Dear LSJ Alumni Community:

As many of you know, I had some pretty big shoes to fill when I became Chair of the Law, Societies, and Justice Department. Under Steve's leadership, and with your help, LSJ became a full-fledged Department, created three new endowed funds, and moved to a lovely and permanent new home on the mezzanine of Smith Hall. The number and diversity of LSJ majors and minors, and LSJ's capacity to offer innovative learning opportunities, increased notably.

I am happy to report that this trend has continued this year. Our experiential learning opportunities – including a robust prison-based education program, a record number of Study Abroad courses, and the Social Justice Through Philanthropy course (in which students decide how to donate $50,000 or more to achieve maximum impact in a specific area) – continued to expand. Our faculty continue to publish their ground-breaking research and to engage the public and with policymakers with remarkable frequency. In 2020 alone, two faculty members (Arzoo Osanloo and Stephen Meyers) published new books; several others are in the works. This year, we also welcomed a new faculty member, Rawan Arar, and two new academic advisers – Kat Eli and Sasha Lee – all of whom have quickly become an indispensable part of the LSJ community.

Of course, recent months have been extraordinarily difficult for all of us. The LSJ faculty study and teach about law, rights, and justice, issues that are front and center in light of the utterly unjustifiable killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and far too many others. And of course, the protests against racial violence and police brutality are unfolding across the backdrop of a global pandemic that has caused so much suffering – suffering that has also been disproportionately borne by communities of color and low income people. We recognize the enormous psychological and emotional toll of these and other incidents, especially for black students, and have worked hard to accommodate students' needs during this time.

While the move to remote instruction has undoubtedly been challenging, our phenomenal faculty, staff, and students responded to the situation with creativity and resilience. LSJ faculty worked quickly and creatively to reimagine their courses for the new remote learning and teaching environment and helped students connect the course material to recent events. Staff provided much needed
support to facilitate the transition. And students rose to the challenge, offering their own ideas about how to create meaningful learning opportunities even as they wrestle with financial hardship, increased familial obligations, and many other challenges stemming from the pandemic and the global movement for racial justice.

As Chair, I have had the distinct pleasure of learning about the many ways LSJ students work hard to make the world a more just and humane place. Earlier this year, one of our majors, Byron Dondoyano, Jr., successfully spearheaded the effort to pass state legislation that requires colleges and universities to provide religious accommodations to all students. Some founded new student organizations that support students facing particular challenges; another organized a photography exhibit to humanize people who live outdoors or in shelters. Some students joined forces with the UW Center for Human Rights to secure greater rights protections for immigrants. Many serve as volunteers in nearby prisons and jails.

And I am happy to report that neither the threat of COVID-19 nor recent events surrounding police brutality have diminished the strength and generosity of our students. In this context, some LSJ students are now the main breadwinner for their families, even as they continue to work toward their degree. Others are writing and selling poetry and donating the proceeds to assist refugees who are contending with COVID-19. Still others are providing intensive case management to people released from jail as a result of the pandemic. Many are protesting racial injustice and police misconduct, and many others are supporting those who are engaged in this kind of direct action. The list goes on and on.

In this context, please enjoy the news of LSJ that we provide here; I hope you find it as inspiring as I do. You can also view our 2020 graduation video here. And please know that your support is, as always, greatly appreciated!

With gratitude,

Katherine Beckett