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AALS Panel - Global Legal Education - Introduction

By Michael Lawrence*

[Association of American Law Schools Session on "Educating Foreign and U.S. Lawyers for Global Challenges", Co-Sponsored by Sections on Graduate Programs for Foreign Lawyers and Post-Graduate Legal Education - AALS Annual Meeting - January 5, 2004, Atlanta, GA]

Thank you for joining us this morning at the Co-Sponsored Program of the AALS Section on Graduate Programs for Foreign Lawyers and Post-Graduate Legal Education on "Educating U.S. and Foreign Lawyers for Global Challenges." As stated in the synopsis for the program provided in the schedule, we'd like to discuss issues in educating U.S. and foreign lawyers in the year 2004 in light of the vast technological and political changes we've experienced over the last quarter century. How have things changed, and how might we as legal educators plan for the future?

I'm Professor Michael Lawrence from the Michigan State University DCL College of Law in East Lansing, and as chair-elect for the Section on Post-Graduate Legal Education I'd like to introduce our other panelists, all of whom have a wealth of experience in educating U.S. and foreign law students and lawyers.

Immediately to my left is Jennifer D'Arcy Maher, Assistant Dean for International Studies and Senior Lecturing Fellow at the Duke University Law School. Dean Maher is the primary administrator for Duke Law's 1 Year LLM program (for international students) and 3 year JD/LLM program (mostly US students). In addition to her administrative responsibilities, she teaches a required, 2-credit course in US legal analysis, research & writing to Duke's LLM students (all of whom are international students). She has taught Intro to US law to students in Duke's Geneva, Switzerland and Fukuoka, Japan summer programs. She has also given presentations to lawyers from all over the world who come to the Raleigh/Durham area on State Dept-sponsored programs. Dean Maher will speak primarily on the topic of educating US law students and lawyers in LL.M. programs.

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Next is Dean Tadas Klimas of the Vytautas Magnus University School of Law in Kaunas, Lithuania. VMU Law is the only American-style law school in Europe. Dean Klimas has been Dean there since 1997. He was born and raised in the United States and is a graduate of DePaul Law School, but he returned to his parents' native country, Lithuania, in 1995. He served as Chief Legal Counsel to Professor Landsbergis when he was Chairman of the Lithuanian parliament, and as his campaign manager when he ran for President. He knows a lingering impression many Americans, including himself, have of Lithuania and Professor Landsbergis involve those early days of independence in the early 1990s – Lithuania was the first of the former Soviet Republics to declare its independence – when Professor Landsbergis and 100,000 of his fellow Lithuanians faced down the Soviet tanks at the Vilnius TV tower. Dean Klimas will speak on the topic of educating foreign lawyers and law students.

Finally, at my far left is Professor Larry Bakken of Hamline University Law School. Professor Bakken is faculty director for Hamline's LLM for international lawyers, which has had students from around 20 countries. Each summer he takes students to Norway for an exchange program where he also teaches international law students and lawyers. He has taught law students and lawyers in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Moldova, Italy, China, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Canada. Professor Bakken will discuss how legal educators introduce US law students and foreign LL.M. students to foreign legal systems, including when they are in the same classes.

As for myself, I was Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Michigan State University DCL College of Law from 2001-2003, and currently I am the Program Director for the College's Mexico Summer Study Abroad Program in Guadalajara as well as its Washington, DC Semester Externship Program. I have taught foreign law students and lawyers in Lithuania, Taiwan, Canada, Mexico, and most in Beijing, China at the Chinese Foreign Affairs University for a month in December, 2003. It was most fascinating to teach a course on American Property Law, which of course deals fundamentally with private property rights, to Chinese law students studying under the Communist system. To say the least, China is a changing.

Thank you once again for coming – this promises to be an interesting discussion. I'll now turn the floor over to Dean Maher.