



ALUMNI MENTORS OFFER REAL-WORLD CONTACT

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The School of Law's Mentor Program is drawing enthusiastic responses from both students and alumni. The program pairs first-year law students with alumni for support, guidance and resources and allows students to explore professional opportunities.

"It's a great way for alumni to stay connected to the School of Law," says Liz McFarlane, director of alumni relations. "The students benefit by having a real-world contact."

About half of the current 235 first-year students have taken part in the mentor program, which has grown by small steps since it began eight years ago, McFarlane notes. Each year, she sends sign-up sheets to 2,500 alumni, or about one-third of the alumni base. Every first-year student also is given an application. Then, the alumni office works in conjunction with the student affairs office to best match mentors with students. The matches primarily are based on areas of practice or interest, McFarlane explains.

Although the mentor and student only are required to commit to a one-semester relationship, some pairs continue to stay in contact.

Sandra McLelland, a second-year student from Philadelphia, still keeps in touch with her mentor, Ann Hoffman '72, of Washington, D.C.

"I asked for someone from the field of labor and employment law," McLelland says. "I was just hoping to speak with somebody who went through law school."

McLelland worked as a legal assistant,

Edward Blanton '60, of Glenarm, Md., had retired from private practice after training young lawyers during much of his career, in which he specialized in corporate and tax law. "I just thought I would like to maintain contact with someone who was coming into the profession," he explains. He was paired with Adam Beckerink, of Jamestown, N.Y.,

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office manager and recruiter for a law firm and said she had a narrow view of what to do with a law degree. She said Hoffman, who has worked in private practice, government and for labor unions, showed her other opportunities.

Hoffman reassured McLelland that she didn't have to follow the same path as her classmates. "There are all kinds of ways to have a career in law," says Hoffman, who has retired from practice but still does some consulting work.

And when McLelland was having trouble lining up interviews, she asked Hoffman for advice. Hoffman volunteered to make some calls to appropriate firms and asked them to consider McLelland for an interview. Mentors can discuss job opportunities with students, but are not expected to be potential employers.

"That's above and beyond what I ever expected a mentor to do," McLelland says.

now a second-year student interested in corporate law.

"He taught me how to use what I learned in the classroom," Beckerink says. "He gave me tips on which classes I should take and where I should interview for a clerkship."

The mentor program is a link between the academics and the profession, McFarlane says. "Faculty provide the foundation for a legal education. Mentors provide another perspective, allowing students to see more clearly how what they've learned in the classroom applies to a variety of practice settings." ■

Pictured above: (left) Sandra McLelland and Ann Hoffman '72, retired from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union; (right) mentor William Fitzgerald '81, solo practitioner, and Meredith Martin