Marc L. Miller’s plans include growing the school’s international element

By Chris Gilfillan
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For new Arizona law dean, focus lies in globalization, synergy

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Miller, the son of former California Bar President Howard B. Miller, came to the law school in 2006 after 17 years at Emory University School of Law, where he served as associate dean for faculty and scholarship. He said he chose the University of Arizona because it fit within his “own view of the world.” He has served as interim dean of the law school since November 2012. After an extensive search, the school selected him as dean in May, effective immediately.

“To me, being public means being accessible,” he said of his vision for the school. “First, accessible on the front end: who can come here, who can be trained for the broad range of things that lawyers do for society. Second, helping to produce lawyers with a modest enough debt burden or no debt burden at all, who can go out and do the range of things in terms of provision of legal services.”

The new dean said providing access to justice is chief among his concerns.

“We see this as an opportunity,” Miller said. “If we continue to educate first-rate lawyers but also respond to globalization, to technology, to changes in legal practice — and we’ll be 100 years old in 2015 — we can continue to produce and help these students get employed as some of the great lawyers in the country.”

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“For the new dean of the University of Arizona’s law school, the emphasis is on opportunity, not challenges.

Despite facing trying economic times and a national decline in law school applications, Marc L. Miller, the newly appointed dean of the James E. Rogers College of Law, is focusing on synergy and globalization while captaining the nearly 100-year-old institution.

One change Miller will see is a decrease in tuition, a drop of 11 percent for in-state residents and 8 percent for out-of-state applicants. With Miller at the helm, the school has also begun to reshape its curriculum for students who take the bar exam early.

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The first step, Miller said, is affordability. “We [lowered tuition] because we think accessibility is key to being a public institution,” he said. “We did that because a wider range of prospective students can come here and come out with lower debt loads if our tuition is lower for everyone. That was a step that centrally embraces the public mission.”

He said the law school plans to grow its intellectual property and global practice and that he is looking for ways to take advantage of its place within the 40,000-student university by establishing new partnerships, such as a master of legal studies program for non lawyers that centers on mining law and policy.

“The issues that come up within mining law and policy are fascinating and touch on all of our strengths,” he said. “Environmental law, human rights law, indigenous people and policy, global trade, investment, labor law — it’s all there.”

Miller also focused on the school’s international element, pointing to the success of the college’s two-year “J.D. with Advanced Standing” degree, which has gone from a handful of international lawyers training for a U. S. law degree to more than 25 in the accelerated program.

“We’re getting people who are coming in who are currently senior IP counsel in major corporations overseas, who are associates in firms in growing economies, who are doing civil rights work and all sorts of interesting things all across the world, and who realize that having a U. S. J.D. will allow them to practice in their home country in a global concern,” he said.

The new dean, who clerked for former 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Chief Judge John Godbold, said providing access to justice is chief among his concerns.

“The role of law schools, even public law schools, is not to solve,” he said. “I don’t think individually they can solve the questions of access to justice. We have clinics and we do provide legal services, which is important in the lessons. But the really important thing is to produce lawyers who will, as citizens and as lawyers, make the law better down the road. And that is something that great law schools do and is something that we try to do with all of our graduates.”

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