Remarks of Ms. Tamara Barnett  
April 15, 2003  
Dean's Awards Tea

I have been asked, as a member of the Student Bar Association's Election Committee, to present this year's award for Professor of the Year. This award has been presented annually for the past 28 years, and is the highest honor that the students can give to a member of the faculty. The recipient is chosen by vote of the student population, for his or her dedication to the student body, innovation and skill in the classroom, and overall love of teaching, as exhibited to those who had the pleasure of learning from him or her.

This year's recipient has certainly lived up to those criteria and then some. This professor, having instructed here for nearly 12 years (or about half a lifetime for most of the students), is well known to first-year and upper-class students alike. He is active in the greater WNEC community, often volunteering his time to career services to perform mock interviews and participating in numerous faculty committees, including the recent search for a new Law School Dean.

His academic credentials abound from co-authoring a treatise to writing articles which have been published by our own law review, as well as in journals at Georgetown University, University of Illinois and Harvard, to name a few. However, this Professor's achievements are not limited to publication. He strives to stay current in his field and innovative in the classroom. This professor has utilized his natural skills of organization and eye for detail to create numerous multimedia and computer-aided classroom presentations, often incorporating music, pop culture, and current events into his lectures in order to bring legal issues home to the students.

Those of you who have not had him in class may think he is just another suit walking the halls of the law school. But fear not, this outwardly conservative professor has a much lighter side. While many students are probably aware of his affinity for the Simpsons - allusions to which he often makes in class - fewer probably know that he has been published in National Lampoon magazine and that he was an editor of his college humor magazine. Not to mention he is probably the only professor here that knows the "official" name of the monopoly man. In addition, bi-weekly he can be found demonstrating his athletic prowess on the racquetball court.

This professor's amazing powers to teach were never more evident than on September 12, 2001, the day after the World Trade Center bombings. I can only say that I was blessed to have had class with him that next morning, because all the wonderful teaching skills I have mentioned so far came to the fore in our hour of need. Recognizing that holding a "normal" class would not be appropriate or even possible less than 24 hours after the tragedy, he was
able to create a lesson plan around the event despite the fact that a friend of his had perished in the disaster. This lesson recognized and empathized with his students’ sense of purposelessness not only in attending classes that day but also in pursuing a legal career at all, in the shadow of such disaster. His lecture on that day helped demonstrate how continuing down the path we had so far chosen was not only appropriate, but also necessary, as our legal abilities would be essential and powerful in coming years.

I am confident that the 2003 Professor of the year has been chosen because of his dedication to the constant growth and development of the school, love for the students, ability to inspire, devotion to his family, and continual learning and enhancement of the classroom. And if you haven't yet guessed who the winner is, I'll give you one final clue before inviting him up here: He has the highest Girl Scout cookie sales in the Pioneer Valley.

Please join me in congratulating our 2003 Professor of the Year, Eric J. Gouvin.