Leveraging the Law School for Good

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Shatorah N. Donovan ’12: “The Annual Fund goes toward helping attract high-level students and supporting the programming that enables all the students to get the core legal education they want and graduate practice-ready.”

Leveraging the school for good

O ne lawyer doing good things can make a world of difference.

A graduating class full of lawyers out to change the world – they can make a real difference.

That’s the leverage that Shatorah N. Donovan ’12 is counting on as she settles into her new position. Donovan, who recently joined the Law School as assistant director of development in charge of the Annual Fund, says she made the move from private practice back to O’Brian Hall because she sees the potential in supporting active, socially aware future attorneys and the good they can do.

“To be able to work with alumni and advocate for the Law School seemed like a natural fit for me,” says Donovan, who has a master’s degree in social work along with a J.D. “It’s about impact. The impact I can have here is compounded, because if I’m able to help a student who otherwise wouldn’t have been able to afford law school, that student is able to go out and practice and help other people.”

In reaching out to alumni, Donovan also draws on her own experience as a law student. “I had an extremely positive experience here,” she says. “They let law fit into your personality and your lifestyle – there are so many different ways at the school to structure your education. I also liked that there is a really open faculty and administration, and a ton of volunteer opportunities.”

The Annual Fund is the Law School’s signature fundraising appeal, an effort that involves outreach by student callers throughout the academic year. Over the past eight years, it has raised more than $1 million each year – support that Donovan says is crucial in multiple ways.

“The Annual Fund goes toward helping attract high-level students and supporting the programming that enables all the students to get the core legal education they want and graduate practice-ready,” she says. “These gifts go to the Law School in very critical ways, such as scholarships, alternative legal programs like moot court competitions, and our clinical program.” Donors with a particular interest can designate the use of their gift. One thoughtful donor, she says, even gives an amount each year that goes to buy bagels and coffee for the students as they grapple with final exams.

She also notes that gifts to the Annual Fund count toward the overall $30 million goal of the Campaign for SUNY Buffalo Law School, which is entering its final phase next year.

While she was in law school, Donovan worked as a law clerk for the University’s immigration counsel, processing immigrant and non-immigrant visas for the University’s international professionals. After graduation, she passed the bar exam, did some contract legal work and worked at a small firm, then joined with her former supervisor at UB, Oscar Budde, in his small practice doing immigration law and corporate start-up legal services.

She’s continuing to exercise her legal skills by taking some pro bono cases, representing immigrants seeking asylum in the United States for political or social reasons. “I’m not giving up the opportunity to help people,” she says.

But mainly she’s focused on leveraging the most good from SUNY Buffalo Law, at the same time honoring what she says the school has done for her. “I’ve gotten so much help from this law school in terms of scholarships, academic support and mentorships,” she says. “I just want to be able to relay that to other people. I really enjoy being an advocate for the Law School and helping persuade people that giving to the Law School means that they really are helping the students and in turn helping the community.”

Outside the office, Donovan – who just recently got married – leads spinning classes at a women’s fitness club.

To learn more about the Annual Fund, or to donate, Donovan can be reached at (716) 645-9048 or snr4@buffalo.edu.

To go to the website, visit www.law.buffalo.edu/giving.