



THOMAS B. ALLINGTON

TRIBUTES

BIOGRAPHICAL TRIBUTE FOR PROFESSOR AND ASSOCIATE DEAN THOMAS B. ALLINGTON

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High quality academic programs are often based on the quiet strengths of faculty members who, consistent with their careful work as scholars, are not flamboyant. Instead, they are focused on the high achievement of each and every student, on the precise and scientifically grounded development of their fields, and on high impact—but often unheralded—service to society. Many of these extraordinarily important faculty will take on administrative roles during their careers, but they consider these to be diversions from the more important work of teaching and building knowledge.

A good exemplar of this model of faculty leadership is Professor Thomas B. Allington of the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis on the IUPUI campus. His teaching, research, and service over thirty-seven years on the faculty have produced high achievement among students, good knowledge development in his fields of tax and bankruptcy law, and important service to our University and its many constituencies. He has achieved all this both in his work as a member of the faculty and in two different periods of service as associate dean.¹

Tom began law teaching at the University of South Dakota not long after earning his law degree from the University of Nebraska in 1966. He earned an LL.M. from New York University at about the same time he joined the faculty at Indiana University in 1970. In those early years, he was the quiet and unassuming leader of the significant number of new faculty who joined the School in the period of growth after the new building was opened. I know first hand of Tom's leadership because I was a new faculty member in 1972 and Jean Bepko and I became close friends of the Allingtons, owing in part to the fact that we lived near each other and our children were about the same age. He was the first of this wave of new faculty to achieve tenure and full rank and served as a role model as well as a voice for the younger faculty.

Tom taught the Law of Taxation for a number of years to large numbers of students and made regular contributions to the profession and the development of tax law. In the 1980s he brought another dimension to his portfolio. He began

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1. Professor and Associate Dean Allington served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs from 1990 to 1997 and Associate Dean for Technology from 1999 to 2007.

to teach the law of debtors and creditors, the most important aspect of which is the Federal Bankruptcy Law. This combination of taxation and bankruptcy, along with his knowledge of the law and practices of agriculture from his days in Nebraska and South Dakota, have given him a unique and valuable perspective, which has been of great value to students and to the profession for which Tom speaks and writes with some regularity.

This breadth paid special dividends for his students, which I observed firsthand when he taught a class session in my course on Secured Transactions. When I became campus Chancellor, I made a decision to stretch myself to continue to teach, but I didn't have enough time to feel good about some special areas that were evolving and required extra preparation. To address this, in the fall term 1988 I invited Tom to teach the class session in which the assigned topics included the role of the Federal Government as creditor, tax liens, and their relationship to security interests in personal property. The next day I wrote to then dean Norman Lefstein to tell him of Tom's masterful handling of my class. I said

Last night he taught the first hour of my two hour session and covered the subject matter in admirable fashion. This is not an exciting subject to most students, but he held their attention and provided some stimulating perspectives, as you would expect a first-rate senior faculty member to do. . . . At the conclusion of his remarks, the students gave him warm applause. This seemed an unusual tribute coming from a group of students studying Secured Transactions from 5:30 to 7:30 each Wednesday evening.

As a further reflection of the breadth of Tom's contributions, he continues to serve on the American Bar Association Section on Taxation where he is a member of the Bankruptcy and Workouts Committee and former Chair of the Agriculture Committee. He also is an elected member of the American Law Institute and the American College of Tax Counsel.

In 1990, Dean Lefstein recruited Tom to be Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Law School—a position in which Tom could build on his natural leadership role among faculty and his meticulous focus on the quality of teaching and research. He contributed in excellent fashion in this role until his return to the faculty in 1997. Proof of his value in the dean's office is that he was recruited in 1999 to be Associate Dean for Technology, a position in which he was the faculty's champion for technology development and in which he gave voice to his own long-held interest in information technology.

Tom's role in the Law School has had a profound impact. As a teacher, scholar, servant of the profession and the larger community, contributor to the reform of the law, leader among faculty, dean for academic affairs, and dean for technology, Tom has been one of those extraordinary faculty who quietly provide the strength that makes academic programs great. Some may think that his modesty and his unassuming manner may mask or deemphasize the extraordinary contributions he has made. I doubt that this is true because his colleagues understand fully how valuable he has been to the School over the years. Even if there are a few who may not have known about his contributions because of his

disinclination to boast, this is more than made up for by Tom's inculcating in the culture of the School the modesty, integrity, and steadfastness that made him such an excellent member of the Law School community.

One faculty colleague, Professor Mary Mitchell, offered her own special perspective on Tom's work among faculty members in a memo to the Law School community. Her words convey these thoughts better than I could write them, and I am proud to include here a quote from her memo:

Tom is unusually perceptive as to faculty dynamics, the deep currents in what is going on at a meeting or behind the scenes. He is unusually forthright, going straight to the relevant points in discussion, cutting through politics and posturing, verbiage and confusion. Many, many times Tom has been the direct and honest voice in a debate. His perspective is often fresh, sidestepping entrenched opposing positions with a creative alternative. His integrity is without question, his clarity useful time and time again. Furthermore—and this is a 14-carat virtue—when he disagrees with others, or even criticizes, he does so without personal attack or rancor, without polarizing debate, without self-aggrandizement, and often with disarming wit. For years I have watched him work a leavening of honor and good will into law school proceedings. While we cannot replace Tom's particularly winning style of collegiality and leadership, I hope that we are up to the challenge of following his example.

Tom has left an indelible positive imprint on the culture of the School for which all his faculty colleagues, students, and alumni should be grateful. After thirty-five years of frequent contacts, I know I have been affected by his work and friendship in a very positive way, and I will continue to be proud to be his colleague and friend.

