Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pride that I announce the appointment of David Chang as the Theodore Dwight 125th Anniversary Professor of Law. This newly-created professorship honors the memory of Theodore Dwight, the central figure in the founding of New York Law School. Dwight taught for many years at Columbia Law School, which he founded in 1858, while also engaging in significant public service: he was the founder and first vice president of the Association of the Bar of The City of New York. Dwight was a proponent of a teaching method called the “lecture” system, in contrast to the “case” system developed by Dean Langdell at Harvard. In early 1891, Columbia President Seth Low, with the backing of the Trustees, advised Dwight that Columbia was going to make several changes to the law school curriculum, including moving away from the lecture system. Dwight resigned in protest, along with four out of the five professors. Many Columbia students and alumni also left, and a group of dissident alumni arranged for the establishment of New York Law School “to secure the perpetuation...of the (Dwight) method.” The Board of Regents granted New York Law School a charter in June 1891, and it opened that fall, with George Chase as Dean. Dwight, who was then 70, did not teach at NYLS, but he was an ardent supporter of the School in its first year. He died in 1892.

As we embark on our 125th Anniversary celebration, please join me in congratulating David on his appointment as the inaugural Theodore Dwight Professor of Law. A member of the faculty since 1983, he truly emulates Dwight in his spirited devotion to teaching and the pursuit of excellence. David is an award-winning expert in various areas of constitutional law, including interpretive theory, discrimination, freedom of speech, and hate crimes. David has a passion for righting society’s wrongs, especially with regard to racial discrimination. When he served as co-chair of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, David worked hard to combat some of the City’s most heinous incidents of brutality and to push for...
legislative remedies through the passage of anti-hate crimes statutes.

David has written extensively on hate crimes legislation and the constitutionality of affirmative action policies, finding himself “almost obsessed with the problems of achieving racial justice in a fundamentally racist society.” He is a champion of policies and practices to redress the effects of past discrimination, and has been a long-time advisor for the Black Law Students Association. He has served as chairman of the Board of Directors of Pratt Area Community Council, an organization that serves a wide range of housing-related needs for low- and moderate-income residents of Brooklyn.


David earned a B.A. magna cum laude from Haverford College in 1979, and a J.D. from Yale Law School in 1982. He realized during his first year at law school that he wanted to teach, finding his Yale professors inspiring. “I found that I enjoyed the academic approach to exploring questions, to coming up with better ways of thinking about problems,” he explains.

From 1982-1983, David served as Law Clerk to the Honorable W. Arthur Garrity of the District of Massachusetts, at a time when the judge began a transition from close judicial supervision of the Boston School Committee’s compliance with the court’s orders desegregating Boston’s public schools, to such supervision by the Massachusetts Board of Education. Following his clerkship, he joined NYLS, where he brings his appreciation for intellectual development into the classroom.

David’s entire focus is on supporting our students and giving them the tools they need for success. He is a leader in working with the faculty to think critically and creatively about how we teach our students. He chaired the Academic Support Curriculum Committee, leading the effort to develop and implement our Comprehensive Curriculum Program.

“I am very impressed with New York Law School students, and find them serious and committed. Their accomplishments, especially among the Evening Division students, are often amazing,” he says. And New York Law School students are equally impressed with David. Last year, he was honored with the Class of 2014 Teaching Award presented by the graduating class at the Commencement Exercises.

Through his diverse pursuits, David has greatly contributed not only to scholarship
across several fields, but to the advancement of social justice. He is an advocate and constitutional scholar of the first order, and we are so fortunate to have him as a member of our scholarly community and as a colleague. We will celebrate David’s investiture on April 28, 2016. Please stay tuned for additional details.

Please join me in congratulating David on this appointment.

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