

Further Reflections on Teaching Professionalism: A Thank You Note to Jack Sammons

by Patrick Emery Longan*

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, I published *Teaching Professionalism* in this Law Review to describe the content and methods of Mercer's first-year course on professionalism.¹ Since then, we have made significant changes to the course, and it seems fitting to share some of those developments in the context of a Symposium that honors the scholarship and teaching of Jack Sammons. As I noted in the earlier article, the idea for the course came from Jack before I ever came to Mercer. It is also appropriate to use this occasion for another reason. I can trace the early design of the course, and most of the more recent improvements, to lessons that I learned from Jack, and this Article gives me the opportunity to acknowledge those lessons and thank him for them.

After eleven years of teaching the professionalism course, it is now clear that we are trying essentially to accomplish three things.² First, we are sensitizing students to issues of professionalism so that when

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1. Patrick E. Longan, *Teaching Professionalism*, 60 MERCER L. REV. 659 (2009).

2. I have adapted these steps from the "Four-Component Model" of the development of moral judgment. For an excellent introduction to the four-component model and how it relates to professionalism education, see Muriel J. Bebeau, *Promoting Ethical Development and Professionalism: Insights from Educational Research in the Professions*, 5 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 366 (2008), and Neil Hamilton, *Assessing Professionalism: Measuring Progress in the Formation of an Ethical Professional Identity*, 5 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 470, 484-88 (2008).

they enter the practice they will know one when they see it “in the wild.” One cannot deal with an issue to which one is blind. Second, we are motivating the students to make decisions that are consistent with the values of the profession. Lawyers need reasons to do the right thing, especially when doing the wrong thing might be easier or more lucrative. Third, we are beginning the process of training the students to make and implement wise decisions when professional values are at stake. Eventually, every lawyer must be able to answer the hard questions—what should I do and how should I do it?—and we are helping our students start to learn how to do that.

As I reflect on those goals, and how over the years we have tried various ways to accomplish them, it is striking to me how many paths lead back to lessons I learned from Jack Sammons. This is the story of how Jack shaped the content and format of the Legal Profession course we teach today.³

SENSITIZATION: VIRTUE ETHICS RATHER THAN AN ETHIC OF RULES

If the first step is to sensitize the students, then the first question is what we are going to sensitize them to. I started on a conventional but misguided path. Jack Sammons showed me what we really needed to be doing.

When I was appointed to the Bootle Chair in Ethics and Professionalism in 2000, I had never taught ethics, much less “professionalism.” I was a veteran Civil Procedure teacher. I knew how to teach students what they must or must not do and what the consequences to them might be if they violated a rule. In other words, I knew how to try to shape behavior by instilling fear of consequences. My background prepared me to teach legal ethics in the way it is conventionally taught, by conveying three lessons: (1) here are the rules of conduct and the other law that governs your conduct as a lawyer; (2) here are the penalties, disciplinary and otherwise, that you will face if you do not fulfill these responsibilities; and so (3) comply with the law governing lawyers or else face the music. That is essentially what I did at first. If I was sensitizing the students to anything, it was to the rules and the law that could result in punishment of some kind.

Eventually I began to realize that this approach was misguided. Lawyers who are sensitized only to the fear of punishment soon learn that a wide range of unprofessional conduct will go unregulated,

3. Details about the course as it is taught now and links to materials we use are available online. *First Year Course on Professionalism*, MERCER LAW, <http://law.mercer.edu/academics/centers/clep/education.cfm> (last visited Jan. 11, 2015).

unnoticed, and unpunished. The world in which lawyers work is too complex for any set of proscriptive rules to cover all situations. Even if a proscriptive rule applies, the settings in which lawyers work are largely too private for us to believe that detection of misbehavior is likely to be reliable. Those in the best position to detect misconduct often have the least incentive to report it. For some violations that are detectable, the resources for enforcement are not there. Other times, such as in malpractice law and the standards for ineffective assistance of counsel, competing policies get in the way. Fear of consequences is not enough.⁴

But if we should not be sensitizing students just to the conduct that could cause them to suffer negative consequences, then what should we be sensitizing them to? I had no idea. This is where Jack Sammons came in.

In my first semester at Mercer, I went to a conference in Savannah and heard Jack speak. He told a story about his daughter. Now that I have met his daughter, I am sure that it was made up, but nonetheless he told the story. In this made-up story, his daughter told Jack something that was not true. When Jack discovered the falsehood, he discussed with her the consequences of telling a lie. If she were caught, she would be punished. But then Jack said something that has stuck with me ever since: he told his daughter that the worst thing about telling a lie was that it made you a liar.

That line, and its emphasis on character rather than punishment, resonated with me because I had already studied Mercer's 1999 five-year plan for the law school. The plan set forth that one of my duties as the holder of the Bootle Chair was the design of the first-year course on professionalism. As I mentioned in my 2009 article, here is how the plan described the course: "[T]he course is less about what lawyers should do and more about who they should *become*."⁵ Needless to say, Jack Sammons wrote those words. In Jack's description of the professionalism course, he made it clear what we needed to sensitize students to: the character of the ideal lawyer—the set of dispositions or virtues that such a lawyer would have and deploy as necessary in his or her work. The course as Jack envisioned it, before I was ever on the scene, would not be about rules, discipline, and fear. The course would be about character, what we would now call professional identity.

That realization changed everything for me as I began to design the course. But it admittedly put me in a bit of a quandary. How do you teach character? Even today, I have people tell me that you cannot do

4. I described these in detail as "gaps in enforcement" in my earlier article. Longan, *supra* note 1, at 679-87.

5. *Id.* at 663.

it. How do you convince students that character is what matters? Even today, some students' initial reaction to this subject is that it is "soft." How do you get students to focus on character rather than—or at least in addition to—grade point average, law review membership, or a high-paying job? Even today, some students treat this instruction as a distraction from what really matters. I struggled with these issues, tried many different things, and found that most of them failed. Then I did something simple. It was my one brilliant contribution to the early development of the course. I got out of the way. In one of the very early years, I simply invited Jack to speak to the class. I sat back and listened.

So what did Jack talk about? He talked about, of all things, the "Athenian Gentleman." I had never heard of the Athenian Gentlemen. I was an economics major as an undergraduate and went to the University of Chicago for law school. I had studied costs and benefits but never Aristotle. I have heard that others have had the experience of listening to Jack and at first not having a clue what he was talking about or where he was going, and this was initially such a moment for me. But I listened, and I got it. Here, in short form, is what I heard.

The ideal for the male citizens of Athens was to become an "Athenian Gentleman." That was the *telos*, or goal, that he should pursue. It was who he should aspire to become if he wanted to look back on his life and have a sense of a life well lived. There were identifiable and agreed-upon virtues that, if deployed, would move the citizen closer to that *telos*. For example, courage is a virtue, and the deployment of courage would move the citizen closer to the ideal. On the other hand, vices would take the citizen in the other direction. Cowardice is a vice and would move the citizen further from the ideal. But in the midst of a particular situation, the Athenian Gentleman had to display the right amount of a virtue. Too much courage is foolhardiness. Too little is timidity. The citizen had to choose the right amount of courage for the particular situation. Furthermore, sometimes virtues would come into conflict with each other. When they did, the Athenian Gentleman had to use the "master virtue" of practical wisdom to chart a course in the particular circumstances of the moment.

Skipping ahead many centuries, Jack acknowledged that today's pluralistic society could not agree on an ideal or on the virtues that would take one closer to the ideal of a citizen. The best we can do now is to look at particular practices—such as the practice of law—and examine the virtues that are valued within that more limited sphere.

This notion comes from the work of Alasdair MacIntyre.⁶ By studying the virtues of such a practice, and learning to deploy them with the master virtue of practical wisdom, one could talk about how to approach the ideal within the particular practice.

This, again, was a revelation to me. I had been struggling to find a way to sensitize students to issues of professionalism by teaching them about character. After Jack's lecture, I saw how one could teach character by teaching about an ideal lawyer. I saw how one could describe the ideal lawyer by identifying the virtues that, if deployed correctly, would move a lawyer in the direction of the *telos*, or ideal. Once the virtues were identified, the students would know what to look for in particular situations. They would be sensitized to what matters.

I knew how to do that. From the late 1980s forward, courts and bar associations had issued hundreds of codes and creeds about professionalism.⁷ I had read them all. After Jack taught me just enough Aristotle and just enough MacIntyre, I undertook to study these creeds and codes closely, in the hope that I could take this notion of the virtues as defined by a particular practice and isolate what the legal profession was saying about the virtues that defined the best of the legal profession. That would be what the students would need to be sensitized to. I did that, and I eventually listed those virtues as competence, fidelity to the client, fidelity to the law, civility, and practice in a spirit of public service.⁸ Since then, the course has begun with the sensitization of the students to these virtues and the challenges to them that lawyers face. By teaching me about the Athenian Gentleman, Jack Sammons made that possible.

MOTIVATION: INTERNAL GOODS, EXTERNAL GOODS, AND EXEMPLARS

The second goal of the course is to motivate, to try to convince the students to begin to make a commitment to being the kind of lawyer who exemplifies the five virtues of the ideal lawyer. If fear will not work, then there must be some other motivation to strive toward that ideal. Jack Sammons provided the key here as well. In his annual lecture to

6. For an introduction to the notion of virtues within particular practices, see ALASDAIR MACINTYRE, *AFTER VIRTUE: A STUDY IN MORAL THEOLOGY* 174-89 (Univ. of Notre Dame Press 1981) (1981).

7. For a sample of these, visit the web site of the American Bar Association Center for Professional Responsibility, *Professionalism Codes*, ABA, http://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/resources/professionalism/professionalism_codes.html (last visited Jan. 11, 2015).

8. I discuss these five virtues at length in the earlier article. Longan, *supra* note 1, at 665-70.

the class, he introduced the students (and me) to the notion of internal rewards that come from conducting yourself in the practice of law in accordance with the virtues of the profession, as defined by the profession. In simple terms, he taught the students (and me) that by seeking to know and embody the virtues that the legal profession values, they would become a particular kind of person, and that being such a person brings its own rewards, apart from money, prestige, or recognition. I described this part of the course in detail in the 2009 article.⁹ Jack summed the point up beautifully in a recent interview when he said that the commitment to conducting oneself with professionalism is essentially a selfish act.¹⁰

In recent years, since the publication of the earlier article, we have introduced a significant innovation that relates to this question of motivation. Early on, I began to realize that an abstract discussion of intrinsic rewards, and the link between professionalism and happiness, would not be enough for first-year law students. They needed to hear directly from lawyers who confronted challenges to their professionalism, who met those challenges, and who managed to be happy and successful along the way. As I described in my earlier article, I assigned the students to conduct oral histories of local lawyers and judges to try to provide such exemplars.¹¹ That part of the course has been a success since the beginning.

Starting in 2009, however, I decided that this one opportunity to hear directly about the lives of lawyers was not enough. I introduced into the course a series of interviews with lawyers and judges that we call "Inside the Legal Profession." For many years, James Lipton interviewed veteran actors and directors on his program, "Inside the Actor's Studio," in front of a live audience of students. In that same format, I interview our guests about the challenges they face in practice and how they overcome them. The students have the opportunity to ask questions, both in the large group setting and informally afterwards. These are chances for the students to connect the abstract discussions of "internal goods" or "intrinsic rewards" with the successful and happy lawyers and judges whom I interview. Here are some comments that the students made in an assignment to reflect on the "Inside the Legal Profession" interviews:

9. *Id.* at 688-92.

10. See MercerLawSchool, *Inside the Legal Profession: A Conversation with Jack Sammons*, YOUTUBE (Mar. 28, 2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvTf_EL08-A.

11. Longan, *supra* note 1, at 695-97.

Being able to listen to established attorneys discuss their experiences and their practices has helped me understand that despite the many different types of legal careers available, the concept of professionalism is truly universal. The interviews helped me see that being an attorney is truly a vocation and requires commitment to your current and future clients, to your values, to the society that supports you, and to the profession in general.

...
I believe that the interviews have been effective in motivating us to make a commitment to professionalism. These interviews allow us to see into the types of decisions and considerations that these members of the profession have to make on a daily basis. . . . These interviews highlight the points on professionalism that are discussed in the readings and group assignments. These interviews have provided us with good advice on how to act professionally and have allowed us to observe the reality of professional conduct that our profession demands.

...
The interviews are very thought-provoking and interesting. They give me an opportunity to observe how professionalism, as we discuss it in the abstract, applies to real life situations. It is reassuring to hear from those that successfully deal with professionalism issues daily, and we have seen that it is possible to maintain an ethical and functional practice.

...
The "Inside the Legal Profession" interviews have been a great way for me to take what I have been reading and understand it from the perspective of the person who is living it. It is one thing to read about the issues and joys of the legal field but it is another, more valuable, thing to hear it from someone who is dealing with them. Often when I was reading the required readings I would be angry, upset, or even worried about these negative sides of the legal field. The interviews allowed me to see that even when dealing with those negative aspects of the law they were still in love with their career and enjoyed the good things about it much more than they worried about the bad things.¹²

Many of the interviews are now available on YouTube.¹³ The participants have included big firm lawyers, legal aid lawyers, prosecutors, defense counsel, transactional lawyers, and many others. By the inspiration of their examples, these lawyers motivate our students to

12. The student comments are on file with the author.

13. The YouTube recordings are linked from the home page for the course. *First Year Course on Professionalism*, *supra* note 3. Other, longer interviews that may serve the same purposes are linked from the home page of our oral history project. *The Oral History Project*, MERCER LAW, <http://law.mercer.edu/academics/centers/clep/oral-histories.cfm> (last visited Jan. 11, 2015).

begin that commitment to professionalism that we want them to have. They talk about the intrinsic joy that comes from doing the job the right way. They are the vivid examples that the students will remember when they read an article, or hear a lecture, about the connection between professionalism and satisfaction.

In 2014, the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Professionalism awarded Mercer the E. Smythe Gambrell Award for Professionalism for the "Inside the Legal Profession" series.¹⁴ That series is now a key component of our efforts to fulfill our second goal for the professionalism course, motivating the students to try to employ the virtues of the ideal lawyer. Those efforts begin with what Jack Sammons taught me to emphasize: the intrinsic rewards of doing so. The interviews reinforce that message.

IMPLEMENTATION: THE CULTIVATION OF PRACTICAL WISDOM

The third goal of the course is to help the students begin to learn how to make and implement decisions about professional conduct. Here, too, Jack's influence has been indispensable.

Several years ago, Jack agreed, along with Professor Mark Jones, to lead the discussions of one section of the course. I attended, but Jack was in charge. That year, we did a series of case studies in which a lawyer had done something wrong.¹⁵ One did not defend a client vigorously enough, while another sold out one client for the benefit of another. Others did not turn over evidence to an adversary as required by law. We had very good discussions about what the lawyers did or did not do and why. These discussions were excellent exercises in sensitization. The students practiced identifying issues of professionalism in

14. The Standing Committee's announcement stated:

The Mercer program exposes law students to a close, highly personal examination of what professionalism means, and how it manifests itself, in the lives of accomplished and prominent practitioners, in a live, student-audience interview conducted by the program director. The program transcends standard practitioner testimonials through a deep and thoughtful exploration of what lawyer professionalism means and how it manifests itself in the day-to-day lives of working lawyers and judges. The intimate, one-on-one interview format lends itself to a compelling and lasting learning experience.

Archive Award Recipients, ABA, http://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/committees_commissions/standingcommitteeonprofessionalism2/prevwinners1/archiveawardrecipients.html (last visited Jan. 11, 2015).

15. There are several collections of such stories. Three excellent ones are JAMES L. KELLEY, *LAWYERS CROSSING LINES: NINE STORIES* (2001), DEBORAH L. RHODE & DAVID LUBAN, *LEGAL ETHICS STORIES* (2006), and MICHAEL L. SEIGEL & JAMES L. KELLEY, *LAWYERS CROSSING LINES: TEN STORIES* (2d ed. 2010).

context. They were able to use the vocabulary and structure they had been taught.

But that was not enough for Jack. In a kind, gentle, almost offhand manner, he questioned my overuse of too many “lawyer-gone-wrong” stories. That gentle style was and is typical of Jack.¹⁶ With further study and reflection, I came to understand why he was right. Students needed much more than what such stories could offer them. Here is what I was missing, and what I would not have realized without Jack’s help.

Sensitivity and motivation are not enough if we want our students to turn aspirations into action. The students need to begin to learn how to deploy virtue. They need to acquire the skills to make a wise decision and chart a prudent course when values conflict and they are surrounded by uncertainty. For example, in a particular situation the virtue of civility may compromise the virtue of fidelity to the client. In another, fidelity to the client may appear to conflict with a duty to the law or the courts. Students can make and implement decisions about professionalism only if they know how, and learning how is all about learning the master virtue, practical wisdom. Jack’s dissatisfaction with too many “lawyer-gone-wrong” stories forced me to realize that we needed to take the next step. The question for me was how to do so. Simply put, my question was, how do you teach wisdom?

Jack and Professor Mark Jones helped me see how this could be done. They introduced me to the work of Barry Schwartz and Kenneth E. Sharpe and brought those two scholars of practical wisdom to speak at Mercer.¹⁷ Professors Sammons and Jones organized a workshop on practical wisdom that brought together people from many different professions to discuss a complex hypothetical problem.¹⁸ I participated, and then I watched Jack critique the process. I learned that, although

16. Jack and I gave a CLE presentation together soon after I came to Mercer, and I said something to the audience that was dead wrong. Remember, I had never taught ethics before I came to Mercer. Jack leaned over to me and asked privately, “Would you mind if I corrected something you said?” I am glad he did correct it, but I never forgot the kind and gracious way he did it.

17. The talk that Professors Schwartz and Sharpe gave at Mercer is available on YouTube. MercerLawSchool, *2008-10-30 Practical Wisdom: The Character of the Professions*, YOUTUBE (Nov. 4, 2009), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUI5ABvpYi4>. Every year, I have my students watch that lecture and also read Barry Schwartz & Kenneth E. Sharpe, *Practical Wisdom: Aristotle Meets Positive Psychology*, 7 J. HAPPINESS STUD. 377 (2006).

18. For a collection of essays that grew out of this and related events at Mercer University, see TOWARD HUMAN FLOURISHING: CHARACTER, PRACTICAL WISDOM, AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION (Mark L. Jones, Paul A. Lewis & Kelly E. Reffitt eds., 2013).

one cannot teach wisdom, wisdom can be learned. One learns wisdom by trying to make wise decisions, by exploring what decisions others would make, by reflecting on those decisions with experienced practitioners, and by doing it again. That was how the workshop was conducted and what made it so effective.

I shamelessly stole the format for our first year course. I mentioned in my 2009 article that we had recently gone to a format in which the students met each week in the groups of the twenty-five or so who comprise each section of the first year class.¹⁹ Those section meetings have now become the occasions for a series of practical wisdom exercises each year. The students are assigned to read a scenario. They meet in groups of three to discuss it. The group must bring a solution to the section and, with the help of an experienced discussion leader, explore the decisions. Then they reflect on the decision and come back a week later to do another one.

A description of one of these exercises is in order. The students are given a script of a vignette that Professor Karen Sneddon, Professor Sue Chesler, and I wrote for a project entitled, "A Day in the Life of A Lawyer: Contracts Module."²⁰ In that script, the students learn about a lawyer who represents Sam Jenkins, a businessman. Sam has just started a new business to manufacture and sell baseball bats made of bamboo. Bamboo bats are durable, and they are safer and more environmentally friendly than metal bats. Sam anticipates a booming market. He needs a supplier for his bamboo, and he turns to his two brothers, who run an import-export business. After extensive and hard-fought negotiations, Sam and his brothers agree that his brothers will meet his requirements for bamboo at a certain price. The brothers, however, insist on an "escape clause" under which they could void the contract if political instability made it impossible to import bamboo from their source country. Sam reluctantly agrees to that clause, and the brothers' lawyer, Amanda, prepares the contract and sends it to Sam's lawyer to obtain Sam's signature. Sam's lawyer discovers that Amanda has left out the escape clause and has an extended discussion with her associate about what they should do. They face the classic problem of the "scrivener's error."

19. Longan, *supra* note 1, at 693.

20. For information about that project, visit *A Day in the Life of A Lawyer: Contracts Module*, ASPEN LAW, http://www.aspenlaw.com/aspen-coursebook-series/id-5001/a_day_in_the_life_of_a_lawyer_contracts_module (last visited Jan. 11, 2015).

The students receive this problem with the instruction that there is no law or rule of conduct that dictates what they should do.²¹ In the script they read, Sam's lawyers discuss three options: present the contract to Sam for his signature, tell Sam about the error, or alert Amanda to the mistake without consulting Sam. The students meet in their "working group" of three and must decide upon a course of action and a rationale. They then come to the section meeting, where they and the other groups present their decisions, and a faculty member leads the discussion.

This is a classic problem of judgment, or practical wisdom. The students must decide what to do and how to do it. They must make and implement a decision about their own professional conduct. Notice that in this scenario the virtues of the ideal lawyer are in conflict. The virtue of fidelity to Sam might lead them merely to have Sam sign a contract in which he obtains an unexpected advantage, or it might at least lead them to discuss it with Sam before telling Amanda. The virtue of civility might lead them simply to call Amanda without consulting Sam. If they choose to talk to Sam, the virtue of competence will certainly be in play, as they must know the potential legal implications of a unilateral mistake in a contract and they must deploy the skills of a wise counselor. The situation is also rife with uncertainty. Among other uncertainties, they do not know if a supply interruption will ever occur, and they do not know how Sam will feel about "taking advantage" of the incompetence of a lawyer who represents his brothers. The scenario requires the students to answer the question for which lawyers earn their money: what *should* be done and how, rather than what *could* be done.

First-year students often see the problems as easy at first and cannot imagine how anyone could disagree with their obvious solutions. These are teachable moments. At least three distinct types of lessons might emerge from the discussion of the scrivener's error: the need to examine motivation carefully, the need to plan for execution of a decision, and the need to anticipate and consider the likely consequences of a course of action.

First, consider motivation. It is common for many student groups to come to the section meeting and explain breezily that "of course" they would just call Amanda and tell her that the escape clause is missing.

21. See ABA Comm. on Ethics & Prof'l Responsibility, Informal Op. 86-1518. The opinion gives guidance but not a mandate: "Where the lawyer for A has received for signature from the lawyer for B the final transcription of a contract from which an important provision previously agreed upon has been inadvertently omitted by the lawyer for B, the lawyer for A, unintentionally advantaged, *should* contact the lawyer for B to correct the error and need not consult A about the error." *Id.* (emphasis added).

If I am leading the discussion, I will ask these students why they chose that course of action. Often the students will say that they are just following the "golden rule"—they would want Amanda to alert them if they made such a mistake. If I ask the students whose interest they are serving by such reasoning, they will have to admit that it is their own, to the potential detriment of their client. I might also ask them why they would not at least give Sam a courtesy call before calling Amanda. Many times they frankly admit that they are afraid that their client will tell them not to reveal the mistake. So, I might suggest, the strategy is intended to serve a personal interest and avoid the discomfort of discussing the situation with the person whose interests they are there to protect. The students often begin to feel uneasy about their "obvious" decision just to call Amanda.

How to execute a decision also comes up. Some students will conclude that they need to talk to Sam, at least to tell him that they are going to call Amanda. I might ask them to describe the content of that conversation or, better yet, to role-play it with me as Sam. Often the students have not considered what they will say to Sam, or how they will say it, in as much detail as they should. Counseling Sam requires that the lawyer predict the legal and practical consequences of various courses of action. What would a court do if Sam signs the contract as is and there is later a dispute about the escape clause? What will the effect on Sam's business reputation be if it becomes known that he took advantage of this situation? How uncomfortable will Thanksgiving be if he takes advantage of his brothers? All of these questions may arise, and students will realize the importance of planning for them. They will see that implementation of a decision about professional conduct involves not just the decision itself but also the means by which it is carried out.

Finally, the students may see the need to "play out" alternative courses of action to see where they might lead. The students sometimes struggle to respond to relentless repetition of the question, what if? What if they tell Amanda and then Sam finds out? What if they talk to Sam first and he insists on signing the contract as is? What if word gets out that they took advantage of a fellow lawyer? Sometimes we construct a decision tree to illustrate the complexity of the situation and the need to ask and answer all the "what if" questions. At the very least, the students will see layers of complexity that they did not see before.

After we discuss as many alternatives as we can over the course of the hour, I will ask the students how many have changed their minds about what they would do. Usually, many have done so. They then have the opportunity to reflect on the exercise. We come back a week later and do another one.

That is how you learn practical wisdom. You exercise it and discuss and defend your judgment with someone who has more experience. You re-evaluate your judgment. Then you do it again, with a new and harder problem. I did not realize the need for these steps until Jack Sammons gently led me there. I would have had no idea how to conduct such an exercise until Jack and Mark Jones showed me how. Learning practical wisdom is a life-long endeavor, but because of Jack Sammons and Mark Jones that process begins for Mercer law students in their second semesters.

CONCLUSION

We now have a very clear vision of what we are trying to accomplish in our first year course on professionalism. We need to sensitize the students to professionalism issues, we need to motivate them to strive for the professional ideal, and we need to train them to make and implement difficult decisions regarding professional conduct. At every step of the way, Jack Sammons has been crucial to how we came to understand and teach professionalism. It is important to realize that Jack never did this by telling me what to do or by pointing out my shortcomings. Instead, he showed me the way, with a generosity of spirit and a kindness that I will never forget and can never repay. But even if I cannot repay him, I can at least acknowledge the debt. Like every other good southern boy, I was raised to send thank you notes when someone does something nice for me. I hope that Jack will read this Article and realize, as the title shows, that this is my thank you note to him for all he has meant to me and to the development of Mercer's first-year course on professionalism.
