

10-1-2005

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UB Law Forum

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Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2005) "At the Head of the Class: Alumni Who Are Law School Faculty Members," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 18 : No. 1 , Article 36.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol18/iss1/36

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At the head of the class

Alumni who are law school faculty members

One measure of a law school is the quality of the legal practitioners it produces. Another is its list of alumni who have gone on themselves to teach at law schools far and wide. For UB Law, that list is long. Nearly 30 alumni identify themselves as professors, lecturers, librarians and deans; dozens more alumni who are practicing lawyers teach as adjuncts. Two alumnae – Dianne Avery '82 and Elizabeth Mensch '78 – are professors at UB Law School. Others range geographically from California to Florida, Canada to Texas.

UB Law Forum caught up with a handful of these professors to ask what's new in their professional lives – and how the UB Law experience made a difference for them.

Abe Abramovsky '70
*Professor
Fordham University School of Law
New York City*

After UB Law, Abramovsky earned his LL.M and J.S.D. from Columbia. At Fordham since 1979, Abramovsky teaches criminal law, international criminal law, organized crime, complex criminal litigation and Jewish law. He also handles some criminal appeals cases. "According to some, I have been quite successful," Abramovsky says. "It keeps me current, and each activity helps the other. The practice of interesting appellate issues helps the teaching, and the teaching helps when I argue the issues to the courts."

Since 1981, he has written a column on criminal law for the *New York Law Journal*, dealing with issues of substantive criminal law and criminal procedure. He also has written 46 law review articles, and recently his article arguing against anonymous juries was cited by the U.S. District Court, 11th Circuit, and the Kansas Supreme Court.

"I very much enjoyed my UB Law School experience," Abramovsky says, "and I always look forward to coming back to the reunions."

William Barker '77
*Professor
Dickinson School of Law
Carlisle, Pa.*

Since 2002, Barker has had a standing appointment with the law faculty at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he has taught international, European and United Kingdom tax. In the last two years, he has received two Fulbright grants to teach and study in South Africa and Latvia. Barker's research focuses on international tax and tax avoidance issues, especially in respect to developing and transitional economies.

Teaching, he says, "is much more fun than being a student. Two great benefits are helping students achieve success in a difficult but fascinating subject, and helping in a small way

others in different countries with the important issues confronting their tax systems."

He adds: "I had some absolutely fabulous professors at Buffalo. From Adolf Homburger I learned to appreciate the greater implications of law from a global perspective. From Kenneth Joyce, who is simply the best, I learned the pure delight that working with the law and with students could be."



Alberto Manuel Benitez '86
*Professor of clinical law and director of the Immigration Clinic
George Washington University Law School
Washington, D.C.*

On Oct. 18, the Hispanic Bar Association of D.C. awarded its Hugh A. Johnson Jr. Memorial Award to the Immigration Clinic that Benitez directs. The award recognizes the service provided to the alien community by the Immigration Clinic since its inception in 1979.

Also, Benitez's first casebook, *An Introduction to the U.S. Legal System: Fundamental Cases and Materials*, is scheduled for publication this year by Carolina Academic Press.

"When I was at UB," he says, "I never imagined that nearly 20 years later I would be doing this kind of work. I have so much fun that I am amazed that I am paid to do this. I have a hand in both the theory and the practice of immigration law. In the fall Immigration Law I course, I teach my students the intricacies of the Immigration & Nationality Act. My course covers the range of issues in immigration, including immigrant and non-immigrant visas, asylum, citizenship, and re-



Robin Barnes '89

*Professor
University of Connecticut School of Law
Hartford, Conn.*

In her 14th year at UConn Law School, where she went to teach after earning an L.L.M. in Wisconsin, Barnes has just completed her first casebook, for Carolina Academic Press. It features the most controversial subjects in the debate surrounding privacy and individual rights. She is writing a second book, *The Caroline Verdict*, based on a paper that she delivered at a media law conference in Mainz, Germany, this summer. It recommends remedies for widespread defamation of the rich and famous under American media law by contrasting those found in the European Union.

“My life as a professor far exceeds my expectations,” Barnes says. “I truly love what I do, and I have the audacity to believe that I am actually making a difference in the world. The late Denise Carty-Bennia and Muhammad Kenyatta provided a great deal of the original inspiration. I have come to truly appreciate the superior legal training that I received before joining the academy. Guyora Binder provided superb guidance in my quest to become a law professor. Under his tutelage I graduated with honors, received an L.L.M. from the University of Wisconsin after serving as a Hastie Fellow, and *Harvard Law Review* published my first essay.

“I have grown even more committed to the same ideals that I held during law school. I now teach three courses in advanced constitutional law: Free Speech; Individual Rights; and Civil and Political Rights. It has been challenging at times in the current political climate domestically as well as the war in Iraq. Yet I go right in there one semester after another. We roll up our sleeves, dig deep and have those conversations that seem all too scarce in many quarters. Some days we all leave class in need of Extra Strength Excedrin, but I would not have it any other way.”

removal. In the Immigration Clinic, I supervise eight students per semester as we represent aliens in immigration matters.

“My alums have gone on to successful careers in government, public interest and private practice. My greatest satisfaction is when my alums contact me after graduation. I am honored that they consult with me on personal and professional matters, if they invite me to their weddings, and when they e-mail me pictures of their newborns. On those occasions, I think that maybe I am good at this.”

At UB Law, Benitez was a student in the Immigration Clinic, directed by Kathy Rimar, and spent two summers doing immigration law in Houston and Chicago. “I learned from, and I recall with respect, all my UB professors,” he says, “but a few who stick in my mind are Virginia Leary, Guyora Binder,

Alan Freeman, Betty Mensch and Jacob Hyman.

“What I most appreciate is that UB stimulated my thinking. It trained my mind to be critical, and to challenge established legal norms and principles. I’ve had the privilege of teaching at Northwestern, Chicago-Kent, and since 1996, George Washington. These are all top-ranked law schools. But UB is their equal in terms of the quality of its faculty, staff, curriculum and students.”

Cheryl Block '79

*Professor
George Washington University Law School
Washington, D.C.*

Block has concentrated her teaching and research in tax, now expanded to include federal budget issues. Her recent articles have included one

on “pathologies” at the intersection of the tax and budget-making process, and another on Enron-like scandals in which she argues that Congress uses some questionable accounting itself.

She also has studied and written lately about the federal response to Hurricane Katrina. In *Washington Post* op-ed pieces, Block has argued that using the tax code for relief – such as giving businesses and entrepreneurs tax breaks for investing in the area’s so-called Gulf Opportunity Zones, or GO Zones – is misguided public policy. Citing the nation’s experience with similar “Liberty Zones” established in New York City after 9/11, Block argues that there is little evidence that such zones help an area’s economic recovery. “You have got a disaster on your hands,” she says. “Why go with something for which the evidence is inconclusive?”

Block says she got into her area of specialization by accident. “When I was at the Law School, tax was a required course,” she says. “I am not even sure I would have taken the course had it not been required. I found Lou Del Cotto and Ken Joyce so inspiring; they got me really excited about tax. I realized there is so much policy involved, and it ties in so much to my interest in political science. It comes as quite a surprise to me that tax is what I do.

“The one thing that I recall about UB Law is just the extraordinary quality of the teaching.”

Mary Anne Bobinski '87

*Dean and professor
University of British Columbia Faculty of Law
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

Nationally prominent in the field of health law, Bobinski became dean of the University of British Columbia Faculty of Law in 2003. After 15 years of teaching U.S. health care law at the University of Houston Law Center, she began teaching Canadian health law last year. Among her specializations is an interest in the legal aspects of HIV.

Of her UB Law experience, Bobinski says: “I was fortunate to be able to participate in a joint J.D.-Ph.D. program under the auspices of the Baldy Center. I therefore enjoyed a mix of law and public policy courses which continue to be very helpful to me today.

Faculty

"It is difficult to mention particular faculty members, because virtually all of them had an influence on my current career. But David Engel was an inspiring professor and helped me to land my first job while in law school. Errol Meidinger taught a very influential course on research methods. Nils Olsen led the legal research and writing program in which I gained my first teaching experience. Tom Headrick's Corporations class was amazingly interesting and intellectually challenging. Finally, Lee Albert was a wonderful mentor in health law, my major field of scholarly interest."

Charles Cercone '84

*Associate dean and professor
Thomas M. Cooley Law School
Lansing, Mich.*

Cercone entered academia after practicing litigation for 12 years in New York City and then for a period in Buffalo. As associate dean of faculty at Thomas M. Cooley Law School, he manages 100 faculty members, including issues of hiring, promotion and sabbaticals. In the classroom, he teaches civil procedure.

A recent article by Cercone in the *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* dealt with the frequent practical problems that confront federal courts when they are faced with work product claims.

At UB, he says, "the person who really inspired me to teach was Professor Del Cotto. He was the best teacher I ever had – his course itself, and how he taught and how he inspired me, how he dealt with students. Aside from a powerful intellect, he had a great classroom presence. He is, to me, the model of a great teacher."

Linda Fentiman '75

*Professor
Pace University School of Law
White Plains, N.Y.*

A recent highlight for Fentiman was the chance to teach at the University of Warsaw, Poland, on a 2003 Fulbright scholarship. There she taught American criminal law and a course in comparative health law and bioethics.

"Just because we do it in the United States does not mean that is the only way to do it," she says. "Issues are han-



**Professor Dianne Avery '82
at commencement**

Dianne Avery '82

*Professor
University at Buffalo Law School
Buffalo*

Avery, who took a stint as UB Law's vice dean for academic affairs from 1998-2003, has returned to what she likes doing best: teaching and scholarship. Avery's most recent major publication is as co-author, with Robert Belton, Maria L. Ontiveros and Roberto L. Corrada, of the casebook *Employment Discrimination Law: Cases and Materials on Equality in the Workplace*. Published in 2004, the book is the seventh edition of this casebook. It is part of a series of casebooks on labor and employment law

topics authored by members of the Labor Law Group, a scholarly association.

She is currently working on an article on legal challenges to sex-based dress and grooming codes in the workplace. It will examine the role that gender stereotypes have played in constraining effective legal and market challenges to employer prerogatives in this area.

"Throughout American history, employers have been free to impose dress and grooming codes on their employees, including policies that are expressly based on sex. Although Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 promised to eliminate sex discrimination in employment, judicial decisions resolving employee challenges to sex-based dress and grooming codes have produced an incoherent body of law. Consequently, employers are generally free to refuse to hire or to fire employees who are unwilling to conform to these sex-based policies.

"My current research explores the historical role that gender stereotypes have played in constraining effective legal and market challenges to employer prerogatives in this area."

dled differently in Poland. There is a different health care system and different values. A number of the women in the class were really very attracted to the American model of reproductive freedom. That was just wonderful.

"I started to understand how exciting and attractive the American approach to legal education is. In Poland, students are lectured to in large lecture halls; they have virtually no interaction with the professor; on the final exam, which is oral, they can be tested on anything, for example three questions from a 900-page criminal code. The idea that there could be give-and-take was thrilling to them. It really energized me as a teacher."

Before beginning her teaching career, Fentiman earned an LL.M. at Harvard.

At UB Law School, Fentiman says, "I had really great professors who were very inspiring and rigorous and challenging, but also took the time to mentor me as a student. In the second semester of my first year, I did an independent research project with one of

my professors that was very exciting, very challenging.

"As a student, I was just working on learning the doctrines, learning the basic skill of applying the law to the facts. As a professor I have to have mastery of the doctrine, and I also get to see the cosmic interconnectedness of everything. Also, I have to make that law accessible to students who have very different learning styles. I try to teach with an awareness of those learning differences. You have to make sure that you are not just talking, you are also making your points visually."



Elizabeth B. Mensch '78

*SUNY Distinguished
Teaching Professor
University at Buffalo
Law School
Buffalo*

Last year, Mensch was named a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor in recognition of her outstanding teaching on the under-

graduate and professional levels. She joined the UB Law faculty in 1980 after earning an LL.M. from Harvard and a stint on the faculty of the University of Miami Law School. At UB she teaches courses in legal history; church/state relations; abortion; law, morality and politics; and contracts and torts – the latter courses are required of all first-year law students.

Mensch co-authored, with her late husband, Alan Freeman, also a UB professor of law, the book *The Politics of Virtue: Is Abortion Debatable?* which

advocates introducing theological thought into the public debate on abortion to bring about a compromise between the two sides of the volatile issue.

“The Supreme Court seems unable to resolve the legal dilemma of church/state relations with anything approaching doctrinal clarity,” Mensch says. “The intractability of the dilemma reflects a long and complex history of both separation and interconnection – a history that reaches back through centuries and continues to inform cur-

rent controversies. My research does not suggest a solution to the ‘problem’ of church and state. Instead, it explores the complexity of social, economic and intellectual interrelationships that have made theology a stubbornly central part of the history of American culture.”

Dennis Patterson '80

*Distinguished professor
Rutgers University School of Law
Camden, N.J.*

A Ph.D. as well as a J.D., “I have spent the last 18 years as an academic,” Patterson notes. “In that time, I have enjoyed my work immensely. I have especially enjoyed the people I have met and the many places my interests have taken me.

“I practiced and taught commercial law and legal philosophy for many years. In the last few years, I have developed an interest in trade law and international law. I am currently working on a book with a colleague, titled *Statecraft, Trade and the Order of States*. In an article-length version of the book (to appear in December in the *University of Chicago International Law Journal*), we make the case that the nature of the state is changing and that these changes will impact world trade in ways few realize.”

In the spring of this year, Patterson spent three months teaching and lecturing at the University of Trento, Italy, and was asked to return for three weeks in November. In addition, he often teaches in Austria and Germany.

“My UB Law education was first-rate,” Patterson says. “This was confirmed for me when I clerked for the chief justice of the Maine Supreme Court. The most important things I learned as a law student were writing well and how to make arguments. I especially learned from Professors Konefsky and Katz. Konefsky taught contracts in a way that I have always tried to emulate. He made connections in the materials that I always learned from.

“Going to class was always fun and interesting. But there is little to equal the life of a law professor. I have as much time as I need to pursue my interests. As a student, there was often little time for anything but study.”

Jerry Hesch '70

*Adjunct professor
University of Miami School of Law
Miami, Fla.*

After 20 years as a full-time law professor, Hesch became a practicing tax lawyer, but he continues as an adjunct at the University of Miami, teaching courses in the graduate programs in taxation and estate planning.



Last January he taught a one-week bridge course at UB Law School, and intends to do the same this January.

“I learned that the key to a successful adviser to clients is not how much you know, but the ability to communicate that knowledge in a manner the client can understand,” Hesch says. “The communication skills I developed in the classroom have proven to be invaluable in the practice of tax law.

“In this age of specialization, I have been emphasizing the need for tax practitioners to look at the broader picture and integrate the different tax disciplines. Estate planning lawyers frequently do not consider income tax planning, and income tax lawyers frequently do not consider estate planning opportunities. My recent publications have stressed the need to integrate these two tax objectives along with the necessary financial analysis. I have been lecturing around the country on the integration of the income tax and estate planning disciplines and how to use financial software to more effectively communicate tax planning ideas. I will be presenting a paper on this topic next January at the University of Miami Heckerling Institute on Estate Planning.”

Hesch is co-author of a law school casebook on federal income taxation, now in its third edition: *The Individual Tax Base: Cases, Problems and Policies in Federal Taxation*. “If some of the materials in this book sound familiar to UB Law alumni,” he says, “I suspect they originated from my class notes from courses with Ken Joyce and Louis Del Cotto, both of whom influenced my teaching.

“From Ken I saw how students appreciated a teacher who is always enthusiastic and excited about what he is teaching, even if it took two hours in a snowstorm to get to the Law School. From Lou, it became apparent that the key is to master the concepts and show how seemingly disparate principles work together. Other professors at Buffalo instilled the notion that even though law was an ever-changing discipline, fundamental legal principles were still relevant and now had to be applied to ever-changing societal norms.”