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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

In August, I was honored to be elected to chair the NCBE Board of Trustees for the 2013–2014 year. Serving on the Board over the past eight years has been a great privilege. I look forward to this year with excitement (and some trepidation). I am grateful to be following Franklin Harrison, who led the Conference so ably during this past year. I will enjoy and benefit from his continued presence on the Board as well as that of my other accomplished colleagues. Finally, I am so fortunate that the Conference has a talented and hardworking staff that makes this organization work so well.

I have the good fortune to devote my first column as chair to writing about the 2013 Robert J. Kutak Award recipient, our own Erica Moeser, NCBE President and CEO. The Kutak Award is presented annually by the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar to recognize someone whose career has promoted collaboration among those in legal education, the bench, and the bar. Most recipients have been active participants in the work of the Section, as Erica has been. The award is in memory of Robert J. Kutak, an Omaha lawyer who was a champion of legal reform and an advocate for legal education.

Erica's career in bar admissions began in 1978 when she was hired as Director of the Wisconsin Board of Law Examiners, a position she remained in for nearly 17 years. During that time, she served as chair of the Committee (now Council) of Bar Admission Administrators (CBAA) from 1982 to 1983. As the eighth person to chair the CBAA since its formation in 1975, Erica contributed to its development as the heart of the bar admission administrator community it still is today. Under the auspices of NCBE, the CBAA continues to play the important role of assisting members in continuously improving bar admission processes, sharing information via listserv as well as through formal educational programs, and providing support and camaraderie for bar administrators. Through the participation and contributions of CBAA members on NCBE committees, the CBAA has functioned as a user group and sounding board for NCBE Board policy decisions.

Erica has long been active in the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. The mission of the Section is to bring together law schools, the bar admissions community, and the judiciary, which is ultimately responsible for bar admissions, to ensure that new lawyers have the best foundation to become members of the bar. Erica's involvement with the Section helped to broaden the Section's focus, which had been almost exclusively on legal education, to include awareness of the importance of bar admission as the final step in the legal education of lawyers as well as the final requirement for becoming a practicing lawyer. Following Erica's lead, the number of individuals from the bar admissions commu-

nity who are involved in the Section’s work has increased significantly.

Erica made important early contributions to the Section while serving on and later co-chairing its Bar Admissions Committee—the only national committee and the only committee within the Section that brings together bar examiners, bar admission administrators, state Supreme Court justices, and law school deans and faculty members to discuss and make recommendations regarding how these diverse entities each can best contribute to improving the process by which lawyers are admitted to the bar.

Erica’s contributions to the Section also included serving on the Section’s Accreditation Committee—the committee that reviews and makes final determinations on whether new and existing law schools may be, or continue to be, accredited by the ABA. She also served on the Standards Review Committee—the committee that continuously reviews and proposes redrafts of each of the 50-plus standards for accreditation that law schools must meet in order to obtain and maintain ABA accreditation.

Over the years, Erica has served on and chaired a number of law school site inspection teams. These are teams composed of law school faculty members, law librarians, practitioners or judges, and non-law school administrators that visit and report on the state of each of the ABA-approved law schools every seven years and provisionally approved law schools annually. Site inspection teams also visit law schools that are newly seeking ABA approval and evaluate foreign programs for which credit is given at ABA-approved law schools.

In 1994, the NCBE Board of Trustees asked Erica to serve as President of the Conference. And in 1995, Erica’s accomplishments with the ABA Section were recognized when she was elected to chair the Section, the first time that a bar admission administrator served in that leadership capacity.



As President of NCBE over the past 19 years, Erica has assembled an exemplary professional staff, overseen the birth of the Multistate Performance Test, promoted the idea of a Uniform Bar Examination, and—as a result of this and more—greatly improved the Conference’s testing products. During Erica’s tenure at the Conference, NCBE’s Annual Bar Admissions Conference has become a significant educational event—not just for bar examiners, but also for judges and justices who are involved in bar admissions.

In her role as NCBE President, Erica has continued her success in building bridges between and among legal educators, bar examiners, and the judiciary. She regularly participates in the activities of the Conference of Chief Justices, the national organization that provides an opportunity for chief justices around the country to meet and discuss improving the administration of justice, which includes their responsibility over bar admission rules and policies in their individual states. She has also initiated conferences among bar examiners and the law school academic support community to demystify the bar examination and enhance the efforts of academic support personnel to help those law students who are challenged by law school as well as by the bar exam.

By designating Erica as the 2013 Kutak Award winner, the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar recognized her achievements in furtherance of high standards in bar admissions, as well as her many contributions to legal education, bar admissions, and the judiciary. As members of the NCBE community, we are honored by her award. Congratulations, Erica, from the entire NCBE and CBAA family. 📧

Best regards to all.

Sincerely,

Margaret Fuller Corneille