New Support for New York: Major Gift by David Franasiak ’78 Strengthens A Signature Program

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New support for New York
Major gift by David Franasiak ’78 strengthens a signature program

“It’s a little like real estate,” says David Franasiak ’78, referring to the Law School’s New York City Program in Finance and Law, of which he has been a principal supporter in both time and resources. “Location, location, location. New York City is part of New York State, and we are the only public law school in the entire SUNY system, so it’s important for SUNY Buffalo Law School to be there.”

And the results are clear: In the nine years since the program was established, “I’ve been told that the quality of students applying to the school has increased because of this program, and placements are up because of this program. I think it is an important program for the school and an important program for the students, both those considering applying and those who find work because of it. Dean Mutua’s vision is that the program would become self-sustaining, and there is good reason to do that down the road.”

Toward that end, Franasiak and his wife, Mary Pat, who holds a master’s degree in business administration from UB, have committed $200,000 in new giving in support of the New York City program. Combined with their previous annual giving, they have earmarked a total of $340,000 in support.

Franasiak, senior partner on the Executive Committee of the Washington, D.C., law firm Williams & Jensen, works on public policy issues for clients including corporations, not-for-profit organizations, accounting firms, broker dealers, hedge funds, financial institutions and associations. Previously he worked on similar issues with Ernst & Young, and before that held positions with British Petroleum, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a major chemical company, congressional staff and local governments.

Through those varied responsibilities, he says, the lessons of SUNY Buffalo Law have remained. “I did learn to think like a lawyer,” he says, “which is particularly helpful in a highly regulated industry like chemicals, but in business generally, too. It certainly works in government, because after all, the government writes the laws.

“When I get a client, I try to understand every detail of their business. Once I understand their business and I understand the problem, then I make sure I understand every aspect of the applicable law. Legal training gives you another way of analyzing issues, problems, and of identifying solutions.

“What I do is like the game of golf: You just play it as it lies. I’m in Washington, so I know what’s going on politically. It’s not always going to be exactly perfect, so you have to find ways to navigate around both sides of the aisle.”

And of his support for the New York City program, for which he also teaches a seminar each year, Franasiak says: “It is important to step up, because the dean has recognized the importance of this program and maybe even the possibility of expanding it beyond financial services. New York City is the center of the financial services industry. That is what it is known for. If I applied to the University of California, I probably would want a program related to entertainment, film or Silicon Valley, because that is what they are known for.

“We are in New York State, and this is what we are known for – financial services.”