Excerpted from Dean Matthew Diller welcome reception remarks
September 16, 2015

Returning to the Law School after 6 years, I am struck by how distinctive Fordham is, how close-knit a place it is. We emphasize engagement—with the key legal issues of the day—and the impact we have on the world around us.

We are a law school that is not just in New York City but of New York City. Like New York City, we are diverse and intensely local, yet we have a global connection. We draw students from around the world and offer programs that deal with legal issues across the globe. We are vibrant, humming with activity, and alive with action.

Our faculty is deeply engaged in major legal issues and the way the law shapes the world in which we live: our freedoms, our responsibilities, our culture, our institutions, our economy. Our faculty is passionate: passionate about their teaching and their research and about the possibilities that the law holds.

On the average day, Fordham Law scholarship—that is, scholarship authored by our faculty or published in our journals—is downloaded 4,692 times. Yesterday alone, Fordham Law scholarship was downloaded in 36 nations across four continents. This is only one form of proof that our faculty is deeply engaged in major legal issues of the day and the way the law shapes society. We will expand the impact of our superb faculty.

We build community and care for one another as colleagues and friends—as people. The strength of our community forms a network that supports alumni and students. The Fordham Law Alumni Association is a powerhouse.

We engage in service—using our education, skills, talents, and passion—to serve clients with pressing legal issues or who need our help to accomplish their dreams. We solve problems with clients at the center. This approach produces lawyers who are serious about the role of law in the world.

Fordham lawyers are prized for being not only smart but also practical. They are good colleagues. People you want on your team. People you can trust with responsibility for things that are important. Lawyers who appreciate the human dimensions of law. This is not an accident but flows from the approach we have developed over decades and from the values of our institution.

I look forward to working with you to deepen our engagement and broaden our impact—to realize the full potential of this great law school that so many of you have worked so hard to build.

I will work to expand our reach with new programs that focus on emerging legal fields such as compliance, entrepreneurship, and fashion law. We have incredible intellectual capital and will offer new audiences legal knowledge and skills.
I will work to expand our impact by supporting superb faculty scholarship and the work of our centers and institutes—to get our ideas out into the public sphere and into the hands of those who make critical decisions that shape our legal system.

I will work to expand our impact by improving our students’ career outcomes. I am committed to carrying the unique Fordham message to employers: large and small firms, public interest, government, and to advancing into new sectors of opportunity for our students.

I will work to strengthen our community by focusing on the needs of students and alumni. I want every student and every alumnus to feel engaged with and supported by the School.

We will focus on the affordability of a Fordham Law education by securing resources to offer financial aid to students. Enabling students to afford the benefits of a Fordham education is essential to continuing to build our community into the future.

I will focus on service. Our Law School is an engine for justice. We teach students the value of service and the importance of justice. We provide opportunities to act on these values.

Fordham Law has long been committed to the ideal of access to justice. Thousands in our society do not have the benefit of legal representation—even on issues that are critical to their lives. Many of our programs grapple with this issue. This year our graduating class performed 129,656 hours of pro bono and community service. Centers such as the Feerick Center for Social Justice, the Leitner Center for International Law and Justice, and the Stein Center for Law and Ethics focus our energies and provide leadership within the School and in the profession.

Our faculty and alumni are similarly committed. We can and will use our collective efforts to bridge the lack of access to the justice system in our society. It is an ideal I have been passionate about for the entire length of my career.

I believe that law school can be and should be empowering, exciting, and invigorating for our students. It’s important to me that every Fordham Law student have a great experience. Our mission is to instill our students with the conviction that they make a difference in the world, in their communities, and in the lives of their clients and to equip them with the skills and opportunities to do so.

I will need all of you and your help to lead Fordham into the future, and I know I can count on you. Thank you for helping make Fordham Law one of the finest law schools in the nation.