LAW SCHOOL GRADUATES LEAD IN MULTIPLE FIELDS

By Robin I. Mordfin
As the University of Chicago Law School gets ready to launch two major leadership initiatives—the Doctoroff Business Leadership Program and the Kapnick Leadership and Professionalism Program—it is an opportune time to reflect on the tremendous role our graduates have played in leading a wide variety of public and private organizations and enterprises. The University of Chicago Law School is much smaller than most of its peer schools and therefore has many fewer alumni. You wouldn’t know that, however, by surveying the top ranks of law, business, and government. Chicago’s groundbreaking commitment to interdisciplinary education has created generations of inventive thinkers and legal trailblazers who lead in countless fields.

Our alumni lead in Congress, in the executive branch, and in the Department of Justice. They are judges, philanthropists, educators, reformers, CEOs, and innovators. Chicago’s enthusiasm for the life of the mind, and the belief that ideas matter, fosters graduates who work to solve societal problems in countless ways and in endlessly varied fields.

Amy Klobuchar, ’85, became the first woman elected to represent Minnesota in the US Senate in 2006. She is vice chair of the Joint Economic Committee and is a member of both the President’s Export Council and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Senator Klobuchar also chairs the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy, and Consumer Rights and was named “Best in Congress” by Working Mother magazine in 2008 for her efforts on behalf of working families.

In the executive branch, Law School graduates head key federal agencies and serve as top advisors to President Barack Obama. James Comey, ’85, became Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in September. Previously, from December 2003 to August 2005, Comey served as Deputy Attorney General, the second-highest ranking official in the US Department of Justice. Richard Cordray, ’86, is the first Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, an independent federal agency that holds primary responsibility for regulating consumer protection for financial products and services. Before accepting his appointment from President Obama, Cordray served as Attorney General of Ohio.

Obama’s chief counterterrorism advisor is Lisa Monaco, ’97, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism and a member of the US Homeland Security Council. From 2011 to 2013, Monaco served as Assistant Attorney General for National Security and as the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the
Department of Justice. James Cole Jr., ’95, is Deputy General Counsel of the US Department of Transportation, where he oversees more than 500 lawyers and ten operating administrations. In June, President Obama nominated him to serve as General Counsel of the US Department of Education.

Chicago alumni lead state and city governments, too, often in very high-profile ways. In Chicago, Steve Koch, ’82, became Deputy Mayor in September. A 27-year veteran of Credit Suisse, he serves as Chairman of the Board of the Greater Chicago Food Depository and cochairman of the Green Ribbon Committee on Sustainability and Climate Change of Chicago.

The Law School also has produced many of the nation’s most influential judges, including Judge Frank H. Easterbrook, ’73, who just completed a term as Chief Judge of the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Easterbrook, a Senior Lecturer in Law, is nationally renowned for using law and economics methods in his writing and his decisions. He is one of the most cited appellate judges in America and has taught at the Law School since 1978. Interestingly, Judge Easterbrook’s tenure as Chief Judge is both preceded and followed by two other longtime Chicago faculty members—Richard Posner and Diane Wood (see page 30).

Judge David S. Tatel, ’66, has been a judge on the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit since 1994. Before taking the bench, Tatel served as founding director of the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights under the Law, Director of the National Lawyer’s Committee on Civil Rights under the Law, and Director of the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Jimmy Carter.

Interestingly, the Law School also has produced prominent judges in other countries. Sir John Thomas, ’70, will become Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales in October. For the past two years he has been head of the Queen’s Bench Division of the High Court of Justice. He was appointed to the High Court in 1996.

Outside of the government, Law School alumni lead through nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and religion. Larry Kramer, ’84, is President of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, a private foundation that awards grants to support education and cultural institutions and to support social and environmental issues. With assets of more than $7 billion, the foundation is one of the largest grant-giving institutions in the United States.

Christopher L. Eisgruber, ’88, is the new president of Princeton University. Eisgruber spent nine years as provost of Princeton, his undergraduate alma mater, while building a reputation as a constitutional scholar and teacher. And Dallin H. Oaks, ’57, has been a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for nearly 30 years. A former professor at the Law School, Elder Oaks served as a justice on the Utah Supreme Court from 1980 to 1984.

Alumni are taking key roles in improving the Law School’s city, too. Jesse H. Ruiz, ’95, is Vice President of the Chicago Board of Education as well as a member of the US Department of Education, Equity and Excellence.

Above, left to right; Jim Abrams, ’87, Michael Blair, ’81, Leslie Bluhm, ’89, Debra Cafaro, ’82, Mike Cavanagh, ’93, James Cole Jr., ’95. Below, left to right; Thomas A. Cole, ’75, James Comey, ’85, Richard Cordray, ’86, Dan Doctoroff, ’84, Brian Duve, ’87, Frank Easterbrook, ’73.
Richard M. Weil, ‘89, built a career in investment and is currently CEO of Janus Capital Group, a publicly held firm that specializes in growth and risk management investment.

Other Law School alumni in financial leadership include John Ettelson, who earned his JD and MBA from the University of Chicago in 1984 and immediately began working for William Blair & Company, a privately held investment banking firm, which he currently runs. He is also Chairman of the Economic Club of Chicago and Chairman of the Lincoln Park Zoo. Mike Cavanagh, ‘93, is co-CEO of J.P. Morgan's Corporate & Investment Bank, the second largest bank in the United States with assets of more than $2.4 trillion.

Antonio J. Gracias, ‘98, serves as CEO and Chairman of the Investment Committee at Valor Equity Partners, a private equity firm focused on expansion, growth, and buyouts. Gracias founded Valor in 2001 with a focus on industrial services, manufacturing, infrastructure, and consumer investment. Thomas Pritzker, ‘76, is CEO of The Pritzker Organization, an investment banking operation, and Executive Chairman of Hyatt Hotels Corporation, an international hotel chain with nearly $4 billion in annual revenue. Pritzker, who earned both an MBA and a JD from Chicago in 1976, is also founder and Chairman of NAWAH, a logistics company serving customers in Iraq. His cousin, Nicholas Pritzker, ‘75, is former Vice Chair of the Hyatt Commission. From 2004 to 2007, Ruiz served as Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education. Leslie Bluhm, ‘89, cofounded Chicago Cares, a public and community service organization that builds volunteer experiences to make Chicago a stronger community. Since its founding in 1991, Chicago Cares volunteers have completed more than 1.4 million hours of service to more than 30,000 projects. Bluhm recently stepped down as executive director and now focuses on Business Shares, a corporate partnership that generates 75 percent of the funding for Chicago Cares.

In the legal world, graduates head two of the country’s most important legal organizations, the American Bar Association and the American Law Institute. James R. Silkenat, ‘72, is the new President of the ABA. Before accepting the presidency, Silkenat served as Chair of the ABA Section of the International Law, Chair of the ABA Section Officers Conference, and Chair of the ABA Standing Committees on Membership and Constitution and Bylaws. Roberta Cooper Ramo, ‘67, is president of the American Law Institute, which promotes the clarification and simplification of American common law. From 1995 to 1996, Ramo was the first woman to serve as President of the ABA and is a member of the Major Case Panel for the American Arbitration Association and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The Law School’s interdisciplinary nature also makes for unique, strong business leaders, who bring a wide-ranging legal knowledge to the world of commerce. For example, David M. Rubenstein, ‘73, cofounded the Carlyle Group, a global asset management firm, after practicing law and serving as a domestic policy advisor to President Carter. With revenues of more than $170 billion in assets, Rubenstein now serves as co-CEO and is also Chairman of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

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Jim Abrams, ’87, CEO of Medline Industries, is leading the way through upheavals in the American medical system. Medline provides more than 350,000 different medical products to hospitals, clinics, and retailers and is the largest privately held manufacturer and distributor of health care and surgical products in the United States. Other alumni are at the forefront of industries providing new solutions to old problems. Ann Ziegler, ’83, serves as Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer and a member of the executive committee of CDW Corporation, a leading provider of technology solutions for business, government, healthcare, and education. And Daniel Greenberg, ’65, has been the Chairman of the Board and CEO of Electro Rent since 1979. Electro Rent was one of the initial start-ups focused on the rental, lease, and sale of new and used electronic test and measurement equipment and is now one of the largest global organizations in the industry.

Law School alumni also have taken their educations and skills to uniquely twenty-first-century enterprises in media and internet-based companies. Dan Doctoroff, ’84, is CEO and President of Bloomberg L.P., a privately held financial software, data, and media company that is one of the nation’s leading providers of financial information. David O. Sacks, ’98, a cofounder of PayPal, recently created and sold Yammer to Microsoft. Yammer is the leading enterprise social network used by more than 200,000 companies worldwide. And just this past August, Kathleen Phillips, ’97, was

Hotels Corporation and the founder of Tao Capital.

Law School graduates thrive in real estate, too. Debra A. Cafaro, ’82, is Chairman and CEO of Ventas, an S&P 500 company that is the largest owner of senior housing and medical offices in the nation. Forbes named Cafaro as one of America’s top ten best-performing CEOs in the nation, and the Wall Street Journal named her one of 50 Women to Watch. David Greenbaum, ’76, is President of the New York Office Division of Vornado Realty Trust, a real estate investment trust that is one of the largest owners and managers of commercial real estate in the United States. Daniel Levin, ’53, founded and serves as chairman of The Habitat Company, one of the largest multifamily property developers and managers in the country. Habitat has directed financing, structuring, and equity syndication of more than 20,000 rental and condominium units and has more than $2 billion in assets under management. It is also well known as the developer and owner of Chicago’s renowned East Bank Club.

In many cases, Law School alumni are on the cutting edge of industries that have changed or will change the face of the nation. William A. Von Hoene, Jr., ’80, is changing the American energy landscape as Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer of Exelon Corporation, the largest operator of nuclear plants in the United States. Former Law School Dean and current Senior Lecturer Daniel R. Fischel, ’77, has changed the way litigation is practiced in his role as Chairman and President of Compass Lexecon, a consulting firm that pioneered the application of economics to legal and regulatory matters. Fischel helped to found the company the year he graduated, and it is now a national consulting firm that specializes in accounting, damages, antitrust, mergers, securities, valuations, and energy.
serves as Chairman of Schiff Hardin, a Chicago-based firm with offices nationwide; Thomas A. Cole, ’75, has just stepped down as Chairman of the Executive Committee of Sidley Austin, a position he held for 15 years; and Stephen L. Ritchie, ’88, serves on the management committee of Kirkland & Ellis. Bob, Tom, and Steve are joined by Brian W. Duwe, ’87, the head of Skadden’s Chicago office, Paul Theiss ’85, Chair of Mayer Brown, and Michael Blair, ’81, Presiding Partner of Debevoise & Plimpton.

A number of Chicago graduates have also chosen to start firms of their own. Robert V. Gunderson, ’79, is a founding partner of Gunderson Dettmer, a business law firm specializing in entrepreneurship, emerging growth companies, and venture capital with offices around the country and in Beijing. David S. Kreisman, ’63, revolutionized real-estate-related legal and title services when he cofounded the LOGS Network, which designs outsourcing solutions for the residential mortgage and consumer credit industry. For more than three decades he has been directly responsible for offices, partnered law firms, title operations, and trustee companies in more than 30 states.

All those leaders, of course, are just a sampling of the impressive work of University of Chicago Law School alumni. And given the Law School’s commitment to train well-rounded and socially conscious thinkers and doers, more leaders in government, activism, law, and business are inevitable. The Chicago legal education prepares students for any professional role they choose to pursue.