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## Amicus Curious

### Frossard teaches by example

By Bethany Krajelis

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When Dean John E. Corkery started thinking last year about who The John Marshall Law School should hire to head a new office entirely dedicated to professionalism, he said he knew he needed to find a professional in every sense of the word.

“The best way to teach professionalism is by having students model their behavior after someone,” he said. “You can tell people the five or 10 things you need to do to be professional, but I don’t think that gets the message across. You really have to model your conduct after someone who is a true professional.”

With that in mind, he set his sights on Margaret O’Mara Frossard, an adjunct professor at the law school who at the time planned to retire from the 1st District Appellate Court.

“When we began talking seriously about it, I was immediately impressed by her ability to get across what it means to act in a professional way,” Corkery said. “I knew she would be the ideal person to help our students learn what it means to be a professional and get this across to students in a formalized way.”

Frossard, who retired in December 2010 after about 12 years on the appellate court, didn’t need much convincing.

She said she hoped to join the academic world after she took off the black robe she first donned in 1988, when she was appointed to the Cook County Circuit Court.

Throughout her judicial career, she taught classes as an adjunct professor at several of the city’s law schools.

She began her duties as the director of John Marshall’s Office of Professionalism and Engagement on March 31.

Ten months later, Corkery said he couldn’t be happier that Frossard agreed to take on the challenge and turned the newly-created office into something the school can be proud of.

“She is a great role model,” he said. “If you met her, you would appreciate how good she is. She is a wonderful communicator and a strategic thinker with a lot of experience.”

Saying that her transition into the academic arena has been smooth, Frossard said she genuinely looks forward to going to work everyday.

“I really enjoy working with the students,” she said. “They have such a fresh, excited



Margaret O’Mara Frossard

outlook on the law.”

Frossard said the law school gave her the freedom to create her position at the office, which opened earlier this year with the goal of helping students develop professionalism through creative approaches.

“You can never have enough professionalism,” she said. “It’s an area we can always grow and do better in, no matter how long we have been practicing.”

The in-classroom professional program serves as one of the office’s approaches to teaching students how to be a true legal professional.

Frossard said the office also intends to address a report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which criticized law schools for not providing enough ethics and professionalism lessons in their curriculum.

The in-classroom program, which began in July, is offered to interested professors, but is not mandatory, she said.

As the name implies, the program brings judges and practitioners into classrooms to give law students a taste of the ethical issues they might face as new attorneys and how to handle

them in a professional manner.

Frossard finds professionals willing to participate in the program and organizes the presentations.

Anthony J. Longo, an associate at Cassiday, Schade LLP, was the first person Frossard reached out to about the in-classroom program.

She said Longo, an adjunct professor in John Marshall’s lawyering skills department, addressed a medical negligence class and talked about his career and even offered students the chance to shadow him at his firm.

Longo said the program is “outstanding” and embraces Frossard’s belief that law students should insert themselves into the legal community before they join it.

“Justice Frossard is such an asset to the school’s professional program because she is a skilled bridge-builder,” Longo said. “She has a large Rolodex and her recommendations are persuasive. Everyone trusts her judgment. Having her facilitate introductions and relationships between students and the bar is a coup for John Marshall.”

On top of her duties to run the office and make herself available to students, most of whom express concerns about jobs, Frossard serves as the administrator of the lawyer-to-lawyer mentoring program, an initiative of the Illinois Supreme Court’s Commission on Professionalism.

The mentoring program pairs first-year attorneys with veteran attorneys and provides both with Continuing Legal Education credit upon completion.

Various bar associations, law firms and law schools throughout the state serve as administrators to this program. With the help of Frossard, John Marshall was the first law school to sign on as an administrator.

So far, Frossard said she helped match about 50 new lawyers with 50 veteran lawyers as part of the mentoring program.

Jayne Rizzo Reardon, executive director of the court’s Commission on Professionalism, said she collaborates with Frossard as part of the mentoring program.

“I think having a judge take on that role is really awesome because judges are the leaders of the legal profession,” Reardon said. “People look to them and I think it’s very positive that she took on such an influential role after she retired.”