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Overview of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition

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INTRODUCTION

THE JOURNAL'S TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY: REFLECTIONS FROM THE FOUNDING TO TODAY

*Scott D. Makar**

Enough time has passed since the founding of the *Journal of Law and Public Policy* to reflect on its birth, which was a laborious and exhilarating challenge with many highlights. The year or so it took to get the *Journal* operational is emblazoned in my memory due to the many twists and turns—and hurdles and stumbling blocks—that were traversed to just get to the starting blocks. Now, at the 25-year mark, the upward path of the *Journal's* progress is a success story, and the initial toil for its establishment is eclipsed fully by the substantial educational payback to the law school and graduate school communities at the University of Florida.

Interdisciplinary law journals were on the rise in the mid-1980s, combining legal scholarship with social sciences to showcase developing “law and [fill in the blank]” movements. Law and economics was the one with which I was most familiar at the time; its natural complement of applying economic analysis to legal doctrine made it fertile ground for the establishment of a number of publications to facilitate the academic output on wide-ranging topics. The *Journal* was born with this movement in mind, though not intended to be exclusively an economics-oriented endeavor. My hope was that law and economic scholarship would be central to the featured articles, but I knew that a broader net of disciplines was necessary to attract better submissions as well as to market and gain acceptance of the *Journal* both within the University of Florida community and beyond. I also knew that future stewardship may value other non-economics disciplines and choose to highlight them.

A broad set of faculty advisors, primarily from the business college, formed the core foundation for the *Journal's* initial launch; a few brave souls from the law school jumped on board too. Funding primarily came from the business college and, at the outset, a modest amount of support for computer equipment came from the university's

* Founder.

student government. The law school was not “on board” at the outset, opposing the organization. But eventually, a decade or so later, it yielded its opposition and adopted the *Journal* as its own, essentially placing its imprimatur and stamp-of-approval on the *Journal*’s rising prominence, which it had independently earned and established. In a way, it was akin to a “friendly takeover” where a host co-opts its guests by making an offer that cannot be refused. The next fifteen years seem to have played out well for the law school, law students, and others involved in the endeavor. And I am pleased that Dean Jerry and the administration have put high value on the *Journal* and its mission, which—in my mind—has always been to provide an academic enterprise for top students at the law school to hone skills that are useful in the marketplace.

So, how is the success of the *Journal* to be measured twenty-five years later? One measure is the wide acceptance of law students with *Journal* experience by law firms and judges. Students with *Journal* experience are in demand, much like those on the law review when I was a member. I have little empirical support, but it appears to me that the *Journal* has come to be on a par with the law review in many respects. As a law review alumnus, I say this with pride for both organizations. What I envisioned 25 years ago was healthy competition between the law review and the *Journal*, a sort of friendly rivalry that would benefit both in terms of attracting top quality members, obtaining solid scholarship from within and outside Florida, and staying close to a publication schedule (a serious challenge then and now).

On a personal note, the most gratifying result of the *Journal* has been when law firms, judges and legal publications placed value on the organization. A number of “firsts” come to mind, such as (a) the first time a court cited the *Journal*, (b) the first time the author of a law review or journal article cited scholarship from the *Journal*, and (c) the first time the *Journal* was listed in the Blue Book! Other “firsts” were (a) the first time a state or federal judge hired a *Journal* member as a law clerk; (b) the first time a top tier law firm hired a *Journal* member; and the first time a *Journal* member became a law professor or judge. When I worked at Holland & Knight, I remember the pride of seeing recruits interviewing for an associate position with the *Journal* on their resumes. The most heartfelt was when a recruit’s resume listed receipt of the “Barbara W. Makar” writing award—a tribute that was set up to honor my mother, an author of children’s books who passed away in 1992. The most humbling was when I was told that an award was created in my name for editorial excellence by a *Journal* member; it

was totally unexpected and undeserved.

As the *Journal* leadership looks to the future, my hope is that the past is used as a guide. The founding premise of the *Journal* was to provide a broad-based academic opportunity for law and graduate students with input from university and legal community members. Its mission was to publish scholarship, but also to be a force in the university community through the sponsorship of public speakers, debates, and symposia. The *Journal's* foundation is anchored in a multi-dimensional purpose and scope, providing a core function (publishing) with important adjunct functions (lectures, debates, symposia, *etc.*). How well it performs these functions over time, particularly in tight fiscal environments and competitive legal marketplaces, will determine its destiny. No law review or journal, to my knowledge, is economically self-sufficient (perhaps Harvard with its Blue Book revenues). For this reason, performing the publication function timely and with distinction becomes paramount on a day in, day out basis; the *Journal's* other functions complement this function, but cannot exist independently of it. Its history shows that the *Journal* is resilient and up to these challenges. My hope is that twenty-five years from now, the introduction to the 50th anniversary issue of the *Journal* will have many other "firsts" to report and that *Journal* alumni will continue to take on important roles in our government, economy, and civic life.

