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Alumni Association



Honorable Victoria Graffeo, New York State Court of Appeals

A Word From On High

Court of Appeals judge addresses New York City alumni

A member of the state's highest court was in New York's biggest city on Jan. 28 to meet with Big Apple alumni of UB Law School. Judge Victoria Graffeo addressed the down-state alumni group at a lunchtime gathering in the famed Waldorf Astoria hotel.

Graffeo mused about the odd ways people's paths cross over the course of their careers, and noted: "The truth is, you never really know where the people you work with and deal with will end up in years to come. How you handle yourself professionally—and how you develop your reputation—is so important.

"Every time I speak to a group of law students, I try to emphasize that," she said, "because I believe that integri-



ty, courtesy and reputation are paramount to our success as attorneys and to the public's view of what we do as lawyers."

The judge spoke as well about current attorneys' role in advising those

Left to right: Denise E. O'Donnell '82, William Flynn and Dennis C. Vacco '78

who will follow them into the profession. "I have been blessed to have worked with many talented mentors over the course of my career," Graffeo said. "I have been fortunate to work in all three branches of government, and I worked in private practice before that.

"I think we all need to remind ourselves that we need to put the time and effort into also serving as mentors for the next generation of lawyers who will work in the state of New York. It is im-

portant for us to carry on that tradition." Those mentoring opportunities, she said, include at the Law School, with its practice-oriented curriculum and manifold clinical opportunities.

An undergraduate product of the State University of New York at Oneonta, the judge spoke strongly in support of the SUNY system.

"I am a firm believer that it is essential that we maintain a very strong

system of public education in New York State, particularly higher education," she said. "SUNY has provided the promise of opportunity for so many families who would not otherwise be able to see their children achieve that.

"I know it has made a tremendous impact in my family. My sister, my brother, I and my stepbrother were all SUNY graduates. My husband in the last few years has earned his degree in political science at Rockefeller College, which is part of the SUNY system. My grandparents were from Italy, and I think it was amazing to them that all their grandchildren became college graduates.

"We need to make sure SUNY stays healthy and strong and competitive, because it is a channel for so many people to achieve so much."

Graffeo also put in a good word for the Court of Appeals' April session in Buffalo, and acknowledged the court's initiative to revise the rules of practice for practitioners appearing before it. "We are trying to make those rules a little more understandable and reflect what you have to do when you are making an appeal," she said.

"We need to make sure SUNY stays healthy and strong and competitive, because it is a channel for so many people to achieve so much."



Honorable Erin M. Peradotto '84



Far left, left to right: Executive Director Ilene R. Fleischmann and Honorable Barbara Howe '80

Left: President Terrance P. Flynn '88



Dean Nils Olsen addresses the luncheon crowd at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.