

# Widener University Delaware Law School

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October 20, 2014

## Widener Adds Support for a State-Sponsored Law School

Erin Daly



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# Widener adds support for a state-sponsored law school



**DELAWARE VOICE**  
ERIN DALY

I write in response to the call for a state-sponsored law school by Rashmi Rangan and James Angus, "Time for state-sponsored law school in Delaware," (Oct. 12).

The authors make a number of important points with which we wholeheartedly agree: the recognition that law schools can serve as incubators for social justice and that state support of a law school can, in their words, stamp the state's "imprimatur on the ideal of service to the public and can instill in students aspiring to careers in law a sense of civic duty and the nobility in helping others."

We also agree law school clinics can promote lawyering skills when students learn to help people navigate through the legal system. Educational programs like these can and do strengthen our communities every day.

Indeed, Widener Law Delaware, the only law school in the state, is committed to the kind of civic engagement which the authors call for: our four clinics serve veterans, promote the environment, protect victims of domestic violence, and represent indigent criminal defendants.

In the past year alone, we have represented hundreds of clients throughout the state. Just last week, our veterans' clinic helped a schizophrenic veteran recover hundreds of thousands of dollars in back benefits that had been wrongfully denied him.

Indeed, it is work like this that earned the Veterans' Clinic the Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Award – and that earned our Wills for Heroes program the same honor last year. This kind of engagement helps the people of Delaware, while it infuses the legal profession here with the value of service for the public good.

We also agree that the cost of education is a growing challenge throughout the nation, although the per credit cost of legal education at Widener Law Dela-

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ware is less than that of graduate programs at the University of Delaware. Indeed, the important point is that there is no necessary correlation between state support of a school and the value that school brings to the state.

Widener alumni and adjuncts serve throughout Delaware state government, and sit on the state's courts. Approximately half of the Delaware bar graduated from this Law School. One candidate for the Attorney General's Office is a Widener graduate. There is no doubt that, after almost 45 years in Wilmington, Widener lawyers speak for Delaware.

The only question is: What should the relationship be between Widener and the state of Delaware? There are many options, and alternative approaches should be considered. New York and Massachusetts support private universities through their land-grant status. In Pennsylvania, Drexel receives public funding for its medical school.

These are examples of state support for private institutions to help them carry out their public missions. Delaware could provide similar support for Widener in the kind of public-private partnership that is becoming increasingly common in higher education.

Widener Law Delaware shares the goals and values the authors espouse. We welcome opportunities to further develop programs to enhance legal education, the legal profession, and our communities throughout the state. We look forward to working in greater partnership with Delaware to promote the public good throughout the state.

Erin Daly is Interim Dean of Widener Law School.