

DEAN TONI M. MASSARO—A TRIBUTE

Peter Likins* & George Davis**

BEST DEAN ON THE PLANET—A TRIBUTE IN ONE ACT

PETE: George, how can we best express our appreciation to Toni Massaro in the “Tribute” that we’ve been invited to write together for the *Arizona Law Review*? I know that you feel, as I do, that Toni offers the best combination of virtues that we have ever known in a college dean. Where will we ever begin?

GEORGE: I can express our shared opinion in very few words: we think Toni Massaro is the best dean on the planet!

PETE: Well said! Although our friends don’t expect such succinct prose from either of us, so perhaps we should elaborate. We can share our understanding of the qualities most important in a dean, beginning with *integrity, intellect, courage, compassion, and creativity*.

GEORGE: I would add *skill*. Not many people who meet your tests also have the verbal, mathematical, and reasoning skills required of a dean. How would you describe these essential qualities? And how can we illustrate the skills that make Toni so special?

PETE: *Integrity:* Nothing is more important than the kind of honesty that requires not merely avoiding the lie but recognizing the truth.

Intellect: Unless a research university dean possesses exceptional intellectual power, the faculty will not follow and the university administration will not trust to lead.

Courage: We value the courage to lead boldly and stand behind principled convictions, even in the face of personal or professional risk.

Compassion: If you have no love in your heart or cannot share that love, you should not be a college dean.

Creativity: New ideas are essential in challenging times.

GEORGE: Toni Massaro meets every test superbly. There is another dimension of compassion that is essential in a college dean—the kind of selflessness that permits

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highly capable people to find fulfillment, pride, and even joy in the accomplishments of others. This nurturing quality lies at the heart of any successful academic administrator and it is beautifully exemplified in Toni Massaro.

Toni's college, the James E. Rogers College of Law, is both academically distinguished and warmly hospitable, a nurturing environment for both students and faculty. Most recently ranked fourth nationally as a hospitable environment for Hispanics, her college is truly a welcoming place for any serious student of the law.

PETE: *Skill:* Toni is a masterful communicator. She is remarkably persuasive, whether stating her case among fellow deans or winning the approval of the University's greatest benefactors. Toni can be as fierce as a mother bear protecting her cubs, but she always recognizes the context of her arguments and the importance of the greater good.

Toni is an acknowledged master in the classroom and an inspirational force before faculty, alumni, and friends of the College. She excels as a communicator by all measures. Toni can write for any reader and speak to any listener, engaging an audience of one or one thousand.

GEORGE: And what a sense of humor! After every meeting in my office, she would walk into the outer office groaning, muttering "boo-hoo-hoo," pretending to cry . . . the staff loved it!

PETE: That sense of humor belongs on our first list of priorities, especially the kind of self-deprecating humor we see in Toni. If we can't laugh at ourselves in these difficult days, we have to cry.

GEORGE: Budgetary constraints could have reduced us all to tears, but Toni helped put that burden in perspective as well. She transformed our expression "strategic cuts" to "strategic saves," putting the entire process in a more positive light. Although Toni's training in the law focused on words, she demonstrated mastery of numbers, too, in her grasp of budgets. The skills a dean needs include quantitative skills.

PETE: You chaired the national search committee in 1998–1999 that recommended Toni Massaro. Did you anticipate her exceptional performance?

GEORGE: There was a groundswell for her on the part of faculty, students, staff and alumni, and Toni's case grew stronger in the backdrop of the list of candidates drawn nationally. They saw her as not "just" an expert in constitutional law (Milton O. Riepe Chair in Constitutional Law!) but as a formidable, emerging academic leader on whom they were prepared to bet their future. Many alumni had experienced firsthand Toni's excellence in the classroom, her mighty grasp of the law, and her respect for students. She was an easy choice as dean in 1999, and these same qualities earned her the distinction of "Regents Professor" in 2007.

One story from the dean search illustrates the mood. Following her formal presentation, she was asked a question that went something like this: "I just arrived here but have learned, Toni, that you have received the 'best teacher' award at

least half a dozen times. Now let me get this straight . . . if you become dean, will you still be eligible for this award, or will others (like me) have a chance?" (grin)

PETE: How can we keep this thing brief? I can see that you're just getting started.

GEORGE: Don't stop me now. I haven't yet mentioned the Rogers Program in Law & Society; the strength of the intellectual property law curriculum; the Program on Economics, Law & the Environment; the LL.M. Program in Indigenous Peoples Law & Policy; the William H. Rehnquist Center of the Constitutional Structures of Government; and the Lohse Chair in Water and Natural Resources. College of Law speakers, ranging from Bill Rehnquist to Ted Kennedy, brought both distinction and balance.

PETE: We can see tangible results of her efforts in Rountree Hall, the Law Commons, and the Daniel F. Cracchiolo Law Library. Jim Rogers and other major benefactors enabled Toni to do so much because they admire her spirit and trust her judgment, just as we do.

GEORGE: Amen, brother, Amen.
