

# Scholar's Empirical Research Leads to New Ways of Understanding

Vice Dean Martin Honored with Nagel Chair Installation

BY BRENT MUELLER

Vice Dean Andrew Martin discussed “Institutional Empiricism in the 21st Century” during his March 28, 2013 installation as the Charles Nagel Chair of Constitutional Law and Political Science. Martin explored the growing applications and challenges of empirical studies in law and politics, brought on by the new age of technology and data collection. “Everything has changed in the last decade,” Martin said. “The future is here, and we’re all struggling to keep up.”

Martin, who holds a joint appointment with the law school and the Department of Political Science in Arts & Sciences, is a prime example of the synergies of interdisciplinary teaching and research at the university. Making remarks at the installation ceremony were Provost Edward Macias, Dean Barbara Schaal, Dean Kent Syverud, and Professor Lee Epstein, University of Southern California, who is a colleague of and frequent empirical-research joint investigator with Martin.

“Andrew has become a giant among scholars and professors of constitutional law and political science,” said Syverud, dean and the Ethan A.H. Shepley Distinguished University Professor. “His dozens of articles are careful, rigorous, and insightful. They’ve come to define the standard for empirical studies of courts in the United States and in the world.”

During his installation address, Martin explored the explosive increase of data now at researchers’ fingertips. This data include surveys, court decisions, social media messages, medical records, census data, and even real-time financial information. With such a wealth of information, Martin said, the true challenge is constructing the right analytical tools to process it and draw reliable inferences.

Martin, who directs the law school’s Center for Empirical Research in the Law (CERL), posed the question of why institutions should be studied empirically. Drawing from his experience researching the workings of the Supreme Court of the United States, he explained how, with the right tools, empirical study can help break down the inner workings of today’s great legal battles.



JERRY NAUNHEIM JR.

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Martin’s expertise is in the study of judicial decision-making, with special emphasis on the Supreme Court and the lower federal courts. Principal of the analytics consultancy Principia Empirica LLC, he also works extensively in the field of political methodology and applied statistics. His research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health.

The Nagel chair was established through the estate of Daniel Noyes Kirby, who received his bachelor’s degree in 1886 and his law degree in 1888, both from Washington University. It honors his law partner, Charles Nagel, LLB 1875.