New York Alumni Hear Appeals Justice Wesley

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Alumni Association

New York alumni hear appeals justice Wesley

UB Law School's biggest alumni chapter outside upstate New York came out in force Jan. 30 for the increasingly popular New York Alumni Luncheon. Held in the tony Union League Club, the event featured an address by Richard C. Wesley, justice of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit.

Wesley's connection with the school is a most personal one: His daughter Sarah is a current UB Law student.

And it was from that dual perspective — as a jurist and a father — that Wesley spoke of UB Law's mission as New York State's only public law school.

"Why is it that people choose the University at Buffalo?" he asked. "Some of you grew up in Buffalo, some of you are from Western New York, some of you want to be closer to home, but some of you came here because of cost and quality. You were able to obtain a high-quality legal education without going bankrupt. The choice is between $17,000 a year and $37,000 a year. The choice is between mortgaging your life and having choices in life. The choice for many people is having any choice at all."

He said his daughter's experience as a student reflects some of the changes that have taken place in the profession since he went through his own legal training in the early 1970s.

"When I entered the Cornell Law School, there were seven women in a class of 150," Wesley said. "In one generation, from mine to my daughter's, women now occupy more than 50 percent of the law school entrants at many law schools. It is unbelievable to me that
we were a profession, at the time when I entered it, that did not give women a fair
shake.”

In addition, he said, Sarah did what
an increasing number of new law stu-
dents are doing – she entered law school
after working for a time after college, in
her case in a prosecutor's office working
with crime victims.

“It is right that we should have pub-
licly funded higher education in the

law,” said Wesley, who was a New York
State Court of Appeals judge before be-
ing elevated to the federal bench last
year. “It is right because so many of us
come from humble backgrounds and
the public university is the only pathway
upward. It is right that the University at
Buffalo Law School should maintain its
commitment to all New Yorkers, whether they be black or white or Lat-
ino, of all colors. There is room in the inn
for all of us.

“But right now there is truly only one
door. And so as we sit on Park Avenue in
Manhattan, the greatest city in the world
in what I think is the greatest state in the
world, let us take pride in the fact that
the University at Buffalo has fulfilled its
responsibility. Let us take pride in the
fact that you – and now I, through my
daughter – will share a commitment to
excellence and a commitment to avail-
ability that should never be watered
from.”

1974 graduate of Cornell
Law School, Judge Wesley
first joined the law firm of
Harris, Beach & Wilcox,
then joined Welch, Streb
and Porter where he became a partner
in 1977. In 1979, Wesley was appointed
assistant counsel to Assembly Republi-
can Leader James L. Emery. For the
next four years, he managed Assembly-
man Emery's legislative programs, con-

Law Alumni Association President Terrance P. Flynn '88 and Hon. Julio M. Fuentes '75,
U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, converse at the New York City luncheon.

In 1994, Gov. Mario Cuomo appoint-
ed Judge Wesley to the Appellate Di-
vision of the Supreme Court for the
Fourth Department. Gov. George Pata-
ki then nominated Judge Wesley to the
Court of Appeals, and he was con-
irmed by a unanimous vote of the
On March 5, 2003, President Bush
nominated Wesley to the 2nd Circuit
Court of Appeals.

Vice Dean Alan S. Carrel updated
the school's New York City alumni on
recent developments at the Law
School, saying that major strides in
quality have come about largely
through the efforts of Dean Nils Olsen
Jr. and with the support of the alumni.

“The alumni are really why we have
been able to accomplish what we have
been able to accomplish,” Carrel said.
“A law school program of this quality,
with strong faculty, extensive course
selection, upgraded technology and
small class sizes, is expensive to pro-
vide. The state's contribution does not
come close to allowing us to provide
many of these things. It is the $700,000
that you are contributing annually to
the Law School, and the $12 million
that we raised recently in our capital
campaign, that are really allowing us to
do what we are doing.

Among the key points of progress
Carrel pointed to were “a rigorous and
highly effective Research and Writing
curriculum”; January bridge courses
taught by giants in the profession”; a
working courtroom that “distinguishes
us from every other law school in the
country”; and a heightened emphasis
on recruiting quality students, resulting
in a 40 percent increase in applications
last year.

“I love walking out of my office and
talking to students,” Carrel said. “I ask
them how they are doing at the Law
School. They are so happy there, and
they cannot talk enough about the
things that are happening. Everyone
seems to think they are part of a very
good law school that is just getting bet-

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