

LAW ALUMNI MENTORING PROGRAM

*You-know-who said it best:
“We get by with a little help
from our friends”*

 University at Buffalo
School of Law



Mentoring pairs law students with practitioners— and everyone benefits



Note: neque digni
and in aliquet nisl
et a umis varius.

When it comes to developing a legal career, a mentor is an indispensable aid



- Provides guidance and advice on types of practices, settings, and cities
- Assists with interviewing skills
- Guides students on appropriate dress, demeanor and etiquette
- Refines their resumes
- Utilizes their professional and social networks to secure interviews

The goal: Move the needle on our graduate employment rate

*Large numbers of volunteer mentors are needed.
They are recruited from:*

- **Dean's Advisory Council**
- **Law Alumni Association**
- **Past Presidents Law Alumni Association**
- **Bar Association of Erie County**
- **Minority Bar Association**
- **Women's Bar Association**



Working together, we get the job done!

Volunteer leadership

- Ann Evanko and Bob Conklin
(DAC Taskforce Chairs)
- Patricia Ciccarelli
(LAA Mentoring Chair)

Administration Mentoring Team

- Ilene Fleischmann
- Bill MacDonald
- Lisa Patterson
- Melinda Saran
- Kristi Fields (UBAA)





Our program is custom tailored to meet the specific placement needs of students in all three classes, LL.Ms and post-graduates.

A brief history of the Law Mentoring Program

- Our mentoring program was founded in the early 1990s, on a limited basis with just a handful of students connecting with mentors. Audrey Koscielniak, the former director of the Career Development Office, partnered with the Law Alumni Association on this initiative.
- Our mentoring program for 1Ls was revitalized in 2005 by the DAC's Bob Conklin. It became mandatory for all 1Ls.
- From 2014-2017, it became voluntary -- but that didn't work well. In 2018, Dean Abramovsky again made it mandatory for 1Ls.
- The program has since been expanded to include the 2Ls, 3Ls and post-graduates on a voluntary basis.

100% of 1Ls now participate!

Last year, matches were made between 110 experienced local practitioners (admitted 3 years or more) and all 145 1Ls.

- Students must register for a mentor as part of their Professionalism class requirements.
- Three alumni panelists visit Professor MacDonald's class in November to tell their stories about how mentors helped them achieve success.
- The UB Law Alumni Association ensures that every one of our 1L students is matched by late January, when the LAA hosts a mentor match kick-off reception.



Process and Timeline for 1Ls and LL.Ms

- **Recruitment and registration** link to Survey-monkey form is emailed in November, to be completed by early January.
- **Mentor Matching** is completed by staff in mid-January.
- Mentees meet their mentors at a kick-off party sponsored by the Law Alumni Association and Bond Schoeneck & King LLP.
- **Follow-up surveys** are then emailed in the spring to insure that mentors and mentees are connecting as promised. We will change mentors if requested.



2Ls and 3Ls are encouraged to opt into the Mentoring Program

- Upper-class mentors are not mandatory, but are highly encouraged by alumni, faculty and staff.
- As they move up, students may choose to retain their 1L mentors or be reassigned.
- Many of our mentors continue to reach out to their original mentees for many years, continuing the relationship throughout law school and beyond.



3Ls especially benefit from having a mentor on their side

- Graduates without job offers at the time of graduation in May are offered a highly experienced, well connected senior mentor. **Several are influential managing partners, or heads of their organization.**
- These mentors are recruited by the DAC Mentor Taskforce and the Law Alumni Association Past Presidents Group, and hail from various regional areas. NYC, Washington, DC, Rochester, Albany, Central NY– all of our LAA chapters participate.
- With the bar exam slated for early October, our 3Ls are now studying. As a result, we have decided to soft-pedal the push to sign up for the mentor program for the moment.
- As of today, 33 law graduates are seeking jobs, while 31 are unreported. The CSO is continually following up and will be contacting them about mentors soon.

3L and post-graduate mentors are more than just a friendly ear



- They are encouraged to connect job seekers with contacts in their desired fields.
- Put in a good word for job seekers who have potential offers at firms or organizations where mentors have relationships.
- Educate employers about timing, and ask contacts to hire **before MARCH 15th** of the year after the student graduates (i.e after both bar results and admission in the 4th Dept. , but before the second round of bar results comes out.)
- This is the date by which a graduate must have a full time, long- term job for the school to get full credit for it by *US News*.

Enhanced online mentoring platform takes off

- One mentor can't do it all! We encourage all our alumni and law students to join UB's online mentoring platform "Career Connector Network" at: www.Buffalo.firsthand.co
- When you register, the platform uploads employment information from LINKED-IN.
- The School of Law has its own special groups. Students are able to browse through various alumni profiles to look for a "match" in a preferred geographic region, practice area or affinity group.
- Students can then reach out for career tips and advice during one-on-one scheduled appointments. It's up to alumni to determine how often – and for how long—they will accept appointments.



DUFFEL

Currently registered online: 84 alumni from Buffalo, Rochester, NYC, Albany, Syracuse, San Diego, Youngstown, Seoul, Tampa, among others



- Group discussion forums are LIVE on the platform and activated.
- All CSO staff and mentoring team members have been given administrative rights and can monitor participation.
- An Alumni Directory is planned to launch in November, as well as an online Job Fair module and Grad Fair module.

Mentor Toolbox on the law school website helps train mentors

- We ask all our mentors to visit our website at *buffalo.law.edu/alumni/volunteer/mentorsneeded/toolbox*
- We have posted links to a wide variety of helpful training materials, including articles, books, PowerPoint presentations and webinars.
- A series of three webinars, created by Prof. MacDonald, were recorded and posted specifically to help and inform our law alumni mentors:
 - “Out of the Starting Gate”
 - “Handling Bumps in the Road”
 - “Approaching the Finish Line”



Opportunities:

- Due to the difficult legal job market, more students should want to network with alumni and opt into the program, or join Career Connectors online.
- Being remote encourages more collaboration between legal organizations, all of whom want to mentor our students. That translates into more diverse mentors.
- Mentoring is “feel good” and increases over-all alumni engagement with the law school.
- Alumni truly empathize with our students at this difficult time and want to help them. As a result, we will probably see an increase in volunteer opportunities and internships for our students in all of our geographic regions.

Challenges:

- Far more alumni are interested in being mentors than upper-class students are in being mentees.
- Older alumni are often frustrated by a cultural and generational clash with millennials.
- Limited in- person interaction and Zoom fatigue are potential problems.
- Follow-up and tracking matches have proven to be challenging.
- Career Connectors platform needs more visibility.
- Undergraduates majoring in law will certainly add to the demand for mentors, exceeding our current capacity.

Adjacent alumni activities that support students in their quest for connecting with alumni

- Mock Interview training
- Power Hour presentations where alumni discuss their career choices and trajectories
- Webinars on career topics such as “How to Succeed in a Brutal Legal Market” and “How to Network Virtually”
- Inclusion in Continuing Legal Education Programs
- Invitations to alumni events

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“I’m looking for a mentor who will show me how to get rich without boring me with a lot of advice.”

