



Professor Nancy Maxwell

Faculty

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believes in the value of a good education, the reward of working hard, being generous and compassionate to those who need it, and giving others the opportunities to succeed. These beliefs, instilled by her parents, along with her chosen profession as a lawyer and professor, are the perfect outlets for these core beliefs.

Maxwell received her juris doctor, with distinction, from the University of North Dakota, School of Law, in 1975. After working in private practice for two years, she applied for an opening at the University of North Dakota's law school and was hired as a one-year visiting faculty member. The Dean at North Dakota informed her if she had a desire to teach law as a career, she would need to obtain an LL.M. from a well-respected law school. Maxwell applied to Harvard, was accepted and graduated in 1979 with an LL.M. in Law Teaching.

Maxwell said her LL.M. experience was the best experience of her life. "I had the opportunity to meet and mingle with the more than 100 foreign LL.M. students. This was my first exposure to different legal systems, which was fascinating and exciting. I felt my mind was in overdrive the entire time, which had a significant impact on someone who had lived her entire life in North Dakota," said Maxwell.

After graduation, Maxwell worked in private practice in Grand Forks, and was the only woman practicing law at the time. That fact alone brought her a great deal of clients in family law who wanted a woman attorney. She also practiced in criminal defense work.

Wanting to remain in the Midwest, Maxwell liked the opportunity to teach at Washburn Law and was struck by how faculty members cared about students. She was hired with seven other new faculty members, five of whom are still at the law school today. "Because of the large number of new faculty members hired over a short time, we had the opportunity to make a significant impact on the direction of the law school. What was impressive, though, was that we had the

support and mentorship of the seasoned Washburn Law professors, which was extremely valuable to young law teachers new to legal education."

Maxwell believes the best opportunities she has been given were things she never planned or had imagined for herself. "While at North Dakota I never thought I would be teaching law, let alone that I would end up doing research on comparative family law issues, co-authoring articles with European legal scholars and working with study abroad programs," said Maxwell.

She recalls advice given to her from family and friends, and it's the same advice Maxwell gives to others, "Clarify your core values and beliefs and remain true to them. Remember not to let mistakes cripple you because in making mistakes comes the greatest opportunity for growth and change. Finally, success comes from the opportunities provided by others and that there is a moral obligation, when it is within your ability to do so, to provide those opportunities to others."

That advice is what Maxwell gives to her students. She believes that teaching law students is a concrete way to have a significant impact on society. Maxwell wants to be able to open doors for others and provide opportunities and connections so others will have the ability to achieve their dreams, just as she has done. Maxwell encourages students to "form strong supportive communities, both at the law school and in your personal lives. Remember that the friendships and mentoring relationships you form in law school have the potential to sustain you throughout your career and personal life."

The greatest satisfaction Maxwell receives from teaching is hearing from former students that something she said or did made a difference in their lives. Maxwell said, "What more could anyone ask?"