

DEDICATION TO PROFESSOR ROBERTA S. MITCHELL

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Forty years ago, this law review published its first issue. The founding Editor in Chief, Roberta S. Mitchell, retired last spring after forty distinguished years on the faculty of Capital University Law School. It is only fitting that this first issue of 2012 be dedicated to Professor Mitchell, who continues to serve the law school as a Professor Emeritus. In dedicating the first issue of this law review, then Editor in Chief Mitchell wrote:

Every professor of law influences, in varying degrees, the abilities and attitudes of his students. Although they are often oblivious to this invisible force, the students will nevertheless carry its indelible mark with them throughout their professional careers.

The marks Professor Mitchell has left on her students are anything but invisible. As one of the pioneers in skills training for law students, she has taught a generation and a half of students her “client-centered” approach to legal education. She has taught her students to be competent, caring, and effective attorneys who recognize that a good attorney is concerned not just with the legal needs of the client but also with their social, psychological, and economic interests as well. Her students have been extremely well served.

Professor Mitchell joined the Capital University Law School faculty in 1972 as a legal writing instructor. When that program was in place, she became an Assistant Professor of Law and worked in Capital’s pioneering clinical program first supervising students who were representing inmates in Ohio’s prisons and later designing and establishing a domestic relations program in a nearby county. In the early years of clinical legal education, Professor Mitchell designed Capital’s innovative model for teaching lawyering skills over a two year period of time. During the first year, students learned interviewing, counseling, and negotiation through a classroom component that emphasized roll playing; the second year emphasized live client representation.

Building on this model, Professor Mitchell was one of this country’s first law professors to create and teach courses in mediation, negotiation, and alternative dispute resolution. This occurred at a time when these “alternative” courses were considered unlawyerly and outside the practice of law. In time, the legal profession came to recognize the importance of these skills. Now, law schools throughout the country make these dispute resolution courses a regular part of the law school curriculum.

To bring a wider audience to her work in dispute resolution, Capital University Law School founded the Center for Dispute Resolution (the Center) in 1984 with Professor Mitchell as its founding director. The Center provides training, direct services, and program and material development to both legal and non-legal organizations in the areas of mediation, negotiation, and alternative dispute resolution. The activities of the Center have had a significant impact both nationally and internationally on changing the way we as a society view problem solving. It has conducted successful programs in both Jamaica and Nicaragua as well as throughout the United States.

In Ohio, Professor Mitchell was instrumental in the establishment of the Governor's Commission for Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, which became an official part of state government. She went on to found Community Mediation Services of Central Ohio and regularly serves as a mediator for the United States District Court, where she has been called upon to help settle a number of large scale community disputes. She has produced countless video tapes on mediation that have been used in training programs throughout the world.

Similarly, since taking over as Director of Clinical Programs over twenty years ago, Professor Mitchell has greatly expanded the scope and depth of the law school's clinical offerings. In 2000 she was instrumental in obtaining funding from the Columbus Coalition on Family Violence to establish a Family Advocacy Clinic. Through this clinic, our students represent victims of family violence from the beginning of their contact with the legal system to the conclusion of their cases. On the criminal side, our legal interns now prosecute cases in several central Ohio municipalities, which provides valuable public sector experience to students who hope to start their careers in this area. Professor Mitchell also established programs in the public sector through the Common Pleas Court of Franklin County, where law school fellows serve the court in handling commercial disputes and as a liaison in stalking cases. Lastly, two years ago Professor Mitchell expanded the clinical program to include the representation of small business entities and those people interested in forming such an entity. While greatly expanding the clinical opportunities for our students, Professor Mitchell has stayed true to her conviction that students should be grounded in basic lawyering skills before they begin representing clients and that their approach to legal representation should be client-centered.

For forty years, Professor Roberta S. Mitchell has served this law school, thousands of students, and the community in general in a dedicated and selfless manner. She has truly left an indelible mark on all of us who have either worked with her, studied law with her, or sought her wise

counsel. For all of these reasons, we dedicate this issue of the Capital University Law Review to our first Editor in Chief, Roberta S. Mitchell.

