A Focus on Scholarship: Vice Dean Meidinger Advocates for UB Law Scholars

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A focus on scholarship

Vice Dean Meidinger advocates for UB Law scholars

"The world of law school scholarship is expanding very rapidly. All of our competitors are stressing scholarship. This makes it more important that we do a good job at disseminating our full profile, so that it is clear that in this growing cacophony of research-oriented law schools, Buffalo stands out."

So says Professor Errol Meidinger, vice dean for research and faculty development, whose administrative role increasingly is devoted to getting the word out about UB Law faculty research and publications.

The research and writing that UB Law faculty members do, he says, benefits the school in two ways.

"The value added that faculty bring is to develop innovative and incisive understandings of the legal system and of legal institutions," Meidinger says. "That is why we have academic law schools. If you have professors at the cutting edge, then what students learn is that much more helpful over the long term.

"Anybody can repeat the nostrums of the past. The quality of the school is heavily dependent on having faculty members who, day in and day out, are trying to develop deeper understandings.

"Second, faculty scholarship is the currency for respect and recognition in the larger world. What matters is that you are seen as generating new ideas and deeper understandings. But historically we have not been very good about promoting ourselves."

That is changing, especially with the now-annual publication of a UB Law faculty scholarship brochure, created in the Law School Office of Communications, that is sent to all legal academics, partners of hiring law firms, judges, students and "anyone else interested in the work that is being done here."

The brochure, Meidinger says, lists recent publications by UB Law faculty, but also describes what they are working on and where their research is headed.

"It allows the reader to see what a very interesting and impressive collection of faculty members we have, how diverse their work is and how much of the broad world of legal research is represented here," he says.

Beyond the faculty scholarship brochure, the Law School has expanded its workshop series in which faculty exchange ideas about their current research; begun a Buffalo Legal Studies Series as part of the online Social Sciences Research Network; and worked to keep faculty fully informed of outside opportunities for research funding.

"Scholarship benefits everybody," Meidinger says. "A serious research program improves the teaching for students, sometimes in fairly hard-to-see ways. It is a core part of the mission of the university-based law school, and it is absolutely essential to our stature in the larger law school world."