Taking the Lead

When Susan Frelich Appleton, the Lemma Barkeloo and Phoebe Couzins Professor of Law, took on the post of associate dean at the School of Law, the position was intended to last only until a new dean was hired. When Joel Seligman became dean, he encouraged Appleton to stay on as associate dean of faculty. That was four years ago. Since then, the School has undergone a period of dramatic growth, and Appleton has been an integral part of that expansion, says Seligman.

In September 2003 Appleton stepped down from the position and Professor Peter J. Wiedenbeck stepped in. An expert in family law, Appleton is leaving the position to spend more time on her scholarly pursuits at the law school.

As associate dean, Appleton served as liaison between the faculty and administration. “On one level, this job entails planning faculty meetings and overseeing curriculum assignments, but it also means enriching the experience of faculty members here by organizing faculty workshops, planning conferences, walking the halls, and being alert to concerns as they evolve,” says Seligman, the Ethan A.H. Shepley University Professor. “Susan cares deeply about the School and the faculty. She was great at taking the lead and coming up with creative ideas.”

Appleton organized the Webster Society, a scholarship program that annually attracts top students. She also created a weekly schedule for faculty workshops, including student-faculty workshops on cases before the Supreme Court of the United States every fall, and oversaw the first major revision of the School’s Web site.

Additionally she worked with Professor Karen Tokarz to enlist lecturers for the School’s Public Interest Law Speakers Series, organized conferences, instituted the annual night at a St. Louis Cardinals game, and spearheaded efforts to create an online journal of faculty working papers.

“There’s an enormous amount of work still to be done, and I am excited that someone with fresh ideas and high energy will be taking over,” Appleton says “In some ways, these projects are just getting started.”

Wiedenbeck, an expert in tax policy and the regulation of employee benefit plans, says the post will give him a chance to see how the School is run. He also welcomes the opportunity to assist the new group of young faculty: “All are extraordinarily capable people, and I want to facilitate their transition here by helping them make the most of our mentoring system and by introducing them to the many opportunities for scholarly exchange.”

Previously Wiedenbeck has served in a number of leadership roles, including as chair of both the School’s Appointments and Curriculum Committees, as chair of the University Judicial Board, as law school representative to the University Benefits Committee, and as a member of the chancellor’s search committee leading to the appointment of Seligman. His efforts on the Appointments Committee last spring contributed to a highly successful hiring year.

Seligman says he is looking forward to working with the newest member of the administration: “Peter is a wonderful addition to our administrative team. He has often proven himself to be a thoughtful leader within the law school and University communities.”

Peter Wiedenbeck, professor of law, and Susan Frelich Appleton, the Lemma Barkeloo and Phoebe Couzins Professor of law