Three New Faculty Members Quickly Make Themselves at Home

Joining the Marquette Law School faculty is not a homecoming for three new professors. But it feels like that to each of them—just ask them.

"It felt like home to me," said Jacob Hamburger, describing his initial impressions of the Law School and Milwaukee. He grew up in the Chicago area, and Milwaukee feels both familiar and new. "I'm very excited by the unique culture of the city," he said.

Felicia Caponigri has roots in South Bend, Indiana, although she has also lived in Italy and France. She said that when she came for an interview at Marquette, "I felt so connected" to the people and to Eckstein Hall itself. "It is symbolic how light it is," she said of the building. "And, by the way, the students were incredible" during her visit.

What attracted Karen Sandrik? "Largely just Marquette," she said. The Law School, with its emphasis on student experiences and preparing students to be practicing lawyers, aligns with her professional goals, she said, and Milwaukee offers a good fit for her, her husband, and their six-year-old son.

Karen Sandrik: Strong commitment to law school learning—and students' personal lives

Karen Sandrik tells students to think of a piece of paper as they envision what they need to do in law school. The paper has a large central space. But it also has a vertical line creating a margin on the left side. The main part of the page symbolizes how she expects her students to work hard. But the margin symbolizes how they also need space and time for other parts of their lives.

"It's really easy for students to lose themselves in law school," she said. "I want students to go all in." But, she tells students, "I need you to have enough margin in your life that you don't go off the page. You need some balance."

Sandrik aims to do that in her own life. She said she is a highly competitive person. "I love working," she said. But she also loves having dinner with her family, outdoor activities, and early-morning runs.

Sandrik grew up in Florida and received her undergraduate degree from Mississippi State University, captaining the women's soccer team; she also played on the U-23 U.S. women's soccer team. After receiving her law degree from Florida State University, she practiced at Troutman Sanders (now Troutman Pepper Locke) in Atlanta. Since 2012, until this year, Sandrik has been on the faculty of Willamette University School of Law in Salem, Oregon, where she also served as associate dean for faculty. In the spring of 2025, she was a U.S. Global Fulbright Scholar in Slovakia. Her academic research centers on "the intersection of patent law and commercial law, with particular attention to how commercial law principles—especially contractual frameworks—influence innovation policy and the broader ecosystem of innovation outcomes."

Sandrik is teaching Contracts to first-year students this fall. "First-year courses are so special," she said. "I love being part of the students' professional journeys in a way that professors were—and remain today—part of mine."

She said she was looking to move to a law school with "a great track record of scholarship" and a practice-oriented program for students, and the Midwest appealed to her because she has extended family in the region. She said she saw a notice of the opening at Marquette and immediately contacted Professor Chad Oldfather, chair of the faculty appointments committee. "Put me in, coach," was and is her basic message.

Jacob Hamburger: Immersed in the legal, political, and human aspects of immigration

Jacob Hamburger is a cool-headed lawyer whose primary professional interest is one of today's hottest subjects: immigration law. His interest started before current events put immigration at the front of nationwide attention. In part, it arises from his experiences living in other countries, including France, and his affinity for people from all over the world. His interest also is bound up with the importance of the subject and the fact that, as Hamburger views it, "there's a lot of capacity to make a difference." Immigration issues have a legal framework, a political context, and a human element, and Hamburger focuses on all three.

While immigration law itself is primarily a

federal matter, Hamburger has a keen interest in how state and local governments become involved with immigration issues. He wants to work with the immigration legal community in Wisconsin and, more broadly, in addressing needs of people in Milwaukee and beyond.

Hamburger has an undergraduate degree from Columbia University, a master's degree in philosophy from École Normale Supérieure in Paris, and a law degree from the University of Chicago Law School. He worked for Legal Aid Chicago before joining the academic world. He was a visiting assistant professor of law at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, before joining the Marquette faculty.

Hamburger's courses include first-year Civil Procedure and a seminar on immigration federalism. "Each subject we teach in law school is incredibly complex," he said. "I see my role in the classroom as offering a starting roadmap. The most rewarding part is seeing students take that map and make it their own—or toss it out entirely as they discover new paths."

His advice to law students generally: "Push yourself to ask big questions. Study, read, and think deeply. This may be the last time in your career when you can focus entirely on learning."

Felicia Caponigri: How law shapes culture and culture shapes lives

Felicia Caponigri loves dinner parties, fashion, art museums, Italian culture and cuisine, connecting with people of all kinds—the list could go on, given her energetic personality and many interests.

Unifying themes among her interests include the importance of what Caponigri calls "cultural property" and how people pass things of value to others.

That means Caponigri is enthusiastic about teaching courses ranging from Trusts and Estates to Property to a seminar in fashion law. The courses align with her interest in how the law can help people deal with what they find valuable. She seeks to "examine how culture shapes intellectual property rights, and how intellectual property rights, in turn, shape access to culture."

Caponigri describes herself as "proudly from South Bend, Indiana." That said, her family moved to Italy when she was six, and her life has been influenced by living in both the United States and Europe. As a young girl, she noticed the differences between how people dressed between Indiana and Italy, prompting her over time to consider how identity and dress are connected. Her undergraduate work at the University of Notre Dame included studying art and cultural heritage in Paris and in Florence, Italy. Her interest in culture and fashion took her to both law school at Notre Dame and a Ph.D. in analysis and management of cultural heritage at the IMT School for Advanced Studies in Lucca, Italy.



(From left) Karen Sandrik, professor of law, and Felicia Caponigri and Jacob Hamburger, assistant professors of law, are new members of the Marquette law faculty.

Her continuing pursuits include a podcast called "A Fashion Law Dinner Party with Fashion by Felicia." What does she like about dinner parties? They are a good way to bring together multiple guests to talk about different subjects and to enjoy different foods. "You have dinner with someone," she said, "and you open up very naturally."

Caponigri said that joining the Marquette faculty appealed to her because of the reputation of the intellectual property program, the collaborative and supportive faculty, and the Jesuit mission of Marquette. The Midwest location, close to some of her family, was also a factor. And Milwaukee's Italian assets, such as Glorioso's Italian Market and the Peter Sciortino Bakery, have been a plus. Her interests outside of work? "You can find me in an art museum." ■