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Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

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Jeanne Estilo Widerka Appointed Associate Dean of Admissions



Dean Melanie Leslie is pleased to announce the promotion of Jeanne Estilo Widerka to Associate Dean of J.D. Admissions. She takes over her new position previously held by David Martinidez, whom she worked closely with for over a decade and whose death this winter left a deep hole in the fabric of our community.

“Jeanne Widerka has always demonstrated a deep dedication to this law school,” said Dean Leslie. “And in a moment of incredible upheaval and sorrow she stepped up to lead in a way that has been truly inspirational. We are so fortunate to have a woman of such talent, experience and grace under pressure leading our J.D. enrollment efforts.”

Dean Widerka has been a member of the Admissions team at Cardozo for over 20 years, becoming Assistant Dean in 2005, and adding to her title *Assistant Dean of Admissions-Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives*, in 2020. A member of the admissions committee, she is part of the leadership team executing admissions strategy and establishing enrollment goals each year.

“It has been a true pleasure to work with this team and to bring so many talented students to Cardozo and to watch them thrive and achieve,” said Dean Widerka. “I am honored to serve Cardozo and I am committed to continuing on the path we set with my dear friend and wonderful colleague Dave.”

As Assistant Dean, she managed and supervised admissions operations and oversaw the admissions staff. Working closely with Dean Martinidez, she planned and executed Cardozo’s national recruitment strategy, expanding its scope and outreach over the years. Dean Widerka traveled extensively throughout the country representing Cardozo at law fairs and recruiting a generation of the law school’s students.

Dean Widerka is highly valued within the Cardozo community for her warm working relationships with students, faculty, administration members and alumni. Her work includes overseeing all orientation programming for new J.D. students, which is a hallmark of the 1L experience.

Dean Widerka has served the law school in a wide variety of critically important initiatives. Some of her recent contributions on committees and other initiatives include: Co-Chair, Community Building Committee (2020-2021); Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (2020-2021); Dean’s Council on Diversity & Inclusion Admissions Working Group (2017–2018); Hiring Committee for Dean of Students and Director for Diversity and Inclusion (2017-2018); Cardozo Faculty Diversity Working Group (2014-2016).

Dean Widerka has worked in the public and private sectors and immediately prior to joining Cardozo, she served as Assistant Director of Career Services at St. John's University School of Law for two years and as a recruiter for a legal search firm.

Dean Widerka is a native of New York City, where she grew up in Queens. She earned a B.A. from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where she majored in psychology and sociology and a J.D. degree from Cornell Law School.