New Admissions Team Raises Our Visibility

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Spreading the word
Jack Cox's challenge is to raise UB Law's visibility

To everything there is a season, says the ancient wisdom. For Associate Dean Jack D. Cox Jr. and his colleagues in UB Law School's newly revamped admissions department, the high season for recruiting the next generation of UB Law students is from mid-September to mid-November. In those couple of months, Cox and recruiter Lillie Wiley made about 100 forays into the wider world of law school recruiting forums, graduate/professional school programs and other campus visits, all in an effort to increase the Law School's visibility statewide, regionally and nationally.

The results, so far, have been dramatic—a 35 percent increase in the number of applicants to UB Law.

To accomplish this, Cox's strategy is to build on one of the Law School's traditional strengths—the high caliber of people who choose to apply. For many years UB Law School has relied heavily on its academic reputation and its position as a school offering good value for the tuition dollar. But as law schools nationwide compete ever more fiercely for the best-qualified applicants, UB Law is responding with an increased number of scholarships and other financial aid offers.

His challenge is to get the word out about what some have called the best-kept secret among American law schools.

"We need to increase the applicant pool. That is one of our primary goals," said Cox, who now coordinates the Law School's student-recruitment programs, admissions and financial-aid policies. He arrived at UB Law in January 1999, after 12 years in admissions at the University of Dayton Law School, the largest private law school in Ohio.

By increasing the number of applicants each year, he said, it becomes more likely that in that pool will be a greater number of academically talented students. As a rule of thumb, the more people who apply for admission, the higher the academic quality of each year's entering class.

To accomplish that goal, Cox has begun a number of initiatives to put the UB Law School name in front of potential students. In addition to the autumn blitz of recruiting visits, he has:
- Established an online application process on the Law School's Web site. "Every piece of correspondence lists our Web site address and notes that we can accept applications online," he said.
- Moved back the application deadline to March 15. The former Feb. 1 deadline, he noted, excluded students who took the LSAT in February.
- Developed a zippy new viewbook for the school in a slightly smaller format with colorful photographs. The paper
Talking proud

Lillie V. Wiley takes UB Law's message on the road

Never underestimate the power of a handshake and a smile — and a quality product to back them up.

That is a basic rule of marketing, and it is one that Lillie V. Wiley, UB Law School’s new director of recruitment, brings to each encounter with a potential UB Law student.

Whether it is at student-recruitment forums held in big-city convention centers, on-campus visits to Eastern and Midwestern undergraduate schools, or the hundreds of follow-up telephone calls and notes she makes to hot prospects, Wiley puts UB Law’s best face forward — and then lets the school’s innate qualities do most of the talking.

“My job is having the personality to draw prospective students in,” said Wiley, who works in conjunction with Associate Dean Jack D. Cox Jr., director of admissions and financial aid. “Once they get to the table, the school pretty much sells itself. I enjoy talking about the Law School. I think we offer some great programs, and my enthusiasm for that comes through.” She points especially to the intensive “bridge” courses offered between semesters in January as a feature unique to UB Law.

Wiley, a native of Lockport, N.Y., comes to Buffalo by way of Pennsylvania State University, where she earned a master’s degree in counselor education and worked for a time as a diversity specialist and senior diversity planning analyst. Her previous exposure to the law came with three years of work at the U.S. attorney’s office during her undergraduate years at Canisius College.

The good news, she says, is that UB Law’s reputation often precedes it. “It is not always a sell job,” Wiley said of her visits to law-student forums and undergraduate campuses in such far-flung locales as Atlanta, Ohio, Chicago, Florida, Baltimore, Michigan and Houston. “For many students, particularly those who are focused on public-interest law, they know UB Law School by reputation. Sometimes my job is more of a sharing of information on the school.

“Also, you find New York State residents wherever you go, people who may be interested in returning to the state. And there are also people who want to practice in New York City, so UB Law is attractive in that it prepares them to take the New York State Bar exam.

“If you do not cast your net widely, it is hard to get those students you want to sit out. Jack and I are very committed to bringing in the very best we can in terms of first-year classes.”

The job can be an arduous one, Wiley acknowledged, particularly during the mid-September to early November period that constitutes the main recruiting season. There is the matter of dealing with the recruitment materials themselves, either lugging them around in a travel case or having table setups shipped ahead. And the driving, particularly on those long swings through the Midwest, can be grueling. Fortunately, she has been able to share rides with recruiters from other schools — friends on the road, friendly rivals for law-school recruits.

Wiley said she and Cox welcome referrals from UB Law alumni. “If you know of prospective law school students, please continue to refer them to us,” she said. “And feel free to call on me with suggestions.”

Meanwhile, she will be coordinating visits to campus by prospective students, writing reminder notes to prospects — and looking forward to the fruits of long labor, an avalanche of applications to UB Law School.

application, formerly eight pages, has been shrunk to four. “My philosophy is, if you want people to do business with you, you must make it easy for them to do business,” Cox said.

In the future, Cox said, he plans to make it a goal “to contact every LSAT test taker in New York State with a competitive LSAT score.” It is possible to make mass contacts, he said, using databases — such as candidate referral service lists with the name of every person who has taken the LSAT recently — overlain with sophisticated filters that take into account a prospect’s grade point average, LSAT score and geographical location.

As for UB Law alumni’s role in the recruitment process, Cox is enthusiastic. “I believe in many cases our graduates are the best recruiters we have,” he said. “The alumni will reach out to people who have been accepted, whether it is with a phone call, by mail or by e-mail.” He noted that the Law Alumni Association’s Board of Directors and the GOLD Group reached out in those ways to the current year’s entering class, and plan to do so again.

Alumni also have the opportunity to serve on panels at open house events and career days that take place on the UB campus during the second semester. Cox said he would welcome calls from UB Law graduates interested in taking part — talking about the law as a career, and why UB Law School can be a successful choice.

Cox earned a bachelor’s degree from Waynesburg College, and a master’s degree from Pennsylvania State University. He has worked at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Slippery Rock University and Bethany College. He is secretary-treasurer of the National Network of Law School Officers and a member of the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals and the National Association of Financial Aid Administrators.

“I am happy to be here at UB,” Cox said. “I am excited as to what the future will hold. And I look forward to working with our alumni in upcoming events and efforts.”