

## OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Office of the General Counsel is to provide first class legal services to The University of Scranton. While the University as an institution is our client, legal services are provided to the Board of Trustees, the President, the Provost, the vice presidents, the deans, administrative department heads, and other representatives of the University who raise questions relating to the interests of the University. This personalization of services makes it especially important that we place the institution's needs and interests above those of any of its units or of any employee.

As employed internal counsel, we are expected to understand the University and its mission and objectives, and to use this understanding to alert the appropriate people to the existence of legal issues that may affect them. We keep abreast of legislative, regulatory and case law so that requirements imposed by new developments may be met. Also, we keep abreast of issues affecting higher education generally so that our advice is given in the context not only of the University's needs but also of developments affecting higher education at large.

Our work, to the maximum extent possible, is preventive – to keep questions from becoming problems and problems from becoming lawsuits. Through timely and knowledgeable advice, we aid our clients in avoiding or reducing exposure to legal risks. Although generally we believe policy making should be left to University clients, from time to time the Office of the General Counsel may write or amend policies with substantial legal content for the benefit of the University. We help the University discharge its mission by helping to create an awareness of the legal ramifications of proposed actions, and suggesting alternate solutions where problems arise. Through regular interaction, formal and informal, with many individuals in the University, we are often able to help our clients analyze situations and sharpen their own objectives and strategies.

The areas of practice of the Office of the General Counsel include, but are not limited to, agreements and contracts, intellectual property, real estate, taxation, governance, and legal issues affecting faculty, staff, and students.

We are responsible for assuring that appropriate resources are brought to bear in the resolution of legal matters. Where outside counsel is retained, we exercise close supervision to yield the best quality service at reasonable cost.

When required to appear before courts, administrative agencies, or other public bodies we provide or cause to be provided strong and responsible advocacy. In nonadversarial public situations we are also advocates for the University and its mission, recognizing that our work in every setting reflects not just on the Office of the General Counsel, but on the University as well.

In fulfilling the mission of this office, we exercise professional competence and independent judgment, avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof, and maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct.

It is the responsibility of the Office of the General Counsel to bring to the attention of the University client those current practices which expose the University to unreasonable risks of legal liability, and advise appropriate changes in those practices for the benefit of the University.

In dealing with our clients, we recognize that requests from certain persons take priority over others, depending on the urgency of the request and the authority of the person making it. Ours is a service function, and we shall respond with that end in mind.

In dealing with all persons who come in contact with the Office of the General Counsel, we will acknowledge and recognize the inherent dignity of the individual and will treat him or her with unfailing respect and courtesy.

Abigail Byman  
General Counsel and University Secretary  
February 14, 1996