March 12, 2013

Dear Law School Community,

As you know by now, Pitt Law's score in the US News rankings released on March 12 declined substantially. This decline is deeply troubling to me, both personally and as Dean. Although I believe that the rankings are profoundly flawed, and they should be but one factor among many in assessing a law school’s quality and stature, I am also acutely aware that they matter to people we care about (all of you).

Because these rankings were just released, and because US News has not yet provided law schools with the full underlying data forming the basis for this year's rankings, we have not yet been able to identify which factors may have contributed to the decline. As soon as full data is available, we will undertake a detailed analysis of any year-over-year differences between the data reported for the 2010-11 academic year (which largely formed the basis for last year's ranking) versus the 2011-12 academic year (which largely formed the basis for this year's ranking).

In the meantime, I want to note that even as a relative newcomer to Pitt Law, it is readily apparent to me that there have been no significant negative changes during the time period in question that could possibly justify such a dramatic shift in our ranking. Indeed, we continue to make strong progress on many fronts. As just a few examples from this past year:

- The Law School was recently ranked #39 in absolute terms (and #31 in adjusted per capita terms) in the production of partners at the “NLJ 100” law firms (the country's 100 largest firms). This again places us ahead of most of our peers and many of our aspirational peers;

- The Law School's faculty was recently ranked 47th in scholarly impact. Faculty members have testified multiple times before the U.S. Congress and state legislative bodies, having a real impact on the development of the law;

- The class of 1Ls that entered the Law School in fall 2012 included 23% minority students, which is the most diverse class that the Law School has seen in at least the last decade; and

- Our students continue to excel, earning prestigious honors, awards and fellowships (and more fellowships).
I will keep you all informed as to what our analysis of this year’s ranking reveals. But rest assured that what it does not reveal is any diminishment in the quality or impact of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. We will address the rankings issue head-on, but we will not lose sight of what ultimately matters most: the quality of the education we provide and the well-being and success of our students, alumni, and community. Finally, you may find the following article (written the last time Pitt Law experienced an inexplicable and abrupt change in our US News rankings) to be of interest:

http://www.lawjobs.com/newsandviews/LawArticle.jsp?id=1202427136135

Best,

[Signature]

William M. Carter, Jr.
Dean