
The View from the Corner Office

**Alums Reflect
on Their Journey
from Law
School to
the C Suite**



The College of Law has produced extraordinary leaders throughout our history. Today, our alumni include the President of the United States, a congressional representative, elected and appointed officials at all levels of government, judges, other public servants, business and nonprofit executives, entrepreneurs, writers, managing partners and law firm chairs, and so many others in positions of influence.

In this third edition of *The View from the Corner Office*, we focus on alumni in senior leadership or entrepreneurial positions in medicine and pharmaceuticals. To be sure, the pandemic has placed a spotlight on public health, global health, and health care systems. Here are the stories of just a few of the College of Law's alumni who have risen to the daunting task of helping to attain the highest level of health care delivery by utilizing their law school training.

Along the way, we learn that for an Orange lawyer, any career benefits from a Syracuse law diploma. Look for more C-suite stories in future issues of the *Stories Book*, and if you missed them, they can be found on our website at law.syr.edu/magazine.



CONNIE MATTEO L'91

Assistant General Counsel in Pfizer's
Civil Litigation Group



“One of the highlights of my time at Syracuse was participating in the College of Law’s trial advocacy program... I use the skills gained in the trial advocacy program almost every day.”

Prior to joining Pfizer in October 2009, **Connie Matteo L'91** was a Senior Corporate Counsel at Wyeth. Before going in-house, she was a principal of Porzio, Bromberg & Newman in Morristown, NJ and a member of the firm's Litigation Department. Her practice focused on complex product liability, including pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices product liability claims. She also counseled pharmaceutical clients on issues related to regulatory compliance.

Matteo has authored a number of articles related to product liability litigation and regulatory compliance, frequently speaks on topics related to such litigation, and serves as a guest lecturer at two law schools.

Her interest in science was prompted by Matteo's own struggle with lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease. “As a patient, I have a deep respect for the work that pharmaceutical companies do to improve the health of patients,” she says, noting the diagnosis pushed her to hone her focus on the pharmaceutical world.

What was your path to get where you are?

When I started at the College of Law, I definitely didn't see myself in my current role. As a first-generation student, my knowledge of the legal profession was fairly limited. I was also a bit shy, so I certainly never saw myself as a litigator. My original goal was to become a human rights attorney and to return to Amnesty International where I had interned in college. I attended an international law symposium during my first year and quickly realized that international law wasn't for me.

My career path was not typical for an in-house lawyer as I started my career as a plaintiff's lawyer at a small firm. One of the two partners at the firm was a College of Law alum. As a benefit of working at a small firm, I had the opportunity to get substantive, hands-on experience, especially trial work. By my third year of practice, I recognized that I enjoyed cases that involved science and moved to a large firm's product liability group in 1994. As an associate and partner, I worked on many matters for Pfizer and Wyeth. In 2007, I joined Wyeth which was later acquired by Pfizer.

How did law school prepare you for your current role?

One of the highlights of my time at Syracuse was participating in the College of Law's trial advocacy program. I gained so much from that experience. I learned practical litigation skills, such as learning to think on my feet and make decisions quickly. I use the skills gained in the trial advocacy program almost every day.

Is there a professor or mentor during your time at the College of Law that stands out?

Professor **Travis H.D. Lewin**. Not only did I gain a tremendous amount from his evidence and trial practice courses, but he was also a mentor and coach for the trial teams.

In light of the pandemic, what innovation has most affected your industry or how you practice law?

Zoom has dramatically changed my practice over the last two years, and I suspect it will continue to have a role after the pandemic. Before the pandemic, I traveled regularly for case management conferences, depositions, and trials. My only exposure to Zoom prior to the pandemic was once, as a guest lecturer at another law school. In the last two years, I've participated in roughly 10 mediations over Zoom. I've observed many oral arguments, case management conferences, depositions, and several jury exercises. We've even had an arbitration over Zoom. The ability to participate in hearings and conferences without traveling is a significant time-saver.

How has your organization overcome challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Pfizer moved at lightning speed to make the impossible possible: Produce a COVID-19 vaccine in less than one year. But we also committed to change the normal ways of working. We've had to pivot from traveling to attend in-person meetings to Zoom, and have adopted this lightning speed mentality in all the work that we do. We cut out red tape where we can, and closely collaborate with colleagues and partners to accomplish our purpose—breakthroughs that change patients' lives. As the litigation lawyer that supports Pfizer's vaccine team, it has been a very busy past couple of years but the work I've done and continue to do is the most meaningful and satisfying work I've ever done.



JEREMY MCKOWN L'98

Vice President of Law, Janssen R&D
at Johnson & Johnson



“To sit across the table with business leaders and discuss our research and tell them what plans we’d developed and how they could maximize their intellectual property was an important skill building tool.”

In overseeing a global legal team at Johnson & Johnson, most recently pursuing an expedited development of a COVID-19 vaccine, **Jeremy McKown L'98** relies on effective communication and practical decision making. Sometimes, including when facing a global pandemic, he says, solutions must be found both creatively and through compromise.

“For every facet of the vaccine development process, my team was involved from a contract perspective, but also from a counseling perspective, because we were trying and doing things we hadn’t attempted in the past.”

In his work, he most enjoys negotiating complex license agreements, but says he’s had a varied career. “It’s been a very fulfilling journey.” He finds gratification especially in seeing a successful outcome after a patient has benefited from a J&J clinical trial or a newly approved medicine.

“When I see someone whose life we’ve helped or saved, it brings tears to my eyes. It’s the same thing with our vaccine effort over the past two years, when I see what that’s done for society across the globe, I take it to heart. It’s very rewarding, and it’s exciting working on programs that may save people’s lives, or at the very least, make their lives better.”

What is your current position and what was your path to get where you are?

In my current role as head of R&D legal for J&J’s Pharmaceutical Group, I manage around 30 lawyers and professionals across the globe. We focus on transactions and spend much of our time drafting and negotiating clinical trial agreements, complex R&D agreements, and other types of agreements needed for our R&D business. Prior to taking this role in 2019,

I worked at J&J as a patent attorney in our pharmaceutical and consumer businesses.

After my first year at Syracuse, I knew I wanted to do intellectual property law. To further investigate, while in school, I took a part-time job downtown with a small IP firm. This helped crystallize that I wanted to be an IP lawyer, particularly focusing on patent law. I first started in Washington, D.C. because I was told this is where all the patent IP firms were. I worked at Dorsey & Whitney and then Wilmer Hale and felt extremely fortunate to find general practice firms that exposed me to patent preparation and prosecution, patent litigation, IP due diligence, and significant transactions including complex license agreements.

How did law school prepare you for your current role?

Learning to think and approach problems differently was the biggest takeaway. Spending my undergraduate and graduate years in science required a different mindset. From the first day in law school, I recognized the need to approach problems from a different perspective. The most beneficial subject matter was taking federal courts and patent law courses and discussing practical examples. The best way to figure out how to draft a patent claim is to actually practice doing it.

Professor **Theodore Hagelin’s Law Technology Management Program** (now known as the **Innovation Law Center**) was extremely important because it was less about reading textbooks and more about interacting with other law students and companies on projects. The huge benefit there was that we were working on real projects and interacting with different companies on these projects.

We worked on projects we knew would have an impact on large Fortune 500 companies or small start-ups. To sit across the table with business leaders and discuss our research and tell them what plans we’d developed and how they could maximize their intellectual property was an important skill building tool. It was as close as you could get to a real-world experience, and that hands-on experience was extremely valuable.

Is there a professor or mentor during your time at the College of Law that stands out?

Professor **Lisa Dolak L’88**, who taught patent law and federal courts, was great because she had industry and legal experience. It wasn’t just theoretical like reading a textbook, it was real-world experience that she was sharing with students. On top of that, during my third year, under Professor Hagelin, I was a teaching assistant for the Law Technology & Management program. The combination of learning from both professors really solidified my interest in IP.

In light of the pandemic, what innovation has most affected your industry or how you practice law?

Zoom has been incredibly important. Before we would do conference calls, but you never really knew if people were paying attention. During the pandemic, it was an extremely important tool to be able to visually connect and talk through issues. It didn’t solve every problem, but it made things more personal. From a mental health aspect, it was essential given that many of my team members were isolated in their apartment buildings. After meetings I often received comments about how connected people felt

thanks to this medium. This was really gratifying to hear and made me feel better as a team leader.

The pandemic also made people think differently about how and what tools can be used to get things done quicker and more efficiently.

Consider artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, which have grown by leaps and bounds. We are now piloting AI tools to make the practice of law more efficient. We look at complex transactions a different way than simple transactions. Confidentiality agreements (CDAs) and non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) are the simplest form of contracts we work with. If we can use an AI tool to craft the CDA or NDA and redline it when it comes back from another party, it makes a lower priority - but essential - task much more efficient. Then we can focus on higher priority work. There’s not an AI tool or company out there that I’m aware of that has solved every issue, but we are spending time looking at different tools that will make contracting more efficient, and, I think, easier for attorneys to spend more time on higher value work.

Can you talk about your legal role in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout?

I have a number of examples. To run a clinical trial, you need to have a clinical investigator and other health care professional work with the trial subjects. In many situations people didn’t want or couldn’t go to a hospital or clinic because of the many restrictions related to COVID-19. This was completely understandable given the pandemic. We had to think about new ways of working, e.g., how to allow nurses and other health care professionals to go into people’s homes. My team—which



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includes **Carrie Kissick Rabbitt L'03** and **Michael McCabe L'06**—worked with our clinical and R&D teams to develop creative solutions, in a compliant manner to make this happen. Given the benefits of these new practices, we continue to use some of these new ways of working.

For the vaccine itself, we were part of Operation Warp Speed (OWS), which was formed under the Trump administration and continues under the Biden administration. The goal of OWS was to accelerate the development of safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19. This required my team to quickly draft and negotiate agreements together with a number of different stakeholders within the federal government, including the National Institute of Health and Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, and develop budgets and flexible contract language, while also focusing on clinical data transfer and privacy issues.

Another significant issue was identifying clinical trial sites and recruiting patients, while

managing through staff shortages, supply chain bottlenecks, and pandemic fatigue. We worked closely with our scientific teams as they utilized AI tools to predict the right hotspots three to four months in advance at a country, state, province, and county level. Setting up our clinical sites in the right locations was critical to evaluating the safety and efficacy of our vaccine. We had weekly meetings with our vendors and partners to ensure we were on track. As you can imagine, there were so many moving parts for the vaccine clinical trial.

And at times, the contracts weren't exactly the way we wanted them, but we had to move quickly and balance the level of risk with the time necessary to negotiate the perfect contracts, because in a global pandemic, every day that went by was a delay of a getting a vaccine to the global population. People's lives were at stake. The amount of time we put in was unbelievable—the team gave up vacations, holidays, weekends, and reprioritized other projects. It was a heroic effort by everyone, from the scientists to the lawyers, to get things across the finish line.



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DEAN A. ROSEN G'90, L'90

Partner at Mehlman Castagnetti Rosen & Thomas



As an expert on America's complex health care system, **Dean Rosen G'90, L'90** says health care became his focus by accident, but has endured because of his work's important interplay and intersection with policy and people's lives.

"Health care has been such an interesting career focus," he says, "because it makes up one-fifth of our economy; because, at the federal level, it is the most heavily regulated portion of the economy, and because the government is a major payer for health care services." The federal government, in his view, is more important to health care stakeholders than to almost any other constituent because of the unique nature of the sector—government programs impose detailed rules and regulations and set rates and reimbursement parameters and protocols.

Rosen played a leading role in developing and advancing health policy through influential posts on Capitol Hill for 15 years. On the Hill, he divided his time between traditional labor issues, law reform issues, and health care, which, he says, were the "Super Bowl of legislation" in the early '90s. His efforts helped to create the Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), among others.

Rosen says that lobbying and policy are a very "hands-on, personal services business" where one's background is a driving force for success. Thus, his own experience and credibility on the Hill and his knowledge helped him grow the then Mehlman Castagnetti lobbying firm from a dozen clients to now approaching 150, half of whom are in the health care field.

What was your path to get where you are? Did you see yourself in this role or field while in law school?

Initially, my interest was in a law career that embraced communications, which is why I did the dual degree with Newhouse. I was flexible on what that would be.

I loved the study of law, but I found the practice of it in a big firm setting not enjoyable. After a couple years working in the law firm setting, I volunteered on political campaigns and eventually took a leave of absence to work on Capitol Hill. That time really underscored for me that I wanted to have a career in government and politics, and not at a law firm.

In 1993, I was hired by my home state senator from Minnesota, David Durenberger, a health care expert. Bill Clinton had just been elected president, and his highest priority was comprehensive health reform. Senator Durenberger served on two key committees in the Senate that dealt with health care, and I was hired because of my legal background and the work I'd done as an employment lawyer. When it was clear that the Clintons were going to really push on health care, Durenberger deployed all of us on his staff to work on the issue. I had to learn the issues really quickly, and I rapidly developed a deep interest in them.

So, health care was really by accident. After spending years working in various positions on Capitol Hill as a senior staff person for various committees that dealt with health care, policy issues, and Congressional leadership, I joined the firm Mehlman Castagnetti, which was at that time a five- or six-person lobbying firm. We've now grown to about 20 full-time lobbyists. We're one of the biggest government relations

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firms in D.C. and have been ranked in the top 10 for the last couple years.

Now day-to-day, I use a lot of the skills and the strategic insights that I gained from working in government to help clients navigate through a number of issues, whether it be trying to pass or stop legislation, helping to shape regulations, or helping clients understand what's going on in Washington, and how that may impact their strategic goals and business.

How did law school prepare you for your current role?

I have a nontraditional career. I'm a lawyer in the sense that I keep my bar license and use my legal training, but I really don't practice law. I work as a lobbyist, but just as I did on Capitol Hill, I utilize the skills I learned at Syracuse Law. My clients are trying to figure out, every day, how they can comply with the law, and how they can change laws. I apply what I learned from my coursework in administrative and regulatory law specifically, as well as more broadly what I gained in legal reasoning and interpretation skills. Beyond that, law school gave me the ability to look critically at an issue, to analyze a document, to think creatively about how to solve problems. I use that every day, whether I'm drafting a piece of legislation or analyzing a regulation.

Is there a professor or mentor during your time at the College of Law that stands out?

Professor **Theodore Hagelin**, who led the **Technology Commercialization Law Program**, (ILC), really cared about and understood the intersection between law and the technology sector. He was also my *Law Review* note advisor. My *Law Review* note was about a Federal

Communications Commission regulation that I felt needed to be reexamined given the evolution of technology. Because it was a complex issue, I don't think I would have been able to write it without somebody like Hagelin who understood and had the passion in this area. Also, Professor **Travis H.D. Lewin**, who led the moot court program, stands out. He had a way of making law fun, and he was passionate about his students. Public speaking is a big part of what I do now, and he helped me gain the confidence I need to advocate for issues in front of small and large audiences.

In light of the pandemic, what innovation has most affected your industry?

The rapid development of vaccines is the most significant. I think the fastest development of a vaccine before COVID-19 was five years, and the COVID-19 vaccine was developed within a year. Additionally, while doctors and nurses had begun using telehealth, the pandemic accelerated the use and acceptance of telehealth as a health care delivery method because of necessity. I personally worked on that front, in order to help providers secure the waivers and greater flexibility they needed for telehealth. There are strict government restrictions in place, with Medicare in particular, around how seniors can get care. These restrictions have been waived during the pandemic. I think that new modality may be one of the biggest changes in our health care system brought on by the pandemic. We have such a shortage of providers, especially in mental health, I believe this in an area where telehealth is going to expand and change how we deliver much needed care to patients moving forward.



G. RANDALL GREEN L'09

Division Chief of Cardiac Surgery and Director of Upstate Heart Institute, SUNY Upstate Medical University; Founder at Phairify, Inc.



“It was a great opportunity to dive into a problem like an entrepreneur and then be meticulous in terms of parsing out the problem, understanding it, and then going through a series of solutions to be successful.”

Day-to-day, **G. Randall Green L'09** is a heart surgeon. In the midst of his decades-long medical career, he's also completed both law and business degrees, which he utilizes within and outside of his demanding work at Upstate.

Green's time in legal practice focused on transactional health law. He represented physicians and physician groups in contract negotiations with hospitals. During this time, he says, it became clear that physicians struggled to define their fair market valuation. “In that process, I learned that fair market value was rarely what it seemed to be,” he says, because it is based off “horrendously bad information.”

The reason: The body of market research done by several third-party providers relies on a sample size of about 3% of physicians. This is often only representative of large, multi-specialty groups. Based on all he learned while representing physicians, and what he has observed in the field as a practicing physician and a medical team leader, Green decided to help solve the problem.

In 2019, he founded Phairify, a web-based platform that helps physicians measure their professional value based on aggregated and specialty-specific data. The platform also helps recruiters to better understand and price the market for physicians and inform recruitment practices.

What elements of your legal training do you apply in your current work?

I think the practical aspect of working with clients tops the list. In the third year of law school, I worked with two different clients, one from Rochester and one locally through the College's **Technology Commercialization**

Law Program (ILC). These companies told us about a problem they had and, working in a four-person group, we analyzed the problem and the intellectual property around it. Efforts included commercialization opportunities, device research, examination of the finances, etc. It was a great opportunity to dive into a problem like an entrepreneur and then be meticulous in terms of parsing out the problem, understanding it, and then going through a series of solutions to be successful. It's now the same thing my team does with our company.

The **Innovation Law Center** now continues this work, and things came full circle when we became a portfolio company in the center. I saw in action now what I saw in my third year. Students did their review and gave us ideas on what could be protectable intellectual property.

Is there a professor or mentor during your time at the College of Law that stands out?

Professor **Ted Hagelin**, who founded and served as director of the Technology Commercialization Law Program, was spectacular. This program was heavy into patent law, IP, and very much about how you start with an idea, protect the idea, and commercialize the idea. Entrepreneurship was a big part of my life. Professor Hagelin really opened my eyes to what in a business is a protectable asset as intellectual property. He made it very clear how one can run a business up to the margin of the law. He helped me discover that I really understood very little about business. That's why I went on to Cornell University for business school immediately following law school. Professor Hagelin had a massive impact on my understanding of the commercialization process, and how business and law intersect.

Additionally, Professor **Lisa Dolak L'88** was a powerful influence as well. I think she was a spectacular educator and taught me a great deal about patent law and, indirectly, business.

How has your work been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

I approach everything from a transactional health law perspective, centering on physicians and hospitals working together. I would have to say, COVID has strained that relationship. COVID put all health care providers in a trying position, by having to provide care to a great number of people in the setting of scarce and constrained resources. We are at an all-time high, I think, of physician burnout. Physicians are leaving their practices in large numbers, which exacerbates the looming problem of a predicted shortage of physicians. Many are leaving current roles to look for better offerings, with greater resources, and a solid percentage of physicians are permanently leaving. Many physicians are also near retirement, which exacerbates the problem.

Health care doesn't happen for patients unless physicians and hospitals work together ... hospitals can't deliver the care without physicians. We are heading into an era where there are going to be very few physicians. We're looking at a shortage of about 140,000 physicians by 2035. As physicians become increasingly scarce, we see a real opportunity in empowering physicians and helping them to quantify their market value and exert control over the jobs they seek and get; in turn, that information allows employers to come in and shape jobs that meets physicians' expectations and advances their delivery needs.

How do you balance running a company and a full-time role as both a cardiac surgeon and hospital leader?

Any startup really has to be done in your spare time. And, you just have to make the time. They're incredibly resource-need. My hospital job takes precedence: I'm a heart surgeon all day long. I fit in all the other activities on nights and weekends. I'm lucky to have three outstanding co-founders. We meet Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday nights for two hours, no matter what. We schedule additional meetings as needed. But you're always doing something: you're either raising money; selling the product, both to society and physicians; generating marketing and advertising content, or overseeing the design of the application.

Final thoughts?

As a practicing physician, an attorney and an entrepreneur, I credit a great deal of whatever small success I've had to Syracuse University College of Law. It was a great experience. It's a phenomenal law school, and I'm very proud to be an alumnus. ■