

“...an exciting

Forty years—four decades that have included seven American presidents, four Supreme Court chief justices and more than 8,000 students starting their legal careers at Pace Law. 🌀 Since our founding, Pace has stressed the importance of learning not just in the classroom, but outside of it as well. Forty years later, this core foundation has proven to be more relevant than ever as students successfully transition from law school to legal practice in today’s marketplace. No longer the new kid on the block among law schools, Pace has carved a unique and valuable place in legal education, well poised to grow even stronger over the next 40 years.

“The new school will provide a traditional form of legal education to serve the needs of the mid-Hudson region which is currently without a law school.”

—DR. EDWARD MORTOLA, EXCERPT FROM A LETTER
TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS, MARCH 1974

The driver behind the creation of the School was Pace University President Dr. Edward Mortola. An educational visionary, Dr. Mortola elevated Pace from a college to a university and from a school based in lower Manhattan to one that extended to Westchester County. His keen eye saw both a dearth of opportunities for talented local candidates to attend law school as well as a growing business community in need of skilled lawyers.

1974

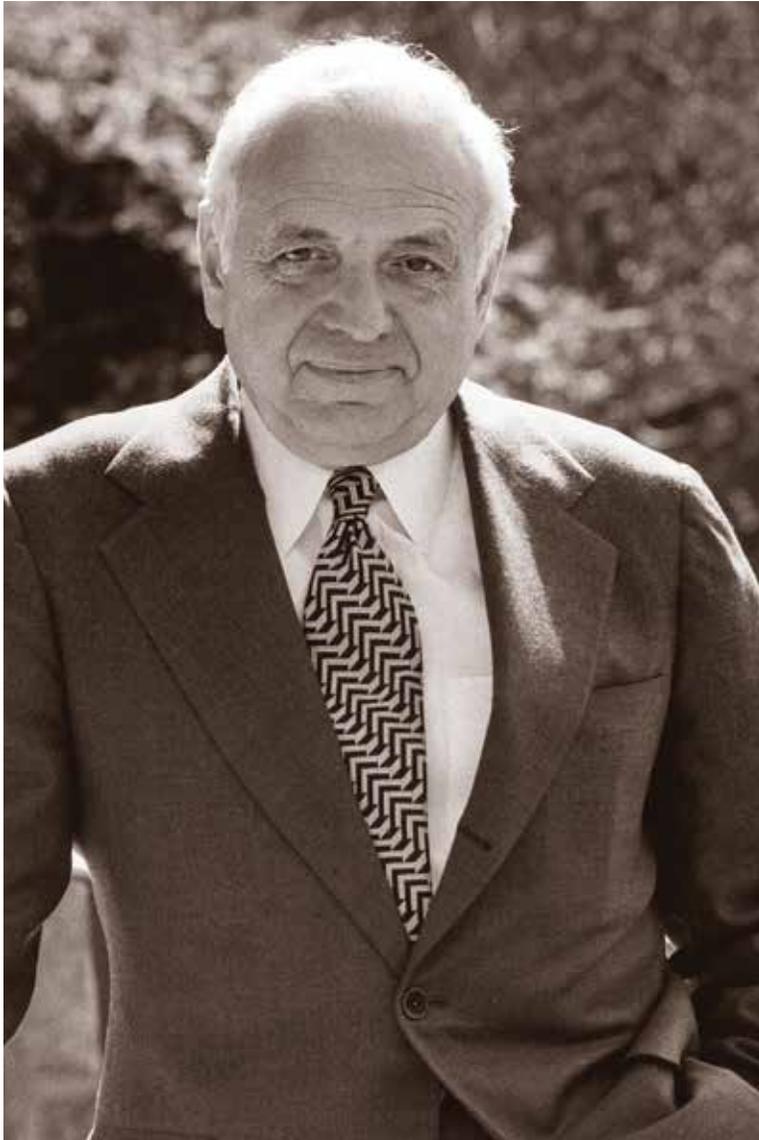
Edward J. Mortola, President of Pace University, writes to Judge Morris E. Lasker of the United States District Court: “A small, quality law school is being planned...to make unique and significant contributions to the University at large and to the Westchester community. Its graduates should be welcomed into the profession and into allied fields.”

1975

The Pace University School of Law opens its doors on the White Plains campus; Dean Robert B. Fleming welcomes 250 day and evening students

opportunity.”

BY JOAN GAYLORD



■ Edward J. Mortola (*left*) served as president of Pace from 1960 to 1984. More than anyone, he is credited with the creation of Pace Law. The official charter (*above*) that allows Pace University to confer Juris Doctor degrees.

1979

Construction completed on the Joseph and Bessie Gerber Glass Law Center
Pace Law School graduates its first class of law students

1981

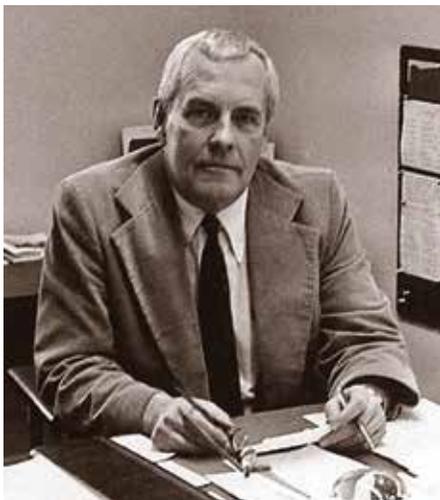
Alumni association established with representatives in 13 states

1982

Dean Fleming retires and interim dean Justice James D. Hopkins assumes leadership



“...AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY.”



■ Robert Fleming’s legal career, prior to becoming dean of Pace Law School, included years spent defending those called before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

“He was an extraordinary human being as well as an educational entrepreneur,” recalls Dean Emeritus Richard Ottinger. Dr. Mortola first hired Dean Ottinger as a faculty member in 1984 and he later served as dean from 1994-1999. He recalls that Dr. Mortola “took a small school for accountants and created a full-blown university.”

Archives housed in the university library, including transcripts of oral histories and carbon copies of the scores of letters that Dr. Mortola wrote to lawyers, judges, elected officials and business leaders, reveal the effort, determination, and collective energy he and others harnessed in order to bring forward their idea.

Pace’s first step, taken in the early 1970s, was to affiliate with New York Law School. Initially, the Pace trustees thought to pursue a formal merger. Dr. Mortola’s reminiscences, however, describe the relationship with NYLS’s trustees as “far from perfect,” enough to kill the plan and prompt a different approach. Pace would establish its own law school.

In May of 1973, Pace officials presented their proposal to the Joint Conference on Legal Education in the State of New York. Acting on the advice of the Conference, they next petitioned the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York and the State Education Department for an amendment to the School’s charter that would allow Pace to award law degrees.

In a letter from 1974 sent to Joseph McGovern, chancellor of the Board of Regents, Dr. Mortola emphasizes the need for broader access to legal education. Drawing from a 1972 report of the American Bar Association’s Task Force on Professional Utilization, Dr. Mortola cited an increasing number of people taking the LSATs, a surge that was expected to continue.

From the start, officials planned to locate the law school in Westchester County, to complement the new undergraduate campus in that area. By then, Pace officials were quite familiar with expansion and the attendant growing pains, but creating a law school required a more complex effort than simply acquiring additional property.

“There’s a whole different process in starting a law school, different from everything we had ever done before,” reads a passage from Dr. Mortola’s oral history.

To guide their efforts, the trustees engaged Dr. Michael H. Cardozo, past executive secretary of the American Association of Law Schools, to serve as a consultant. Next, Dr. Mortola gathered a group of 100 advisors from various facets of the Westchester community and tasked them with assessing the plan and discerning the best steps to take in response to local needs.

They began with the most basic issues: should the school offer both full-time and part-time programs? Should there be an evening program? Dr. Mortola recalled the growing excitement as the group reviewed each issue:

“Absolute, total enthusiasm. It was just remarkable. Westchester was eager and ready. The County Executive then, Al Del Bello; the Mayor, Al Delvecchio; and the local officials were all enthusiastic about the law school.”

1983

The Honorable Janet Johnson named dean of the School of Law. Serving for six years, she established Pace’s first direct client representation legal clinic, John Jay Legal Services
LL.M. program in environmental law launched

1987

Environmental Litigation Clinic established
Barbara Salken Criminal Justice Clinic established
Pace Energy Project (now known as the Pace Energy and Climate Center) launched by Pace Law professor and former United States Congressman, Richard L. Ottinger

To establish adequate financial resources, the University earmarked more than \$2.5 million in contributions from corporations and individuals in addition to seed funding from the University budget. While Dr. Mortola himself might not have been a lawyer, his letter to the New York State Department of Education nonetheless built a strong closing argument:

- “• There are funds.
- There are facilities available.
- There is leadership.
- There is genuine concern for quality.
- There are distinguished law professors and deans who have agreed to participate actively and authoritatively in faculty and staff selection and curriculum development.
- There is a remarkable degree of community support.
- There is a need for a school of law in this area which is so rapidly growing and lacks opportunity for the study of law.
- There is a greatly expanded and expanding corporate community that employs thousands of college graduates who cannot study law without giving up their positions unless a school of law is made available in Westchester County.
- We only lack the opportunity to begin.”

Five weeks later, on April 26, 1974, the Department awarded Pace University a charter for a law school. In its press release, the state noted this would help to meet the needs of the mid-Hudson region. The release also shared that Pace would be the first New York school outside of the city to offer a part-time program of legal education.

Interestingly, the Department also granted law school charters to Yeshiva University and City University of New York at that same meeting, showing the clear perception of a shortage of opportunities in New York to study law.

Moving rapidly, school officials set a goal of welcoming 150 day and 100 evening students for the 1975-76 academic year. With limited time to prepare, Dr. Mortola hired a dean and quickly thereafter a second dean (“if at first you don’t succeed...”), Robert Fleming. Dean Fleming left a practice defending clients called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. His oral history reveals that he was drawn to Pace by what he described as “an exciting possibility.”

As Dean Fleming hired faculty, librarians and administrative staff, the trustees altered their original plan to locate the law school on the recently acquired Pleas-



■ Nick Robinson, founder of the environmental law program; Barbara Black, law professor and interim dean; Justice James D. Hopkins of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, interim dean; John Humbach, law professor



■ An undated photo of students gathering on the lawn between Preston and the library

1989

Annual student-run National Environmental Law Moot Court Competition launched

Dean Janet Johnson resigns to return to teaching; Steven H. Goldberg succeeds her

1991

Institute of International Commercial Law founded

1993

Land Use Law Center established under the direction of Professor John Nolon

Professor Barbara Black named interim dean and serves until June of 1994

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■ Preston Hall then and now

antville campus. They looked instead for space in White Plains, closer to the federal and state courthouses, and the hub of the Westchester legal community. The result, of course, was the purchase of Preston Hall. It may seem surprising in light of today’s full campus, but Preston was originally supposed to house the entire school. The main classroom would be the second floor space that currently serves as the faculty lounge. The library would be located in the Tudor Room, an adequate but limiting solution.

This is where Mrs. Bessie Glass enters the picture.

According to Dr. Mortola’s account, a few years earlier, when Pace was still a college and Dr. Mortola was still pursuing a short-lived plan to establish a center for the study of law and society as a precursor to a law school, Mrs. Glass had tried to interest New York Law School in creating a new school to honor her late husband, Joseph Glass, one of its graduates. Her plan included locating the proposed school on the Glass family property in Mount Kisco, in northern Westchester County. Finding the location unappealing for a Manhattan-based school, the trustees did not act on her proposal.

Dr. Mortola was aware of her offer due to his affiliation with New York Law School during the time that Pace was considering making it part of Pace College. He asked if the trustees would mind if he went and talked with Mrs. Glass. With his original plan to create a center, Dr. Mortola thought the Mount Kisco property might be a suitable location.

The two visited and, by all accounts, hit it off quite well. Mrs. Glass, however, held to her conviction to create a law school, not a center.

Undeterred, Dr. Mortola made additional visits to Mount Kisco and also invited Mrs. Glass to join him for lunch at his office in the city. As months unfolded and Dr. Mortola set aside his plan for a center in favor of proceeding directly to the creation of a law school, Mrs. Glass set aside her insistence to locate a school in Mount Kisco. With the charter in hand and the purchase of the White Plains property, Mrs. Glass signed on to the project.

She pledged \$1 million to construct what is now the Gerber Glass Law Center. She fulfilled her pledge with Tenneco stock, a gift that accrued an additional \$37,000 before Pace liquidated the shares. The additional money went towards the purchase of books to stock the shelves.

Dean Fleming described the first day of classes as “a madhouse.” He had delayed the opening for two weeks but the extra time didn’t seem to matter. Both the day and evening programs were oversubscribed and people showed up to pay their deposits the same day they planned to attend their first class.

The students reflected the anticipated demographic of people who had been waiting for this opportunity. In his oral history, Dean Fleming recalled that most were older than traditional law students and many were women. “I think that first year it was on the order of 35 to 40 percent women, which was an awful lot in ’76,” he recalled.

1994

Professor Richard Ottinger appointed acting dean in July and dean in December

International Program established and led by Professor Gayl Westerman

LL.M. in Comparative Legal Studies created

1995

Pace becomes one of only 22 law schools nationwide authorized to confer a research doctorate degree, the Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD) in Environmental Law

1997

Professor Barbara Black creates the Securities Arbitration Clinic

Investor Rights Clinic established

Professor Ben Gershman remembers a lively and productive semester that sometimes bordered on chaos. Pace shared the campus with the College of White Plains as well as the Good Counsel community. Though the law school was housed in Preston, he recalls that some of the nuns still lived on the fourth floor at that point. It was not unusual, he says, for them to cut through the building during the day, mixing in with the law students.

The same energy and activity that had enticed Professor Gershman to join the faculty brought in other pioneers as well. The original team included Ralph Stein, Josephine King, James DeMarco and Hervey Johnson. “We were creating something that didn’t exist before,” recalled Professor Gershman, who, alone among the original faculty continues to teach at the school.

With applications pouring in, Dean Fleming expanded the faculty to meet the needs of the growing student body. His oral history conveys that he didn’t advertise; word circulated that there was a new law school and his box filled with resumes, a mix of both scholars and practicing attorneys.

“I picked people who looked interesting,” said Dean Fleming, hiring people who had strong law school records and had gone on to acquire professional experience “at a high level.”

Among these early hires was Nick Robinson who led one of Pace Law’s most significant initiatives—a program focusing on environmental law, a new field at that time. Professor Robinson had previously served on the Legal Advisory Committee to the President’s Council on Environmental Quality and was among the few legal scholars to foresee how large and important the field would become.

“I agreed to come to Pace to begin one of our nation’s very first environmental law specializations,” recalled Professor Robinson during a recent interview. “The dean endorsed my proposals, on the condition that I do all the work, so my first task was to recruit colleagues to join me. Thank goodness we found an extraordinary group: Dick Ottinger, Ann Powers, Jeff Miller and John Nolon.”

Their efforts, of course, produced an environmental law program that has consistently ranked among the best in the country.

“I agreed to come to Pace to begin one of our nation’s very first environmental law specializations.”

—PROFESSOR NICK ROBINSON

The 1980s

In just five years, Pace had attracted a strong faculty and a growing student body. With this solid foundation in place, Dean Fleming retired in 1982. Justice James D. Hopkins of the New York State Supreme Court served as interim until 1983 when Dean Janet Johnson took office. One of the country’s few women law school deans, she brought a wealth of experience as a professor, a judge, as well as a practicing attorney, making her well suited to guide the nascent school through the next decade.

During her first year, Dean Johnson focused on providing a skills-based legal education and established Pace’s John Jay Legal Services, which provided students

1998

Federal Judicial Honors Program created
UN Environmental Diplomacy Practicum created

1999

Dean Ottinger retires and is succeeded by David S. Cohen
Equal Justice America Disability Rights Clinic established

2000

State-of-the-art, 27,000-square-foot classroom building opens

2003

The New York State Judicial Institute opens on the Pace Law School campus

2004

Stephen J. Friedman succeeds Dean Cohen

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“As a faculty candidate, Pace struck me as a place that simultaneously valued practical legal training, rigorous and engaged classroom teaching, service to the community, and a deep scholarly inquiry into complex questions about law and society.”

—PROFESSOR BRIDGET CRAWFORD.

with the opportunity to gain practical experience representing actual clients. Five years later, Pace opened both the Barbara Salken Criminal Justice Clinic and the Environmental Litigation Clinic.

The 1980s also saw the creation of the first two centers affiliated with Pace, the Women’s Justice Center and the Pace Energy Project, now known as the Pace Energy and Climate Center (“PECC”). Professor Ottinger, founder of the PECC, noted recently the dual purpose that the centers have served. “They provide additional opportunities for our students to gain practical experience, of course. But they also expand the reputation of Pace because the work of the centers reaches beyond academia.”

The 1990s

Steve Goldberg arrived at Pace on the cusp of the new decade, stepping into the dean’s office in 1989, just as legal education entered a transformative era.

“The bastion of what had existed was changing,” he recently remarked.

In 1992, the American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar created a minor earthquake with its MacCrate Report, criticizing the theoretical approach that had become prevalent in legal education. The report called for a more focused professional training to better prepare students for legal practice.

“Of course, Pace was doing this already,” remarked Professor Goldberg. “The School had an amazingly good faculty for a school as young as it was and a lot of the faculty had practical experience. They understood the practice of law.”

To complement the array of practical opportunities available to its law students, Pace developed new skills classes, including an integrated writing program. Spearheaded by Professor Michelle Simon, the two-semester program combined legal writing instruction with a substantive course, and was taught by full-time tenured faculty. Professor Simon described it as an innovative approach that concurrently taught legal doctrine along with analytical and writing skills, so as to accustom students to the practice of using doctrine to advance a client’s interest.

The 2000s

At the start of the new millennium, a flood of young, talented professors joined the faculty.

“As a faculty candidate, Pace struck me as a place that simultaneously valued practical legal training, rigorous and engaged classroom teaching, service to the community, and a deep scholarly inquiry into complex questions about law and society,” recalled Professor Bridget Crawford who was hired in 2003 after more than six years at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP.

The next year, David Cohen, who had become Dean in 1999, hired Horace Anderson and Darren Rosenblum.

2005

Immigration Justice Clinic opened
Pace awarded the ABA Award for Distinguished Achievement in Environmental Law and Policy
School initiates the annual International Criminal Court Moot Competition

2007

Michelle S. Simon appointed interim dean, succeeding Stephen J. Friedman who becomes president of Pace University

2008

Michelle Simon, a faculty member since 1985, appointed dean
Public Interest Law Center created
Theodore W. Kheel Center on the Resolution of Environmental Interest Disputes created

“It struck me as a place where people who are passionate about teaching and who wanted to prepare the next generation of lawyers could experiment, try out ideas and develop new programs in service of that goal,” recalled Professor Anderson, who had been practicing intellectual property law at White & Case LLP.

“I was drawn to Pace’s beautiful campus and its intimate size,” Professor Rosenblum remembers. “The intellectual vibrancy of the faculty and the engagement of such diverse students has made it the perfect home for my growth as a teacher and a scholar.”

Following, Dean Cohen’s five year term, Stephen J. Friedman became dean of the law school in 2004. Three years later, when Dean Friedman was appointed president of Pace University, Professor Simon succeeded him and led Pace Law into the next decade.

The 2010s

Its sterling faculty, its institutional flexibility and its practical approach to legal education have enabled Pace to navigate the most challenging era that law schools have experienced in decades. Over the last few years, Pace elevated its ranking in both environmental as well as public interest law programs. It was recognized by “National Jurist” as the law school that had “the greatest consistent improvement” in employment rates over a five year period.

At 40, the Law School continues to move forward. Over just the past two years, Pace Law has reorganized its curriculum into a series of concentrations aligned with the main areas of legal practice such as litigation, business law and criminal practice. These offer a more tailored course of study, along with opportunities to meet and talk with leading practitioners so that students can learn the norms of practice and begin to develop professional networks. The school has also added more clinics and in-the-field courses, including two new programs enabling students to spend their entire last semester in supervised practice.

In May of 2016, Pace celebrated its 40th anniversary in grand style—by announcing an extraordinary gift to the law school from the family of the late environmentalist, Elisabeth Haub, and the renaming of the school in her honor. The gift, the largest that Pace University has received in its history, establishes an endowment for the law school, creates new chairs for distinguished faculty and funds a scholarship program for top students.

The school’s current dean, David Yassky, sums it up: “The gift recognizes four decades of exceptional legal education and an amazing record of success by our alumni. Most important, it will allow us to keep innovating, so we stay ahead of the curve. I think Dean Fleming nailed it 40 years ago when he said Pace offers ‘an exciting possibility.’”



■ Bessie Glass’s enduring gift to the law school

2010

Brazil-American Institute for Law and Environment (BAILE) established

2012

Pace Community Law Practice established

2014

David Yassky appointed dean
Neighborhood Justice Clinic established

2016

Pace Law receives historic gift from the family of Elisabeth Haub; school renamed Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University