

12 November 2021

Dear Friends:

It is with both sadness and gratitude that I announce that, after almost a decade of service, Lesley Benn will be leaving her position as Executive Director of the International Law Students Association on 31 January 2022.

Lesley has been an extraordinary leader of ILSA since 2012. During her tenure, both ILSA and the Jessup Competition achieved several historic firsts. More than 100 countries and 700 law schools now regularly compete in the Jessup. Lesley created the All Rise Society – our exclusive philanthropic society of Jessup alumni and friends – and has overseen the beginnings of a fundraising culture within ILSA. She recruited new law firm, academic, and organizational partnerships around the world. She met thousands of our participating law students each year and visited more than 20 countries to make connections with our stakeholders and participants.

Most recently, Lesley organized and ran the immensely successful 2021 Global Rounds of the Competition – a first of its kind, fully global virtual event. Held entirely online and against all odds, the Global Rounds became the largest event in Jessup history.

In April, the Board of Directors created a new award in Lesley's name and in her honor. The Lesley Benn Award recognizes exceptional individuals who, in the face of personal and professional adversity, demonstrate exemplary creativity, fortitude, and resilience in their efforts to promote and protect international law.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the global Jessup community, we are extraordinarily grateful to Lesley for her energy, vision, dedication, and commitment to the Jessup Competition and to ILSA. We wish her the absolute best in her future plans and endeavors.

I spoke to Lesley last week. She said, "It is because of the incredible strength of our global Jessup community and our amazing Executive Office that I have been able to make this difficult decision to leave the organization. Although I will be departing from ILSA, the Jessup will always be part of who I am and what I believe in. I am confident that ILSA is poised to enter an exciting period in its history, and I think now is the time to make room for new leadership with fresh visions for the future."

I have the pleasure to announce that Tessa Walker, ILSA's long-time Programs Director, has agreed to serve as Interim Executive Director following Lesley's departure. Tessa has been a vital worker, leader, and decision-maker in the Executive Office for seven years, and there is simply no one better suited to see the organization seamlessly through the 2022 Jessup season. ILSA's Executive Office remains an energetic, talented, and committed team. The Board has every confidence in their ability to continue their great work under Tessa's capable oversight.

The ILSA Board will soon begin the process of recruiting and securing ILSA's next chief executive. This an exciting and unprecedented time, offering new opportunities to widen and deepen our community's global connections, and to deploy those connections to address the seemingly intractable problems that face us. We are grateful for Lesley's legacy in making the Jessup much more than a moot court competition, and we look forward to finding new ways for ILSA to develop within the international legal order.

Thank you to all of our students, judges, sponsors, donors, and volunteers for your continued support of our vision of promoting international law and the peaceful resolution of disputes. If you have any questions or concerns about this transition, please do not hesitate to reach out to me by email at mluz@ilsa.org.

Sincerely,



Mark Luz
Chair, ILSA Board of Directors