

Professor Beth A. Eisler: In Memoriam

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Beth A. Eisler, a member of the faculty at The University of Toledo College of Law and former associate and interim dean, died on December 31, 2012 at the age of 66. We lost her too soon, too unexpectedly, and too suddenly. But we remember her as the vibrant, good-natured, accomplished, and caring person she was and as a vital and influential presence at the College of Law for twenty-six years.

These remarks will focus on Beth Eisler's professional achievements and contributions, but we would be remiss if we did not mention her beloved family: her husband, Ira Fisher, her children, Maia (Eugene Keselman) and Alex (Tiffany), and her grandchildren, Mirabelle, Xavier, Neve, and Oliver. Beth loved the College of Law, but she loved them more.

Beth came to the law school in 1987 as a visiting professor and then joined the faculty as a permanent member two years later. She had received both her bachelor's degree and a law degree, with honors, from The George Washington University. She was valedictorian of her law school graduating class. Beth had earlier taught for seven years at Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, after a stint with the U.S. Department of Justice. In the course of her career here she taught Sales, Secured Transactions, Legislative Drafting, and Trusts and Estates – but her major courses were Evidence and Contracts. She was popular and her courses were popular; many years Beth taught the most students of anyone in the building. Beth received the Outstanding Professor Award from the graduating class on three separate occasions, and in the last two years received the University's Student Impact Award. After her death Beth was awarded The University of Toledo Outstanding Teacher Award.

Of her teaching, one former student recalled:

No lawyer will ever forget the first semester in law school...the quirky personalities of their classmates, the panic-stricken fear of getting cold-called on a case you neglected to read, and for every UT law student who had Professor Eisler for Contracts 1, they will never forget Professor Eisler's enthusiasm for teaching. She was so animated and witty. She made an hour and a half discussion on the meaning of the word "chicken" surprisingly funny and interesting.

After word of her illness reached the students, hundreds of emails poured in. Certain themes emerged: initial fear, then appreciation for the Socratic method; Beth's encouragement of students who wondered whether to continue; and her patience and understanding in addressing their problems. What is true of all the emails is that Beth's former students and colleagues all recognized her kindness, her intelligence, her wit and, most of all, her humanity.

Beth served twice as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the College of Law: in 1993-1995 with Dean James Klein and in 1999-2005 with Dean Phillip Closius. In that position she was involved in innovations to our program that continue today. To name just a few: certificates of concentration in certain

specialized subject areas; 60 minutes of class for each credit hour, rather than the standard 50; bar exam type questions on our final exams; and our mandatory attendance policy. As her family and colleagues know, she spent long hours at the office -- on top of the drive from her home in Ann Arbor. Beth served as Interim Dean during the 2005-2006 academic year, doing her usual thoughtful, hardworking, and effective job.

After leaving administration, Beth did not stop helping to run the school, most especially as chair of the faculty hiring and strategic planning committees. Many of our outstanding professors are on this faculty today thanks to Beth's judgment and her efforts. We learned what a central role Beth played at the law school after her medical leave last fall, when we had to replace her in her committee assignments and course coverage. It wasn't easy.

The University of Toledo College of Law would be a very different – and not nearly as good – law school had Beth Eisler not been a part of it. As an administrator and faculty member she was instrumental in shaping our program and the composition of our faculty. Perhaps most importantly, she helped set the tone of the school – of caring for our colleagues, and most of all, for our students.

For her entire time here Beth taught the two semesters of first year Contracts. To help keep her memory alive, the College of Law established the Beth Eisler Award for First-Year Teaching, to be voted on by our students at the end of their first year. We have also created the Beth Eisler Student Assistance Fund, which will address students' emergency financial needs.

Beth enriched the lives of all of us at the College of Law – faculty, staff, students, and graduates. She will live in the memory of her colleagues, her thousands of students, and in the imprint she left on our law school.