

# *Nova Law Review*

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## Roger Abrams, 1986-93

Paul R. Joseph\*

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# Roger Abrams, 1986-93

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## **Abstract**

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## Roger Abrams, 1986-93

*Paul R Joseph*

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When word went around that Roger was leaving to accept the deanship at Rutgers, Newark, I E-mailed my congratulations to him on the computer network that did not exist before he came to Nova. Something in this act caused me to think about how much had changed since Roger became a part of us and how much we have to thank him for.

I came to Nova in 1984, a time that may one day be remembered as "the good old days." But to me, as a new member of the faculty, some things didn't seem very good at all. My faculty colleagues were very good, as they still are today. In fact, the faculty was the biggest plus for me about Nova. Many of the raw materials for positive growth existed, but forward motion seemed stymied. Morale was buffeted by financial uncertainties and a lack of an adequate physical plant, which drew intense and uncomfortable scrutiny from the American Bar Association. Relations with the university were deteriorating.

Roger Abrams acted as the catalyst for Nova's growth and for the creation of its stability. He sought out the best in each of us and encouraged its development. While he got down to the business of overhauling the Law Center, he created the space in which we could excel. And he did it all with a smile that became famous.

Roger realized that to serve students well we needed an adequately staffed administrative structure. He built that structure, and from Career and Student Services to Development and Admissions, we can see the positive results. Roger also supported the acquisition of better technology. When I sit in my office conducting a Westlaw search on my computer, I don't generally stop to thank Roger, so let me do so here.

Oh yes, my office: a clean, bright, sparkling workplace where my books do *not* mildew and my nose does *not* wrinkle at the smell. Lecture halls are tiered without sightline obstructions. The library is a three-floor invitation to productive work. The atrium, a sun-lit tree-filled area, has truly become the hub of the Law Center—a place where guest speakers and programs bring us together, just as Roger knew that it would.

Buildings do not spring into existence because we wish to have them. Millions of dollars must be raised. This required an excellent development



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staff and, in a law school context, it required a dean who was committed to fund-raising and who was willing to give it the attention that it deserved. Roger was such a dean. The building is a lasting monument to his success. Thank you, Roger.

During Roger's tenure, the Shepard Broad Law Center reached out to involve itself with the wider world. The Youth Policy Center and Aids Law Clinics are two examples. The presence of John Anderson is another. A relationship was forged with the Russian Justice Ministry, and the Law Center hosted conferences and distinguished visitors.

The Law Center is larger than it was when Roger came, whether that is measured by square footage or size of the student body, staff, and faculty. We are a more diverse group than we were and we are forging, with Roger's strong encouragement, an increasing commitment to diversity, inclusion, and academic support. Many of the things we *will* become in the future began here during the deanship of Roger Abrams.

A dean is a leader of a group of active, intelligent individuals. What Nova is now represents our group effort over the last seven years. Nothing I say here is intended to take anything away from the important part played by my colleagues in Nova's success. Yet, it is the dean who sets the tone for an institution, is its most visible representative, and acts to nurture, encourage, and shape the overall direction. Roger Abrams has been a proactive, energetic visionary, who worked tirelessly to move us towards financial security, internal stability, and external visibility.

Roger, you may be going, but you will not be forgotten. You leave behind what you have been so central in building. You will be missed.