

DEAN TONI M. MASSARO—A TRIBUTE

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It is an understatement to say that during her ten years as dean, Toni Massaro has harnessed her many strengths to vastly improve the life of our College and the individuals in it. Upon a first meeting, it is Toni's intellect that bowls people over, inspiring us to see the profound importance of even everyday actions—the ones most of us generally treat as bits of drudgery. She reminds us of our responsibility and ability as a community to affect our world for the better.

Those who have been fortunate enough to learn from her (and there are many ways to learn from her, not just in a classroom) have experienced this awe-inspiring ability first hand. We have also noticed that combined with her extraordinary vision is a grounded realism that allowed her, for example, to describe to architects in words and drawings how she wanted our building transformed. That description included about a dozen major goals and as many particular ways of reaching them, which caused *me* to despair at its complexity and apparent impossibility. Not only did she visualize this dream, but she communicated it effectively and, against great odds, saw it through to the end.

The openness of our Law Commons is not just an aesthetic treat; it is a statement that the doors of this community are open. Access to public legal education is a core value of Toni's. In fact, it's in her DNA. She was not born to a family of lawyers or professionals for whom walking through doors like these was easy. It took grit, hard work, determination, and courage to undertake her spectacular professional journey. Most importantly, she never forgets that many of our students have never met a lawyer before, have parents who never attended college, and have a hard time imagining themselves entering, much less "making it," in the professional world. Toni lets each of our students know that they *can* learn to thrive in this world, and that their unique life experiences will be important to how they serve their future clients. When students do possess professional experience and confidence about their place in this part of the world *before* they walk through our doors, she encourages them to express that confidence, contribute to the community, and recognize that our profession is one of ethical service and responsibility. She encourages our entire community to learn from each other—to share our different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives with each other so that we are all enriched as a result.

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Under Toni's leadership, faculty, staff, and administrators have developed the ethos of a shared responsibility for and with our students. That responsibility includes the *public* responsibility of lawyers as civic leaders—another of Toni's core themes. She communicates this to our students from her first meeting with them, conveying that, whether we realize it or not, lawyers are seen by the larger community as people who can effectively lead—not only in professional roles, but also in community groups, committees, and in informal decision-making situations. She tells students that, as future lawyers, they will be asked to give their opinions, chair committees, and speak for others in both legal and civic settings. She inspires faculty and administrators to make sure that our students have the experiences in law school necessary to prepare them effectively for these roles.

A few things I have learned from Toni's inspiration and compassion:

- Take responsibility for each other.
- Focus on the strengths of others and bring them out whenever possible. (We are all expert at identifying the weaknesses of others; the more important lesson of identifying strengths comes less naturally.)
- A team that works together can accomplish a great deal more than individuals working separately (and the team can have a lot more fun).
- Access and excellence are complementary, not contradictory.
- Always listen, and respond honestly.
- Stand by each other in troubled times.
- Keep your standards high, but never lose your compassion.
- Put the institution before personal ambition.
- Remember that the institution is made up of people.
- Diversity serves us all: “When I teach, write, work, and dean, I do not do this for any subset of us. I try to make a place for all of us to have a shot. *Everyone* has a place at the table of the common world. No exceptions. That way, we are not doomed to our prior assumptions about who we are, where we belong, what we can be—or who we can become.”¹

The examples of courage, stamina, inspiration, loyalty, and simple human caring that Toni has exhibited over the past ten years are impossible to adequately enumerate. But it is possible to say that we are aware of and grateful for having been graced by her enormous talents—her energy, time, intellect, imagination, and integrity—given to us with total unselfishness, for the past ten years. Toni Massaro, as a person and a dean, is truly a treasure.

1. From remarks by Toni M. Massaro upon receiving the 2009 Arizona Minority Bar Association Community Service Award—Champion of Excellence & Diversity, March 26, 2009, Tucson, Arizona.