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## A Message from the Dean

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

*John D. Feerick\**

There is a growing recognition within the legal profession that attitudes and conduct that have prejudiced women in many human endeavors profoundly affect the administration of our laws. Compelling, often poignant, proof exists—some of which is set forth in the pages that follow—of frustrations women face when pursuing careers in the law and of injustices they suffer when attempting to enforce their legal rights. It is clear that principles of fairness and equality that are so often elevated in legal prose have been betrayed in practice; our culture still clings to pernicious stereotypes that undermine women's credibility and diminish women's perceived capabilities and contributions.

The challenge of reform is presented to all elements of our community. But it must be most squarely faced by the legal community, especially legal educators.

Law schools are charged with preparing men and women for a variety of pathways in the law. Indeed, the law school is where first and enduring impressions of the legal system are formed. Accordingly, it is an integral part of a student's preparation to learn that a lawyer's cardinal obligation—one that is on an equal footing with the often competing pursuit of advancing a client's best interest—is to foster the integrity of the legal system by promoting human dignity.

Legal educators' imparting this professional value is essential to combating the prejudice women face in our court system. We cannot accomplish it, however, simply by repeating time-worn aspirational phrases. More is required. The law school, as an institution, must recognize unambiguously that sexism is a problem and clearly articulate, by words and deeds, that it is utterly repugnant and unacceptable. We must pay close attention to the substantive areas and practical circumstances in which problems arise and to the far-reaching consequences of sexist conduct in the courts.

The faculty and administration of the Fordham University School of Law stand committed to promoting equality for women and men in the profession, in the courts and in the law school community. We are indebted to the *Urban Law Journal* for taking this important step.

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\* Dean, Fordham University School of Law.

## **New York Task Force on Women in the Courts**

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