



## CHARLES TUCKER

Find out what Charles Tucker has planned for the future of the IHRLI, and learn in what three areas he's focusing the institute's energies.



→ Although CHARLES TUCKER, the new executive director of the International Human Rights Law Institute (IHRLI), has no problem with going into a post-conflict society and helping it deal with war crimes issues or reestablish a judiciary after a conflict, he's more interested in tackling underlying issues *before* they escalate.

"For example, while dealing in the Balkans on the prosecution of war criminals, I became convinced that those sorts of international tribunals—while an important part of the spectrum of tools that the international community has to deal with situations—were inadequate," he explains. "What we needed to do, in my view, was focus more on capacity building to assist emerging democracies in transitional countries—to assist them in developing internal capacity to deal with their own problems."

Tucker says many things can spur violence—poverty, property, family and domestic issues. He says making an effort to understand these issues and helping countries "develop capacity to strengthen rule of law within their own society can help forestall war or at least mitigate some of the consequences of war."

In addition to his position at DePaul, Tucker is an Air National Guard major general, a two-star position. He directs joint-doctrine training and force development for the National Guard through his office in Washington, D.C. Tucker also spent nearly 10 years as a judge advocate general for the U.S. Air Force.

"Cherif Bassiouni, founder and former director of the institute, had been one of my professors when I was a law student here. He

had a tremendous impact on my life," Tucker says. Although Tucker plans to adhere to the same core values for the institute, his approach to "instituting the institute" is, in some ways, different.

→ **What are the main areas in which the IHRLI engages?**

Since I came on board last July, I've been focusing the institute on three different arenas. The first is capacity-building projects overseas. We receive funding from a variety of sources, such as the State Department and private sources. For example, we recently announced three large contracts to do capacity-building work in Iraq. We were able to channel those grants into three specific projects in Iraq: a mentoring project working with women; another working with law schools to rebuild their legal education programs; and a third working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help them to investigate their own human rights violations.

The second arena we play in is something that I have paid particular attention to: our educational focus. When I first started I asked, "What is it that makes us different than other do-good NGOs?" The answer is we're in a university, a law school. If we lose sight of the primary mission—to train and educate students—then I think we've lost something important. It's not enough to go off and do good work overseas. We have to keep the focus on the students. So we put a lot

of emphasis on improving our fellowships, getting scholarships for students and getting them into different educational programs.

The third arena is community outreach. We have a diverse student body and live in a diverse community. It was my assessment that we had not done enough to leverage that, to leverage the special skills, backgrounds and interest levels of our students. I want to look into how we can hook our students up with local community organizations and perhaps get those organizations to engage internationally.

→ **What do you want the institute to offer students, and what do you hope they walk away with?**

We have students of all ages and backgrounds, and the hardest part is to figure out where you fit in. You're blessed to be able to go to law school. Now what? We can help open doors and show students ways to earn a decent living where they can do this sort of work on a sustainable basis. There is nothing wrong with going to the Peace Corps—that's fantastic—but this is beyond that. The Peace Corps is a couple of years of your life. What I'm asking you to do is to think about how you can do this for the rest of your life while still maintaining a family, if that's what you want to do, and having a nice place to live. It's about balance and sustainability.

I'm also suggesting that we refocus away from the war crimes aspect, particularly

high-level war crimes. For example, it is one thing to go back and want to prosecute the president of Sudan for war crimes that are occurring in Darfur. But most of our students are never going to be the chief prosecutor for the war crimes tribunal, nor are they going to be focused on prosecuting presidents. I think it would be far more within our core skills to train students to go in and work with the Sudanese legal system so that it can help build its own capacity to deal with its own legal problems. If we can help local attorneys and institutions to develop their own capacity to deal with some issues—perhaps at a lower level than prosecuting a president—maybe we can have a real impact on human rights.

→ **What's the most rewarding and challenging part of your position?**

Students are the most rewarding part. I get to be an energy vampire. Just about the time you become depressed or cynical, your students come in and they aren't going to let you get that way. It's the reverse of the "Picture of Dorian Grey"—I get older, but they stay the same. You can't be cynical when you see people wanting to come in and dedicate their lives to doing something bigger than themselves. That's hugely rewarding. It's also exhausting. You can't rest—there's always a new student, a new group. This is something that, once you get into, if you're taking that energy, you're going to have to give it right back. ■