



Robert Hartsook '79

Alumni

Vice President of Colby Community College, Washburn University and Wichita State; Executive Vice President of a professional organization and now CEO of Hartsook Companies Inc. Robert Hartsook seems to excel at everything he attempts.

Hartsook graduated from Washburn Law in 1979. During law school, he was Executive Editor of the *Washburn Law Journal*. "Writing and editing is an important part of my life today – though I don't write on legal issues, I have written five books, with a sixth on the way, as well as hundreds of articles and monographs. My legal education clearly influenced my thinking," admits Hartsook.

Prior to entering Washburn Law, Hartsook served as Vice President of Colby Community College. Upon entering law school, he was about six years older than his fellow students, closer in age to some of the professors. However, he felt at home at Washburn Law and enjoyed the student interaction at the school. After graduation, he served as Executive Vice President of the Kansas Engineering Society in Topeka. Hartsook then accepted a position at Washburn University as Vice President, which introduced Hartsook to fundraising, something he had not done before. After Washburn University, he became Vice President of Wichita State University.

After Wichita State, Hartsook founded a small fundraising and philanthropic management company in Wichita, Kansas. It was a small, three-person business at the time. Seven years ago, Hartsook made a decision to grow his business. Today his firm is one of the four largest firms of its type in the country.

As chairman and CEO of Hartsook Companies, Inc., Hartsook provides leadership and guidance to over 50 employees, located in nearly 20 cities nationwide. Hartsook Companies has worked with over 1,700 nonprofit organizations across America. They have helped institutions raise billions of dollars for the benefit of the arts, education, social service, health care, youth development and more. "To think you have that degree of impact is very humbling and rewarding," says Hartsook.

Hartsook credits Washburn with his successful career. "The result of hiring me as Vice President at Washburn ultimately resulted in a very successful career," said Hartsook. He credits several people during his career who have given him useful advice and encouragement. "Governor Sebelius taught me so much when she was Executive Director for the Kansas Trial Lawyers Association while I worked there during law school. Three university presidents taught me to lead by questioning, to think big and to see the best in people," said Hartsook.

Hartsook says listening to donors and clients is the most important aspect of his career. He credits his law school education with teaching him how to listen, think and analyze. He says that listening is thinking about what is being said. Hartsook said he has viewed the world of philanthropy in a more creative way than many others; one of the reasons he has been so successful in his business. "I understand wealth and how it can be used for our society and culture," said Hartsook.

Hartsook believes law school preparation gives you a unique perspective of the world. "It teaches you to think like a lawyer. Seeing elements of issues that others do not see. Understanding consequences and questioning absolutes," said Hartsook. He continues to be impressed with the quality of legal education that Washburn Law offers. "I read every journal and newsletter. The faculty is impressive and diverse and their contribution to the profession is immense," stated Hartsook.

Three years ago Hartsook sold 49 percent of Hartsook Companies to his employees and expects to sell the rest in the next two or three years. He plans to counsel to nonprofit organizations for the rest of his life. Hartsook has two other businesses, Hartsook Management Company (business organization counsel) and Hartsook Farms and Resorts. He hopes to devote more time to both businesses.