New Names for Three Familiar Classrooms

UB Law Forum
Leadership Giving

New names for three familiar classrooms

As the modernization and renovation of John Lord O'Brian Hall moves forward, three newly refurbished first-floor classrooms have been named for generous donors.

Room 104 was named the William A. Niese Classroom in recognition of Niese, a Class of 1961 graduate. Nearby, Room 102 was named the Anthony J. Renaldo Classroom in recognition of a gift from Renaldo, Class of 1950. And Room 106 has been renamed the Hodgson Russ Classroom in honor of a Buffalo law in recognition of a major gift from the firm.

"The Law School is doing some pioneering work as far as this University is concerned," said Professor William R. Greiner, who was University at Buffalo president during the recently completed, $291 million Campaign for UB: Generation to Generation. "In the last decade, we have been working very hard at connecting with our alumni and our friends, in this case some of our most prominent and best-known alumni, and they have responded in kind with generous gifts that support the Law School. The future of the University is going to depend ever more heavily on this kind of supplementation."

Said Dean Nils Olsen: "There is some truth to the saying that you are what you look like. Through the generosity of alumni, we are restoring the professional environment of the Law School to the level that our students deserve. We are well on the way to presenting an appearance that is commensurate with our quality."

Renaldo is a prominent Buffalo attorney who served as a member of the Law School’s Campaign Steering Committee and chaired the school’s 2002-03 Annual Campaign. A founding member of the Law Alumni Association, he also serves on the Dean’s Advisory Council. His generous gift to the Law School was his contribution to the University’s capital campaign.

An attorney with a national reputation in zoning law, Renaldo has long been regarded as Western New York’s “guru” in this area of the law, and has taught zoning law as an adjunct professor at the Law School. He also is a member of the Dean’s Advisory Council and began the highly successful tradition of holding New York City luncheons in conjunction with the state bar meetings, single-handedly planning those gatherings for 18 years.

Renaldo’s work is credited with making Amherst a flourishing, progressive, beautiful community whose citizens have a high quality of life, excellent schools and little crime, even as surrounding communities have struggled. "He is known as a lawyer who gets deals done and as a founder of modern Amherst," Dean Olsen said. "His genius, charisma and persuasive skills have created thousands of jobs in Western New York and have kept us from losing thousands of others."

In addition, Renaldo helped found the thriving UB Law Alumni Association, served in all of its offices over the years, and was one of the longest serving alumni on the UBLAA’s board of directors.

Niese is retired as senior vice president and general counsel of Times Mirror, after a 34-year career at the publishing corporation. At the Law School, he was an honorary co-chair of the University’s capital campaign, contributing a major gift, and served on the steering committee of the Law School’s campaign. He was a member of the President’s Constituency Group at UB and a former chair of the Law School Dean’s Advisory Council.

In that capacity, he was instrumental in focusing attention on the condition of O’Brien Hall. "He convinced me to make the building’s renovation a high priority," Olsen said, "and the many improvements we have made since then have enhanced the school significantly."
At the dedication of the William A. Niese Classroom, Olsen noted that at UB Law School, Niese "was the best student in a very bright class. He was editor in chief of the Law Review, received 11 separate academic awards for outstanding performance, graduated first in his class, and was cum laude."

Though his professional career was spent on the West coast, Niese maintained a strong interest in the Law School.

"I can think of no graduate who has had a larger impact on our recent successes than Bill," Olsen said. "He joined the Dean's Advisory Council in 1996, and his ability, commitment and vision were immediately apparent. He revitalized the Council by broadening and enhancing its membership and by changing its structure. He also sent a four-page letter to Barry Boyer, the dean at the time, describing the role the Council could play in improving the school.

"Bill was soon chair of the Council. At about that time I became dean. He convinced me to make the building's renovation a high priority, and the many improvements we have made since then have enhanced the school significantly.

"Bill is a quick study. He immediately understood our strengths and weaknesses, and he worked with us to develop plans to improve our school. He realized we had to develop a solid revenue base, do a better job of recruiting students, retain our strong faculty, change our grading system, charge more tuition, supplement students who could not afford the increase, and become a national rather than a regional school.

"With his help, all of that is being accomplished."

Continued on Page 80
Leadership Giving

Continued from Page 79

The Hodgson Russ LLP Classroom was so named because of the firm’s generous gifts during Generation to Generation: The Campaign for UB.

"The Law School is pleased to create this permanent and visible tribute to a firm that has been an integral part of our school for decades. There is no way we can adequately thank you for all you have done and continue to do to make this a great law school," Dean Nils Olsen said at the Oct. 25 ceremony.

"We could not have enhanced this classroom without your assistance. You have consistently provided generous financial support. You sponsor numerous student, alumni and Law School events annually. You have made major gifts to fund our Research and Writing Program, the Professor William R. Greiner Scholarship Fund and improvements to our building. Not only do many individuals at Hodgson Russ help us, your firm as a whole has been one of the Law School’s best friends. Whenever we need something, you are there!"

Said Gary M. Schober, president of Hodgson Russ: "With 78 graduates of the University at Buffalo Law School currently practicing at our firm, we are proud of our association with the Law School and grateful that those fine attorneys chose to pursue their careers at Hodgson Russ."

Beyond financial support, the dean pointed to several ways Hodgson Russ has been intimately involved with the success of the Law School:

• Hodgson Russ has been interviewing and successfully recruiting our top students for many years. Your hiring focuses not only on intellect and potential to succeed in the profession, but also on values, integrity and character. That is why your attorneys are not only accomplished professionals, but are also terrific people."

• Many of our graduates have played leadership roles in your firm. With each new group of officers and board members, there is always a high percentage of UB alumni."

• "Our relationship with our alumni at Hodgson continues after graduation. The Dean’s Advisory Council, the Law Alumni Association and our adjunct faculty depend heavily upon your firm for talent. Many firm members who are not UB Law graduates have also played key roles in the life and development of our school."

• "In addition, your attorneys judge moot court competitions, provide mentors for our Mentoring Program, help the Career Services Office prepare our students, assist Admissions in attracting students and make calls at our phonathons. And for more than 20 years you have graciously opened your offices and supplied phones for our alumni and students to make calls at our phonathon."

• "Finally, for over a decade you have hosted a high-quality reception to welcome first-year students to the Buffalo legal community. You give the students the opportunity to network with many of the best lawyers in Western New York — while providing much better food than they usually eat!"

Renaming of the three classrooms was approved by the UB Council.