



Faculty Lunches with the Dean (No. 1)

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Last Thursday I had the first of the new Faculty Lunches with the Dean, which grew out of a recommendation from the strategic foresight process to encourage more communication and collaboration among faculty members. The idea is that four faculty members join me to share something about their work during a 90-minute lunch. I also committed to blogging about each lunch so that everyone can learn something about the work of different faculty colleagues. I'm only going to give a short summary of the discussion, and I encourage you to reach out to people if you want to learn more about something they shared.

The goal is an informal conversation with plenty of time for sharing and questions. I thought it was a really good session, and my sense is that everyone who participated would agree. This post highlights two faculty members, and I'll do a post about the other two in the next day or so.



Sara DePasquale

Sara DePasquale. Sara shared two things that she has been working on. The first is the [Child Welfare Case Compendium](#) (CWCC), which is an on-line searchable database that consists of annotations of opinions addressing child welfare issues that have been published by the North Carolina appellate courts and the U.S. Supreme Court from January 2014 to present. The CWCC is organized into six categories and a person can conduct a search only within those categories, or a person can conduct a global search within the entire CWCC. Each annotation includes the case name and citation, a description of the holding, the judgment (including whether there is a dissent and/or stay), related tags (or pre-identified search terms) that allow users to see other case annotations with the same tag, and a link to the published opinion. The feedback was immediate—four emails within 30 minutes of the launch—and incredibly positive. Special thanks to Stefanie Panke and Nicole Benes for their hard work in helping to make CWCC happen.

Sara also talked about Season Two of our [Beyond the Bench podcast series](#). She is creating a number of episodes (four to eight that are each 20-30 minutes long) that focus on the neglect and child welfare system, with a particular emphasis on homelessness and housing insecurity. Each episode will address a different stage of the child welfare process—from initial report to a final disposition of reunification, adoption, or aging out of the system. For example, the first episode will talk about reporting and make the important point that homelessness by itself is not necessarily neglect under the law. Each episode will have the voices and perspectives of a case from the different participants—including district court judges, staff members with a youth homeless shelter, DSS social workers and a DSS attorney, a guardian ad litem volunteer and attorney advocate, a parent attorney, and a former foster youth. These podcasts obviously require a great deal of planning and effort, and one thing we touched on briefly is how we insure that they count for



purposes of promotion and tenure. This is something for consideration by our new Academic Policy Advisory Committee.



Kirk Boone

Kirk Boone. Kirk talked about two things—one that is recently underway and another that is in the preliminary stage. The first was a new blog that he is collaborating on with Greg Allison and Whitney Afonso. It is called [Death and Taxes—The Public Finance Blog You Can't Avoid](#). Kirk had just done his first post, "[Dark Stores](#)," which is about arguments by big-box stores that the tax value of their relatively new buildings is comparable to the value of similar, but vacated, "dark" buildings. This argument has prevailed in Michigan where Lowes stores are assessed at \$22.10 per square foot compared to \$79.08 per square foot in North Carolina. Not surprisingly, Lowes recently argued that the same rules should apply here. Check out Kirk's post if you want to learn more about it.

Kirk also described his thinking about how he might use Virtual Reality (VR) in some of his programs. He has bought an inexpensive VR headset that works with a Samsung phone and uses various existing applications. In terms of training tax assessors, Kirk is considering how to create e-learning modules that would allow students to use VR to tour and view various kinds of property—a house, a tract of land, a car or fiber optic manufacturing equipment. It is not uncommon for appraisers to ask one another if they have comparable sales of unusual property, such as large shopping centers. Appraisers in a class could view the details of a shopping center and gain practical experience without having to visit the location. There is almost an endless number of applications. Kirk also is talking with Chad Haefele, the Interim Head of User Experience with UNC Libraries. Haefele has access to a more sophisticated VR unit and he is helping Kirk explore a



number of uses, including a virtual blackboard that could allow students to select items they want to view and change the places where the items is located.

It is too early to know exactly how VR will work and some of the logistics associated with it. For example, will we need to buy units for every student in a class? We can worry about that later. In the meantime it is exciting to think about how VR might allow us to have a greater impact with tax assessors and other students.