



Dennis R. McCoy '77 and Brian D. Baird '83



Mary Joanne Dowd '80, Joseph W. Belluck '94 and Paul J. Wessel '87



Dean Makau W. Mutua, Thomas E. Black '79, Associate Dean James R. Newton and Michael C. Banks '89



Thomas E. Black Jr. '79

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 – Thomas E. Black Jr. '79, DAC chairman



Paul J. Korniczky '86 and Diane F. Bosse '76



Kenneth B. Forrest '76 and Richard S. Feldman '76

# A number that matters

## Dean's Advisory Council focuses on our rankings

“A chorus of soloists” is how Thomas E. Black Jr. '79 describes the Dean's Advisory Council, the consulting board of alumni where Black has served for six years and which he will now lead as its chair. “There is just so much talent in that room and so many very impressive people,” says Black, who will serve a two-year term. “Because it is a large group, and a diverse group of some of the most successful people who have graduated from the Law School, there

are lots of opinions. The job of the chair is to keep them all singing the same song.” Black, a recipient this year of the Distinguished Alumnus Award from UB Law School, practices in the area of regulatory compliance for mortgage companies, with the firm Black, Mann & Graham in Flower Mound, Texas. A Buffalo native, he did his undergraduate work at the University of Notre Dame, and now is back at Notre Dame part time pursuing a master's degree in business administration.

The Dean's Advisory Council, he notes, does two things at once: It enables Dean Makau Mutua to seek the advice of alumni practitioners on issues such as curriculum, and it provides a forum for alumni who have issues or concerns they want to bring to the dean's attention. “Our purpose,” Black says, “is to provide our advice to the dean on issues that the dean feels are important. The agenda for DAC meetings is set in conversation between the chair and the dean.” The group meets twice a year, once in New York City and once in the fall in Buffalo. Of necessity, Black says, the current Council is focused on a three-pronged effort to better UB Law's po-

sition in the controversial annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings of the nation's law schools. Despite the somewhat subjective nature of the rankings, he says, “there is a real-world impact, because that is the only rating out there. It does affect people's perception of the school, it affects incoming students, it affects students looking for jobs, and it affects how the alumni feel about the school.” So for the DAC, he says, it is important that UB Law School rank in the top 50 on that list. The Council's plan to help the school toward that achievement, he said, comes with three goals: • Raising the average LSAT score of incoming students. “The applicant pool we have is very strong,” Black says. “If we could recruit the people at the top end, we would do very well. We have not had the financial aid necessary to really entice those students.

We need to focus on the state, on the overall University administration getting funds to the Law School; we need to look at the income we receive from students; and we need to look to the alumni for assistance. Part of our job is to make sure all of that happens.” • Continuing to recruit and maintain a top-notch, highly respected faculty. “To do that,” Black says, “we need to have endowed professorships and endowed chairs.” The school currently has two endowed professorships but no endowed faculty chairs, a position that requires substantially more funding. • Increasing the rate of job placement for Law School alumni. “The school is producing smart and talented attorneys. We encourage our graduates to hire a student or new graduate. This is particularly important given that *U.S. News* now counts people who are not seeking employment as ‘unemployed’ in their ranking

formula. Some of our graduates choose not to work immediately, because their debt load provides this flexibility. This requires that we redouble our efforts to help the vast majority of our graduates find employment. “If we can just double our efforts, we can put those things together,” Black says. “We are starting a process of communications to make sure that all of the players are pulling together at the same time to make happen. It is realistic to say that we can be and should be among the top 50 law schools. The program that we have today delivers real value.”