



Blogging

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In preparing a presentation for the School's fundraising campaign committee, I wanted to say something about our entry into the world of blogs. Kelley O'Brien worked with our instructional technology gurus in the IT Division, Rob Moore and Jamar Jones, to create a slide for me that showed the popularity of two blogs. Frankly, I was surprised and impressed when I saw the



numbers, and I'm sure that our campaign committee was too.

Our entry into blogging started with Jeff Welty, who wanted to experiment and see what might happen. Jeff started the *Criminal Law Blog* in 2009 and his ambition was to post something every day of the work week. Thanks to help from his colleagues in the criminal law field, he has met that goal and the blog has become incredibly popular.

How popular? The *North Carolina Criminal Law* blog has averaged **1,930 hits per day in 2013**. It totaled 606,116 hits in 2012. The *Coates Canons* blog focuses on local government law. It is administered by Kara Millonzi and also is a collaborative effort. It has averaged **631 hits per day in 2013** and it totaled 202,461 hits in 2012. I don't know the numbers for the *Community and Economic Development* blog, but I'm confident it is having an impact because it also provides very good information and analysis.



None of us could have predicted the popularity of our blogs. I routinely hear from city and county managers that *Coates Canons* is one of the most useful things that the School has ever done. The information and analysis is timely and accessible. They forward posts to their colleagues and use them as training tools in staff meetings. They return to them later as the need arises. The same thing must be true for the *North Carolina Criminal Law* blog.

There are many great things about our blogs. I love that they are collaborative efforts involving many different people. It is wonderful that they give public officials faster access to information in a manageable format. Our books and longer publications certainly have a place, but public officials are pressed for time and they needed something different. Responsiveness has long been one of our core values, and the blogs illustrate it perfectly.

Blogs also have an impact in other ways. A couple of weeks ago the North Carolina Court of Appeals cited one of Jeff Welty's posts in support of its analysis that a police officer had reasonable suspicion to stop a driver under the Fourth Amendment (the so-called "weaving plus" doctrine). It was not the first time one of our blogs has been cited by North Carolina's appellate



courts as authoritative legal scholarship. Substance is what matters, and it is great to see that our courts and others are focusing on the quality of the information rather than the delivery mechanism.



The School's blogs also represent a new form of engaged scholarship at a time when what counts for promotion and tenure is changing. The early image that people had of blogs was as a forum for superficial and personal anecdotes. That still is true for many popular blogs. In contrast, most of our blog posts are the equivalent of short substantive articles that feature the same kind of rigorous analysis that one would find in our longer-form publications. It is one reason why the School's appointment, promotion, and tenure policy provides that "[h]igh-quality, high-impact works, regardless of the choice of medium, count the same for purposes of reappointment and promotion." We didn't necessarily have blogs in mind when our policy was created, but they definitely count.

Our blogs illustrate innovation by our faculty and first-rate support by our professional staff. I can't wait to see what they come up with next, but I'm sure it will be good—and it will respond to the needs of public officials.