More Support for Mentoring

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In a challenging legal marketplace, it’s more important than ever that our law students have every tool at hand to help them find their niche in the legal world. That’s why UB School of Law is putting additional muscle to work to make sure our students begin their career search with all of the right connections.

A new initiative, a joint effort between the Career Services Office, the Office of Alumni Relations and our incredibly engaged alumni network, expands upon the school’s existing mentor program offering our students more opportunities to meet with and learn from the seasoned pros.

Ilene Fleischmann, Vice Dean for Alumni and Executive Director of the Law Alumni Association, has assembled a group of experienced and connected graduates from the Buffalo legal community to partner with our newest attorneys seeking that first post-law school job. The initiative, now in a limited pilot phase, will enable alumni mentors to draw on their personal connections in support of our graduates’ job search, and extends to coaching the job-seekers on interview skills and search strategies.

Lisa Patterson, Vice Dean for Career Services, says that, typically, 30 to 40 percent of students graduate with a job offer in hand. For others, an employment offer awaits after they’ve passed the bar. Those without a job waiting in the wings can benefit immensely from some professional guidance and an ally within the legal community.

The new 3L and graduate mentorship program, Patterson says, involves “some rather high-level hands-on matching. We have to know the alumnus and the student pretty well in this situation, so that we understand their needs and can make a good match. Sometimes that means reaching out to them and finding out what those needs are, and how the alums might be able to help.”

In addition to 3Ls and recent graduates, 1Ls are also the beneficiaries of a renewed focus on mentoring. For several years, participation in the first-year mentor program was optional. But under William MacDonald, the law school’s new Director of Academic Success, participation in the 1L mentoring program is a required part of his first-year Legal Profession course.

Alumni and students sign up for a mentor in December, and mentor matches are made in January. This year, a reception for mentors and their matches will be held on Jan. 31 in the Center for Tomorrow on UB’s North Campus from 6 to 8 p.m.

To accommodate all 144 first-year students, the Law Alumni Association has taken ownership of the 1Ls, says Fleischmann. Led by Megan Gomez ’05, a LAA Mentoring Committee has reached out to other legal organizations to recruit mentors, including members of the Monroe County Bar Association, the Western New York Chapter of the Women’s Bar Association, and the Minority Bar Association of Western New York.

Guidance and convenient online training will be provided so even those who have never mentored before have everything they need to develop a great mentoring relationship. A mentoring page on the law school’s website is in development and will include helpful tips, a Q&A and webinars, and will enable students to connect with mentors of their choice throughout the country via video.

“How hopefully, the matches will stick throughout the students’ law school years,” says Patterson. “Our alumni are our greatest asset and it is wonderful to see students connecting with them.”

How YOU Can Help

Have you learned a thing or two along the way?

Volunteer your time and expertise by mentoring a law student as he or she transitions to the legal profession. To participate in our mentor program, contact:

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Ashley R. Lowry ’09 with Danielle G. Chamberlain ’18