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Who Are You, Class of 2016

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WHO ARE YOU CLASS OF 2016

I suspect, prior to making your decision to attend this law school, you exhausted every avenue you could find for “the scoop.” You did your Internet searches, sought advice from your pre-law advisors, queried lawyers you know, visited us online or in person and read every blog out there. I want you to know we also exhausted every avenue seeking you out - travelling 87, 380 miles by land and air to find, and recruit you, to join our law school family. You should know Jay and I are grateful to you for adding to our road warrior frequent mile accounts since we travelled thousands more miles than last year.

Rather like your first day in kindergarten, high school and then college you tried to imagine who would be in your classes. You packed your dreams and aspirations and, yes, even your own insecurities into making this monumental decision that will greatly impact your life and professional future.

Each of you sitting out there has won a seat despite the stiff competition of 2,446 applicants this year - the second largest applicant pool in this law school's history. Each of you is sitting here because of the faith of the faculty that you "measure up" to those who have gone before you. We know that each of you is fully capable of being a star in life, in this law school and in the legal profession. As has been our long tradition, I am here to issue to you, Class of 2016, a challenge. Each of you has a unique story. The challenge is to discover, in the course of your three years here, which story belongs to which of your classmates. To find out "who is who." That challenge begins now.

You were among those applying from 603 colleges and universities; from 48 countries and all 50 states. You are alumni of 66 American and 3 foreign universities; 14 of you have earned graduate degrees - one of you, a PhD. One of you is a Rabbi. Sixty percent of you have been out of school for at least one year and one of you graduated in 1999. You are a smart group: of the 395,770 test takers nationally, your class LSAT median is 161 - in the top 17% of these test takers. Your median GPA is 3.50.

Nearly half of you come from out of state representing 23 states as well as China and Cameroon. One of you is a citizen of the United Kingdom. We also welcome 5 exchange students from France, Italy, Australia, Belgium and the Netherlands and 21 transfer students among whom 6 hold foreign law degrees from the Ukraine, Saudi Arabia and Puerto Rico and 3 from China. You've majored in 45 different disciplines with 21 of you being political science majors - the largest number from a single major. History runs second with 17 of you having that major. Two of you are engineering majors, and 2 are chemistry majors. Fifty of you achieved Latin Honors - 13 of you Magna, 5 Summa and 26 Cum Laude and 6 with highest distinction honors. Five of you have been inducted in Phi Beta Kappa and into ODK. Nearly everyone has done an internship of some type and 42 of you have either interned or worked in a law firm - one of you has interned at 3 of the top law firms in NYC. Fourteen of you are married and several of you have children. Several of you have family members who are graduates of our undergraduate school and 2 of you have parents who are valuable alumni of our

law school. Twenty-three of you have clearly been inspired by your parents who are attorneys – a surprisingly large number and several of you are the first in your families to attend college. One of you, whose mother was pregnant with him while she was in law school, says, "When I complete my law degree three years from now here, this will technically be my second time at the rodeo when I walk up to the podium to receive my degree." Five of you are Eagle Scouts and one woman has received the Girl Scout Gold Award. Many of you have had undergraduate scholarships - some several. You represent membership in a variety of prestigious honor societies. Several of you are dedicated EMTs and give many, many hours in emergency service.

Many of you have traveled extensively, lived, worked, done mission trips, studied and performed as goodwill ambassadors all over the world. You speak many different languages - 11 of them - French, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, German, Serbian, Greek, Croatian, Mandarin, Cantonese and Shanghaiese.

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to your classmates who served our country - 8 of you have been in the military - 4 were Marines, 3 Navy and 1 Army. One of you attended both West Point and graduated from the Naval Academy. Two of you were intelligence officers and served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Another served 28 months in combat and yet another was a nuclear submarine officer who said he "thrived on the challenge of driving a billion dollar warship." One said, in his application, "I saw how the guarantee of equal protection under the law, regardless of one's faith, ethnicity or orientation, is a remarkable but not a universal principle. I also learned that the rule of law is fragile and can be ruined through intimidation, violence, fear and indifference. I came to understand that preserving these ideals requires the active participation of an educated citizenry, and I want to serve the law and protect these American ideals." One of you recently received the Bronze Star for leadership and "loyalty to his men and his duty" and one of you was deployed to a combat zone chasing pirates around the Horn of Africa. Our Bronze Star recipient wrote, "Fear of failure, particularly when the lives of others hang in the balance is as terrifying as any physical threat."

Along with so many of you I'm anxious to meet the fellow who won a \$10,000 purse fishing, the woman who was a tour guide at an opera house in Italy. I'm pretty envious of the two men in your class who have each lost more than 100 pounds. I suspect the woman who was a professional actor in NYC for 6 years has a lot to share especially since she appeared in Law & Order, appeared in Lee Ann Womack's Last Call music video and recorded with two NYC bands. Perhaps we can get her together with your classmate who was a member of a comedy troupe. You've had such interesting careers pre law school! How about the fellow who started a company that produced local, all natural grass-fed beef - he says, "I am a good cattle farmer. When I look at a field of cattle I can tell you which cows are healthy, which are sick, and which just might try to run you over" - aren't you as anxious to meet him as I? One of your classmates appraises and owns a store that specializes in rare books. He owns hundreds of books of poetry, first editions, signed copies and association copies – 7,500 books. He says, "The preservation of history, of *our* history, is something in which I want to be directly involved. He serves on boards of several historical societies including one to preserve a

plantation. I'm anxious to learn more about your classmate who worked with an organization to combat human trafficking domestically and abroad and your male classmate who worked in a nursing home as a housekeeper. One of you has received a Research Award for a study, performed over a 15-year period, which will benefit those needing shoulder replacement surgery and one of you worked for a gem and mineral mine. Another of you co-authored a patent and yet another operated an MRI and other brain imaging technology to measure brain functions.

Your interests and talents are varied and you are accomplished in so many areas. You are actors, musicians, teachers, and tutors. You are athletic with many of you having been Varsity soccer players, football and baseball players. You hold black belts in karate and you volunteer for Special Olympics teaching others to also enjoy your sports. Several of you are published. You have a serious commitment to public service. One of you wrote, "Through the lens of service, the study of law and the potential to become a lawyer became more than just a profession, it became a service. The practice of law, in the service to others is the summit." Your class has exemplified a commitment to service by volunteering countless hours working with the abused, infirm and elderly, in soup kitchens, shelters and with crisis hotlines. You've worked long hours teaching the disadvantaged, distributing food to the needy, raising funds for charities and extending a helping hand wherever you see need. You commit yourselves not only to those disadvantaged at home but seek to help those less fortunate in foreign countries as well. You believe in the American Dream and seek to take that dream to the world at large. You give much of yourselves - you are our hope for the future!

Again, this year I've been struck to so often see words such as, integrity, commitment, honesty, public interest, ethics, and loyalty permeate your narrative statements. I've been thrilled to see that the reasons so many of you have chosen to go to law school remains the altruistic desire to contribute to making our world a better place to be ... to make a difference ... to contribute to mankind. So many of you are survivors of life's more difficult times yet you endure and strive to be better. You take on life's challenges and are better for it. One of you wrote, "Simply having the courage to come up to the plate doesn't mean you'll hit a home run. In fact, sometimes you are going to fail utterly. And being in a position of responsibility means that when you do fail, it is inevitably others who pay the price. This is the terrible, secret cost of responsibility. And this is why it is so important to hold it sacred." You don't give up; you are winners.

I could go on telling you tidbits ... or factoids as they're sometimes called ... about your class. There are 134 stories amongst you and all of them shed light on your personalities, your hopes and your dreams. But, half the fun of being in this law school is getting to know those who are going to become your life-long friends. And that, Class of 2016, is the challenge. I challenge you to use the next three years to find out about that future best friend sitting beside you today - or at the end of the row - and there will be a quiz in 3 short years as you graduate and leave us to take your place in the noble legal profession amongst those upon whose shoulders you stand. I wish you good luck and good fun as you embark on the enviable adventure before you.