

Dan Hamilton Joins Boyd School of Law as Dean

If asked at a young age what he was going to be when he grew up, Dan Hamilton's response probably wouldn't have been "dean of a law school."

Growing up in Washington, D.C., Hamilton thought he would pursue a career in politics. It wasn't until after he became a high school history teacher that he discovered his real passion ... academia.

"It was an intense and fulfilling job, and it made me want to be an academic," Hamilton said.

That goal has not only been fulfilled, but exceeded. Today, Hamilton sits at the helm of UNLV's William S. Boyd School of Law as the fourth dean and Richard J. Morgan Professor of Law. He joined Boyd in July.



While Hamilton hasn't been on the job but two short months, he's set some big goals for the law school. One is to continue to attract first-rate students and faculty and to keep the academic profile of the school strong and growing. Another is to build a gaming law program, possibly as an executive training program or a postgraduate law degree.

"We want to be for gaming law what NYU is for tax law – the place to go for people who need to be trained and kept current in gaming law. We have, in Vegas and in the state, a great advantage to be the leader. It's a natural fit for us, and we're going to pursue that. We need to move on making the gaming law program a reality this year," Hamilton said.

He and others have already started work on this program – the Gaming Law Advisory Board has been reinvigorated, conversations with key stakeholders in the city have been taking place, a talk in gaming law is being planned for the spring, and talks of establishing a new major gaming law center are underway.

Hamilton credits much of his ability to hit the ground running to former Boyd deans as well as alumni, staff and supporters.

"[Former deans] Dick Morgan, John White, and Nancy Rapoport were able to accomplish something really remarkable by building Boyd into a nationally recognized school in 15 years," said Hamilton. "This isn't a deanship where you have to reinvent the wheel. It's a deanship with great pieces in place. The momentum can be maintained. There's nothing stopping Boyd from being a regional powerhouse.

"Boyd has great advantages," he continued. "It's the law school for the state of Nevada and has been embraced since the day it opened its doors. Boyd alumni are achieving great success and are becoming leaders of the Bar. Our faculty is nationally recognized. There's a great professional team that's very student-centric and good at what they do. Another thing that's so important to Boyd is its friends, people like Bill Boyd, Jim Rogers, Tom Thomas, Mike Saltman, Judge Philip Pro, Barbara Buckley, Jeff Silver, Bill Curran, and many others."

Hamilton brings with him years of experience in the legal field. He joined UNLV from the University of Illinois College of Law, where he was the associate dean for faculty development and professor of law and history. He

taught property law, legal history, and constitutional law and received multiple teaching awards, including Professor of the Year.

Hamilton researches and writes primarily on American property ideology and the legal and constitutional issues raised by the Civil War. His book, *The Limits of Sovereignty: Property Confiscation in the Union and the Confederacy During the Civil War*, was published by the University of Chicago Press.

Hamilton earned his J.D. from George Washington University and went on to pursue a Ph.D. in American legal history at Harvard University. He then spent a year at New York University Law School as a Golieb Fellow in Legal History.

It was at Harvard that Hamilton met his wife, Mary-Ann Winkelmes.



“Mary-Ann is a national leader in faculty development and higher education pedagogy. She is now working in the UNLV Provost’s Office developing teaching and learning programs and researching teaching and learning. It’s the first time we’ve ever worked in the same outfit,” he said.

Joining Hamilton and his wife in Las Vegas is their 9-year-old daughter, Katie.

“Katie loves Scooby Doo. We came home the other day to a Scooby Doo marathon, so she likes Vegas so far because she thinks there’s a channel devoted to Scooby Doo,” he said fondly. “Katie loves to swim. She’s a very talented artist. We’re very fortunate that she likes to read. She and I go to the movies all the time. She’s a lot of fun.”

When he’s not spending time with his daughter, Hamilton is busy in his new role as dean, with a

calendar chock-full of meetings, many discussions about the future of Boyd, and his own personal discovery of his deanship.

But what brought him to this position in the first place – his love of teaching – still remains a passion.

“I do miss teaching, and I will definitely do it again in the future. It’s a thrill; but, for right now, being a dean requires my full attention. It’s a full-time gig, you know,” he said, laughing.