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Just asking

Development professional Mary Ann Rogers joins the Law School team

That rarest of commodities, an unexpected stretch of free time, led to a whole new career for the newest member of UB Law School's development team.

Mary Ann Rogers, a native Western New Yorker, had graduated from the University in 1986 with a degree in communications. After working more than two years as assistant to the School of Management dean, she was serving as personnel officer for the School of Arts and Letters and doing well. But "it was at a point in my life when I really didn't have much to do outside of work," she says.

Talent abhors a vacuum; she knew she needed more. So Rogers got busy — first as a development volunteer for the Roswell Park Alliance, which raises money for Buffalo's premier cancer treatment hospital; then serving dinners and fund-raising for Friends of Night People, the city's well-known organization for the homeless and hungry. "The people involved in these causes were dedicated individuals who worked hard," Rogers says. "It was enormously inspiring to see what they accomplished."

And in performing that community service, she discovered she had a knack for the combination of idealism and dollar signs that makes a successful development professional. She changed careers, working for two years as development director for UB's public radio station, WBFO-FM, and then as assistant dean for development in UB's Graduate School of Education.

Now she has taken on a new challenge. In December 1997, Rogers was named assistant dean for development at UB Law School, working with Associate Dean Tom Farrell.

The job is a major one — and increasingly important, as the University

continues its transition from a state-supported institution to a more self-sufficient entity. Rogers points out that as recently as a couple of years ago, 90 percent of UB's budget came from taxpayer dollars; now that proportion is less than 50 percent.

"The climate has changed, certainly, but change breeds all sorts of opportunities," Rogers says. "We're viewing this as a great time. It's a chance to define different terms for success and discover new possibilities in meeting challenges. It's a chance to figure out how we will take more control in moving our institution forward."

Rogers stresses that the funding situation has not dampened the Law School's aspirations for excellence. "The message sent through the SUNY cut-backs was that we needed to come to terms with decreased funding, that we should learn to live with less, or at best, maintain status quo," she says.

"We are not comfortable reconciling ourselves to that concept, particularly now, when the Law School is working harder than ever to compete with the best institutions. So we are looking for other ways to fuel the engine, mostly through the identification and involvement of new partners."

Those partners primarily include friends and alumni of the Law School. As the school strives to improve the quality of education it provides to its students, input and support from its constituents is critical. Part of Rogers' role is to engage the Law School's graduates in this process.

"We are responding to the priorities and interests that our alumni perceive to be important, both to their profession and to the broader community," Rogers says. "We want to provide them with a sense of ownership in our efforts to

grow and advance, so that ultimately our case for support will be richer, bolder and more compelling to those interested in helping us."

And there are indeed many ways to help the Law School by giving, either through the Annual Fund, whose income helps the school meet its operating needs, or through major gifts, which are typically defined in amounts of \$25,000 or greater, and build upon the school's existing endowment resources.

"The Annual Fund can essentially be thought of as 'money to live by,' whereas we look at major gifts as 'money to grow by,'" says Rogers. "Major gifts fund the enhancements that will help us distinguish ourselves among the better law schools. They provide us with the flexibility we need to further our educational program and reach our academic goals."

Gifts in this category typically supplement faculty research, provide better financial aid to students and further curriculum and library development. Some gifts will also be used to fund much-needed improvements to O'Brian Hall — the oldest building on the North Campus.

That's the story that Rogers will be telling as she starts reaching out to alumni. As for that troubling excess of free time ... Rogers has solved that problem in spades. In addition to her development work and continuing community service, she has been working her way through the University's Executive MBA program, with graduation expected in May.

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