2010 Scholarship Luncheon Remarks – Associate Dean Jeff Coates

Good afternoon. I am Jeff Coates, and I serve as the Associate Dean for Alumni & Development. I am delighted to have the opportunity to welcome you to this very special gathering.

This luncheon is a celebration. We gather to celebrate the outstanding students who have assembled to study at Duke Law. To celebrate the acts of generosity which make it financially feasible to pursue a Duke Law education. And, to celebrate the community of good will that emerges when benefactors come together with beneficiaries. This is a gathering of extraordinary people, brought together for a common purpose – to recognize our generous benefactors and to celebrate our students who so impressively bear the honor and title of those who came before.

Many of our alumni have told me of the difference a scholarship made in their lives. For many, a scholarship was the deciding factor in attending Duke Law School. I am reminded of a recent trip to Chicago where I met with a 1985 graduate who shared with me that he grew up in a modest farming family in southern Indiana. After receiving his undergraduate degree at Wabash College, he was eager to continue his education in law school. Because he came from modest beginnings, this alum would not have been able to attend Duke Law School without significant scholarship support. He received financial support through scholarship and work study, came to Duke, and graduated Order of the Coif; also serving on the Duke Law Journal while in school. He now has a successful litigation practice and is a strong supporter of the Law School. I imagine, this story could be replicated by many people here today.

The deep and personal value of a scholarship is likely the reason so many recipients become scholarship donors themselves — many have experienced the power of this gift, and are eager to “pay it forward.” I hope that your example will inspire our students to consider how they might one day repay your generosity, perhaps through a new scholarship for the generations to come.

Philanthropy is a circle, a continuous loop of generosity received and given. Duke’s traditions in this regard are strong and longstanding, and one of the reasons this institution has achieved so much.

Perhaps the author Robert Louis Stevenson was on a scholarship when he read law at the University of Edinburgh. As he once said: “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.” As you look around today – you can see the results of the seeds planted through scholarships here at Duke Law. The talented and ambitious students in this room are the future of the legal profession, our communities, and our world. It is amazing to consider how the generosity of a few can so positively affect the lives of so many.
We owe a debt of gratitude to those individuals and their families who have planted those seeds by establishing the 84 named scholarships we are here to recognize today. Please join me in thanking them now.

It is my pleasure to be associated with the students, faculty, alumni and friends of Duke Law School. Today we will have the opportunity to hear from two such individuals – Kathryn Gibbons Johnson, a 1977 Duke Law graduate, will provide a few remarks on behalf of our scholarship donors, and Phil Rubin, the James Padilla Scholar, a third-year law student, will provide a few remarks on behalf of the student scholars. Dean Levi will introduce them in a few moments.

In the meantime, please enjoy your time together and your lunch.

Thank you, again, for being here today.