The School of Law’s new Center and Institute prepare to host world-renowned academics and leaders.

by Brenda Murphy-Niederkorn

When Joel Seligman interviewed for the position of dean of the Washington University School of Law last year, he asked faculty and students at the School exactly what might provide greatest value to students’ legal education. Two oft-repeated responses—interdisciplinary studies and global legal studies—led to the establishment of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies and the Institute for Global Legal Studies.

Bob Kallen, JD/MA ’82, knows the importance of interdisciplinary studies. In fact, he says it’s the reason he landed his first job out of law school with the Federal Trade Commission’s Bureau of Consumer Protection in Washington, D.C.

According to Kallen, who complemented his law degree with a master’s in economics from Washington University, a new law school graduate had to be in the top 10 percent of the class to be considered for a federal government position. Even though he wasn’t in this tier of students, his additional degree in economics put him at the head of the candidate list.

“Interdisciplinary studies are even more important today,” says Kallen, now president of Chicago-based RSK Strategies, a firm he started to help grow small and mid-sized Internet and brick-and-mortar companies. “The practice of law has evolved so that clients want you to know not only legal nuances, but to understand business as well. They don’t want legal technocrats. Interdisciplinary studies help to take the

In today’s global environment—where not only communicating with others, but also conducting commerce worldwide is as simple as pressing a key on a personal computer—legal problems require international cooperation and insight.

“In today’s global environment, goods, services, information, and capital all flow across national boundaries,” says Stephen Legomsky, the Charles F. Nagel Professor of International and Comparative Law and director of the Institute for Global Legal Studies. “These transactions can generate complicated issues that are governed by U.S., foreign, and international law.

We’ve also seen a dramatic surge in immigration. More and more issues require international solutions.”

That’s why the School of Law created the Institute for Global Legal Studies. “The Institute offers a great way to expose our students to exciting international developments, as well as to enhance the vibrancy and visibility of the school,” says Legomsky. “We intend to become one of the world’s premier international legal centers.”

This fall the Institute will be moving into its headquarters on the third floor of Anheuser-Busch Hall. To celebrate, the Institute will hold an inaugural event on November 17-18, 2000, focusing on “The United Nations and the Protection of Human Rights.”
blinders off. You become a more well-rounded person who can bring added value to your clients.”

John N. Drobak, professor of law, professor of economics in Arts & Sciences, and chair of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, agrees:

“Lawyers are valued as problem solvers. They are able to amass large amounts of information and discern the important threads within that information. Interdisciplinary studies are tools that provide additional knowledge and data that can be applied to problem solving.”

Several members of the School of Law’s faculty hold joint appointments in other parts of the University, including the School of Medicine and the Department of Philosophy in Arts & Sciences. In addition, faculty members from other parts of Washington University teach law school courses. Law and other disciplines are also combined in eight joint-degree programs.

The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies will be adding to these offerings with an annual series of conferences focusing on contemporary topics that raise legal issues and require input from other disciplines.

The 2000–01 program, “Norms and the Law,” will focus on the relationship between law and social, cultural, religious, and economic norms. Drobak is coordinating this program.

Four keynote speakers are scheduled:

Justice Richard Goldstone, a member of the South African Constitutional Court and formerly chief prosecutor of the United Nations International Criminal Courts for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Judge Patricia Wald, a judge on the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia and formerly a circuit judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

Dr. Francis Deng, formerly Sudan’s ambassador to the United Nations and currently a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan’s representative for internally displaced persons.

Ambassador Aida González Martínez of Mexico, the chair of the United Nation’s Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Other distinguished speakers will be John Anderson, former member of Congress, the 1980 Independent presidential candidate, and now president and chief executive officer of the World Federalist Association; Richard C. Hottelet, long-time CBS foreign correspondent who was one of the original “Murrow Boys” and an expert on the United Nations; Erika Feller, director of the Department of International Protection in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Professor Cherif Bassiouni, 1999 Nobel Peace Prize nominee and the father of the International Criminal Court; Thomas Franck, professor at New York University and the recently retired president of the American Society of International Law; and Ruth Wedgwood, professor at Yale University.

The Institute’s core activity will be a series of conferences on contemporary themes of global importance. “Constitutional Courts” is the topic of the first conference, planned for fall 2001. It will focus on the efforts of both established constitutional courts and new courts in emerging democracies to define their roles and sustain their legitimacy. Co-organizing the conference are Stanley L. Paulson, professor of law and professor of philosophy in Arts & Sciences, and Lee Epstein, professor of law and the Edward Mallinckrodt Distinguished University Professor of Political Science in Arts & Sciences.

Several other accomplished thinkers on the subject of constitutional
courts have agreed to provide papers and presentations at this conference. They include Ronald Dworkin, one of the world’s leading legal philosophers; Juergen Habermas, one of the world’s leading political scientists; Nobel Laureate Douglass C. North, an economist at Washington University; Robert Alexy, one of Germany’s leading legal philosophers; and Michael Stolleis, a leading authority in the German-speaking world on the history of public law.

The Institute’s conferences will contribute to the ongoing debates on significant issues through media coverage and the publication of conference proceedings. The Oxford University Press already has expressed interest in publishing a book based on the “Constitutional Courts” conference. A student seminar will also be offered.

In addition to the inaugural event and conference, the Institute has hosted a steady stream of international guests to discuss important international legal issues. Recent visitors to the law school have included Mary Kay Magistad, National Public Radio’s China correspondent; Czech Supreme Court Justice Wojciek Cepi; S.P. Sathe, Indian constitutional scholar; Michael Byers, Amnesty International’s counsel in the case of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet; Thomas Franck, a distinguished international law scholar; six European German Marshall fellows; and a delegation of 12 Turkish law deans.

A 15-member board of international and comparative law faculty members advises the Institute’s director. An additional external board, the International Council, so far includes Cherif Bassiouni, the father of the new International Criminal Court; Justice Herbert Ma of the Supreme Court of Taiwan; Paul Craig, professor of English law at the University of Oxford; and David Detjen, JD ’73, a prominent international lawyer with Walter, Conston, Alexander & Green, PC, in New York.

Stephen Legomsky responds to questions about the American legal system from a group of visiting German Marshall fellows.