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Alumni Association

Dean Boyer makes a special appeal to Big Apple alumni

It was an old song lyric, but Dean Barry B. Boyer brought new meaning to it. "If you can make it here," he said to a special reception for New York City-area alumni of UB Law School, "you can make it anywhere, and many of you have definitely made it here."

The challenge, he said, is to make that success work for the good of the Law School.

The Oct. 23, 1997, reception brought together more than 30 of the approximately 1,400 UB Law alumni living and working in the New York metro area – nearly one-fifth of the school's living alumni. It was the first in what is expected to be a series of initiatives seeking to build a stronger relationship between the Law School and its alums working in the biggest legal market in the nation. That relationship is essential, Boyer said, to furthering the school's mission, building on its strengths and enhancing the value of a UB Law degree.

"A major part of our future has to be here in the New York City area," he told the attendees. "The city is crucial to us."

The event was arranged and hosted by Kenneth B. Forrest '76, a partner with Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz, and co-hosted by two fellow UB Law alumni: Thomas R. Bremer '79, senior vice president and general counsel for U.S. Surgical Corp., and Jeffrey L. Tanenbaum '76, a partner with Weil, Gotshal & Manges. All three are members of the Dean's Advisory Council and its Alumni Relations and Development Committee. ■



Honorable Elena Cacavas '85 and Timothy J. Sheehan '84

Left to right: Kenneth B. Forrest '76, Thomas R. Bremer '79 and Jeffrey L. Tanenbaum '76



Excerpts from Dean Boyer's speech to New York City alumni:

New York is a place where opinions are formed and communicated. That's certainly true for the legal profession. This is a leadership area. One of the things that we are committed to as part of our strategy is building our reputation. We think we have a terrific product and we have outside confirmation of that in several ways.

But when we get low rankings, when our reputation lags, our alumni let us know in no uncertain terms. Even those who have been very successful as practicing lawyers feel the effects. They feel that it downgrades their degree and the quality of the service they can provide for their clients. We have to have a strong reputation in order to find the sources of revenue that we need to become the great law school of our dreams.

About the New Curriculum:

Within the past five years we have brought aboard 14 new faculty members. That has made a huge difference. They have brought a level of energy and talent that is hard to match. In the first year we still have the familiar core courses: torts, contracts, civil procedure, etc. But built around them we have many new things. We offer full-year research and writing, for one. We have problem-solving courses in the first year. In the upper division, we are putting concentrations in the curriculum, such as finance transactions, environment, family law, regulation, international law and housing development. We have also used our adjunct faculty in more creative, and I believe more appropriate ways.

We have continued our tradition of interdisciplinary work, including the creation of some new institutes that Provost Tom Headrick, our former dean, has set up: the Institute for Research and Education on Women and Gender, and the Institute for Regional Governance and Economic Growth. We also have a cross-listing of courses with the School of Management. Many of our students



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are interested in the joint J.D./MBA. We are looking to upgrade that program.

The response has been very enthusiastic. Our accreditation site visit team said this is a terrific plan, if you can pull it off. Our faculty are working harder than ever but are very engaged and enjoying it more because the teaching is more satisfying and the curriculum development is going well. And most importantly, our students are as happy as at any time in the more than 20 years that I have been at UB. There is a level of energy and engagement that is really encouraging.

In student recruitment, we have to do more targeting of good students, more outreach, and follow up with those who have been accepted. You can help us fill that gap. Any of you can help us reach out to students. You can pass the word about what a terrific value UB Law is, and how our curricu-

lum can suit their needs.

In career development, one of the things we are talking about is trying to create a more formal network of alumni advisors in the metropolitan area who could be in regular communication, who could be helping us to think strategically about what is happening in this market, how our graduates can fit into it, and how we can be more successful in placing them.

If you look at other great public law schools — the Michigans, the Berkeleys, the Virginias — they don't get the bulk of their resources from state appropriations. They do it themselves through managing their tuition and enrollment, through grants and contracts, and through private philanthropy of various kinds. It is difficult for us to make that transition as fast as the State of New York is forcing us to make it. But if we take the example of Eastern Europe and the countries that changed from a socialist to a market economy, which is close to what we are doing, I think shock therapy is the most effective way to do it.

We are working very hard to enhance private giving by our alumni. Our Annual Fund is now over half a million dollars a year, up from about \$200,000 when I first became dean. We are also seeing a marked increase in major gift donations, which are now up to about \$2.5 million over the past two years.

What are our next steps? We are going to be working on more meetings like this in the future, ranging from individual meetings to small groups to larger events. Meanwhile, any time you have thoughts about what we ought to be doing in any of these areas, ideas for improving our competitiveness, please let us know. Any of us can be reached by phone, by fax, by e-mail, and we would love to hear from you and get your ideas about how we can work better together. If we do work effectively together, then the school's future and its reputation as a truly leading, dynamic institution in legal education, as an asset in New York State, and as a road of access to the profession for the non-wealthy, but bright kids who need a break to get into the profession, will continue to grow. ■