has continued to grow in number and variety in response to student interest and demand.

Over the years, the Program weathered changes in the administration and the party in power, several full and partial government shutdowns, and, of course, in the spring of 2020, the novel coronavirus, which sent both fieldwork and classes online. Through all the challenges, Richard remained upbeat and committed. He believed in the Program—in its ability to expose students to the unique practice opportunities available in the nation's capital and to prepare them for careers in which the federal government would be their employer or a key player in their practice.

Many of Richard's students pursued careers in DC. This was perhaps the achievement of which Richard was most proud. As the Program grew, so did the number of Program alumni who stayed in or returned to DC to build their careers. Each year, when the UConn Law Alumni Relations Department would hold a gathering in DC for the DC-based alumni, the room would teem with graduates of the Program. Richard would hold court with his former students, glowing with pride and delight as they recounted how their participation in the DC Program—the work experiences, the coursework, the networking,

and Richard's support and encouragement—had laid the groundwork for their careers.

Building a base of UConn Law graduates in DC was not just a point of pride. As more Program participants graduated and embarked on legal careers in DC, we turned to them to supervise a new generation of students. For Richard, this was the ultimate sign of the Program's success: a graduate whose career in DC had been launched by the Program would "pay it forward" by hosting a student and offering opportunities to follow a similar path. These graduates signaled their support of the Program by helping to sustain and perpetuate it.

Others have commented on Richard's scholarship and his role in the administrative law community. I knew Richard as a teacher, mentor, and coach. He was constantly refining his courses to ensure that his students got the doctrinal grounding that they needed to excel as scholars and practitioners in the administrative space. At the same time, Richard came to appreciate and incorporate aspects of externship pedagogy—learning agendas, lawyering audits, and guided reflections—into the Program curriculum. I recall a long weekend phone call with Richard during which he and I mapped out the course that would become "The Role of the Government Lawyer," one of the Program's seminars. By the end of our call, the planned course had many features of the traditional externship seminar. I joked with Richard that he was working his way onto the clinical faculty. "Not yet," he laughed.

Richard's commitment to students was limitless. Just last year, an agency offered one of our students a position late in the placement process. The student had already accepted another offer and declined the position. When Richard heard that there might be an available slot, he sprang into action. He reached out to the agency lawyer directly to ask that the agency extend an offer to another UConn Law student. After Richard's repeated entreaties, the agency lawyer agreed. The only problem was that we did not have a student lined up to apply for the position. Richard was undeterred. He put out a call to the faculty and, later that day, we had a list of students to contact about the position. Within a week, we had contacted a student who had never even considered going to DC, connected her with the agency, and confirmed her placement for the following term.

Students were never far from Richard's mind. He would email, call, or text me at all hours of the day with ideas for potential

placements for students. Indeed, the last email I received from Richard, just days before his death, suggested a contact at another office to whom we should reach out about hosting one of our students. I followed up on that lead, as Richard would have wanted, and today one of our students is working in that office.

The Semester in DC Program will continue, but, without Richard, it will never be the same. Students will continue to spend semesters in DC, alumni will continue to assess the impact of the Program on their careers, and those practicing in DC will continue to volunteer to host our students and speak at classes. Perhaps some will teach in the Program. I am grateful for having worked with Richard, having been both his student and teacher, and having had a role in building a Program that is a major part of Richard's legacy at UConn Law.