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Hodgson Russ Fellowship supports research and writing

BY NATHAN GOLDBERG

Responding to the increased need for private-sector involvement in the University at Buffalo's Law School, the Buffalo firm of Hodgson, Russ, Andrews, Woods & Goodyear, LLP has created the Hodgson Russ Fellowship Program to recognize and encourage excellence among the law faculty in research and writing. Sarah Herbert, head of UB Law's Research and Writing Program, has been named the first Hodgson Russ Fellow with an award of \$15,000.

The Research and Writing program, now in its fourth year, has become an integral part of the Law School's New Curriculum.

"Law schools have always depended on the bar for financial support and for help in teaching our students professional skills. We can expect to see this relationship become even closer as both law practice and the financing of higher education continue to change," says Herbert. "The Hodgson Russ Fellowship is an example of how law schools and law firms can work together."

With state funding for SUNY schools falling almost 50 percent in the last decade, local firms like Hodgson Russ are recognizing the increasing importance of contributions like theirs to the future success of UB Law School.

"We are extremely fortunate to be located in a city with a law school of UB's caliber," says James W. Wadsworth, the chairman of Hodgson Russ. "There is a great deal of synergy between Hodgson Russ and the University's faculty and student body, and this is something that we feel has been invaluable to us."

The Research and Writing Program, which instructs students in everything from writing legal summaries, to drafting contracts and documents, to writing full appellate briefs, has already drawn considerable praise

from students and employers. It, and the New Curriculum as a whole, is seen by many in the legal community as a crucial and timely innovation in legal education.

"There are many senior lawyers in this firm who grew up in the days of more rigorous classical education, and they long for the highly skilled word-smiths that that type of educational structure produced," says Wadsworth. "I think we have been witnessing a general decrease in the writing skills of students. This is especially dangerous in a field which places such importance on the precise use of language."

Herbert agrees, but is quick to point out that only through greater private support can the program begin to raise faculty salaries to a level that can attract and retain talented instructors who are also experienced lawyers. The Hodgson Russ Fellowship, Herbert says, has been key in this regard.

Established in 1817 — the same year that the Rush-Bagot Treaty between the U.S. and Britain demilitarized the Great Lakes — Hodgson Russ is one of the largest and oldest law firms in Buffalo. Alumni of this firm include U.S. Presidents Millard Fillmore and Grover Cleveland as well as three Buffalo mayors, and former Congressman and World Bank President Barber Conable. The former chair of the firm's tax department, Donald C. Lubick, currently serves as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy, the top executive branch tax policy position in the nation.

Ever since the founding of the

Buffalo Law School in 1887, Hodgson Russ and the University at Buffalo have had strong and consistent ties.

Wadsworth points out that approximately 30 percent of Hodgson Russ' lawyers are UB alumni, more than from any other law school. "As you might imagine," says Wadsworth, "this contributes a great deal to our interaction with the university. For example, Hodgson Russ currently has four adjunct faculty members teaching at UB."

Wadsworth recognizes a parallel development in the way that law firms have adapted to the needs of their clients and the way that UB Law has been aware of the changing needs of the legal community. "The legal profession has to be responsive in this way, and

Dean Barry Boyer has been aware of this," says Wadsworth. "When instituting the New Curriculum, he and others from the Law School came to us and to other firms in the community to find out where we felt changes had to be made and where new emphasis needed to be placed in legal education."

Herbert sees the Hodgson Russ Fellowship as evidence that this com-

munication is now paying off. "Knowing that the private bar supports this program is very important to those of us who have been trying to improve it," she says. "We believe we are producing students who are better able to profit from their legal education and become qualified attorneys, and we appreciate knowing that firms like Hodgson Russ think so, too."

According to Wadsworth, this sense of encouragement is certainly warranted. "We feel that the Research and Writing Program has been effective in addressing our concerns as well as the concerns of the profession and we are happy to support it in any way we can." ■



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