

ON THE RETIREMENT FROM TEACHING LAW OF PROFESSOR OF LAW EMERITA CYNTHIA M. ADAMS

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ISSUE: Professor of Law Emerita Cynthia K. Adams (“Professor Adams”) is retiring from the Indiana University McKinney School of Law (“IU McKinney”).

RULE: Exceptional professors of law should be recognized and celebrated.

APPLICATION: I started night law school at IU-McKinney in the Fall Semester of 1993. My first and second semester curricula included Legal Research & Writing. I was eminently fortunate to have been assigned Professor Adams as my instructor. Writing was an important and regular part of my undergraduate experience, but I had never taken a class focused solely on the art and craft of writing.

Professor Adams—who started teaching at McKinney in 1991—was engaging, challenging, and thoughtful. She offered precise edits and feedback on our written and oral (mock argument) assignments. She made legal writing engaging.

What stands out to me now—and what I took from Professor Adams into private practice and the bench—was a focus on precise and concise writing in “plain English;” organizing and structuring your work product; and thinking about what it is your writing is meant to accomplish. Be meaningful and to the point. Do so without resorting to legalese. Have headings that tell a story and provide the reader with a roadmap. Who is your audience? Are you writing to a client or a judge? Proofread. And proofread again.

Through that class, Professor Adams focused in my mind the separate but critically important art and skill of legal writing. Mastery of substantive law such as property or contracts alone is not enough; as a lawyer, you must effectively and persuasively communicate that knowledge to your intended audience. Professor Adams taught me—and countless others—how to do so.

The lessons I and others learned in her class found their way into Professor Adams’ written scholarship. Her impact extends beyond the four walls of IU McKinney.¹ It is no surprise to me that the first three words in *A Practical Guide to Drafting Contracts: From Concept to Closure*, are these: “Clear. Concise. Precise.”² Those words were burned somewhere onto my brain circa 1993–1994.

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1. Cynthia Adams, ’83, Named Vice Dean, IU McKinney School of Law, IND. UNIV. ROBERT H. MCKINNEY SCH. OF L. (July 1, 2020), <https://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/news/releases/2020/07/cynthia-adams-83-named-vice-dean-iu-mckinney-school-of-law.html> [https://perma.cc/2WLU-VYKE] (Professor Adams “is co-author of two books: *A Practical Guide to Drafting Contracts: From Concept to Closure* (2d ed., Wolters Kluwer 2020), and *The Guide to U.S. Legal Analysis and Communication* (3d ed. forthcoming, Wolters Kluwer 2021). Over the years, she has made numerous presentations nationally and internationally on transactional issues, related ADR issues, and transactional pedagogy.”).

2. CYNTHIA M. ADAMS & PETER K. CRAMER, A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO DRAFTING CONTRACTS: FROM CONCEPT TO CLOSURE 1 (3d ed. 2025).

I encountered Professor Adams early in her teaching career. She continued to excel in her field. She has received several awards for her effective teaching. Professor Adams “was one of the first [IU McKinney] faculty members to receive Indiana University’s Trustee’s Teaching Award in recognition of teaching excellence and is a four-time recipient of the school’s Teaching Excellence Recognition Award.”³ The “primary factor for selection” of Professor Adams for the Indiana University Board of Trustees recognition was her “excellence in teaching.”⁴

Recognizing the need for more practical courses for law students, Professor Adams initiated and led IU McKinney’s addition of a contract drafting course to the curriculum—later supported by the book she co-authored: *A Practical Guide to Drafting Contracts*.⁵ That class now has four to five sections and a regular waiting list. Reflecting the breadth of her substantive expertise, she taught classes in various other areas of the law: Secured Transactions, Negotiations, Small Business Planning, Legal Communication and Analysis, Integrated Contracts, Civil Procedure, and, for good measure, Trusts and Estates.⁶

Along the way, Professor Adams took the position of Vice Dean of the law school in 2020,⁷ a position to which she would not have been appointed if she did not enjoy the respect of colleagues and students alike. And, she coached students in the National Transactional LawMeet Competition.⁸

CONCLUSION: Professor Adams’ lasting legacy is the meaningful and enduring impact she had on the law students who passed through her classes at IU McKinney during her tenure. “Many of us end up with no more than five or six people who remember us. Teachers have thousands of people who remember them for the rest of their lives.”⁹ Professor Adams will be fondly remembered by her many students, who, on a daily basis, use the skills she taught them in law school. On behalf of myself and the many other IU McKinney graduates who were fortunate enough to have had Professor Adams in class: Thank you for what you taught me. What I learned from you was a critical part of what has allowed me to enjoy a fulfilling legal career.

3. IND. UNIV. ROBERT H. MCKINNEY SCH. OF L., *supra* note 1.

4. *Trustee’s Teaching Award*, IND. UNIV., <https://medicine.iu.edu/faculty/professional-development/awards/trustees-teaching> [<https://perma.cc/CJX7-B54X>] (last visited Jan. 16, 2026).

5. *See* IND. UNIV. ROBERT H. MCKINNEY SCH. OF L., *supra* note 1.

6. *Id.*

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

9. Andy Rooney, BRAINYQUOTES, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/andy_rooney_194052 [<https://perma.cc/42K9-7ML5>] (last visited Jan. 16, 2026).