



*India Keefover, first-year student, visits with Dr. Max Halley, '66.*

## **MENTOR/MENTEE** NEW THREE-TIER APPROACH CONNECTS GENERATIONS

Connecting with alumni and friends of Washburn Law and *building those relationships* enhances first-year law students' bank of resources.



*Jay Hall, '07, talks with Steve Scholtz, first-year student.*

The Mentor/Mentee Program, established in 2003, has successfully served as a primary networking opportunity for law students who want to meet with those who have navigated the real world of the legal profession.

“The program has always been about giving students a connection to the legal community, the real world, while also helping alumni to connect to the law school,” said Margann Bennett, director of Professional Development at Washburn Law.

Although the program has been successful, with an average of two-thirds of the first-year students voluntarily signing up each year, it’s important to Bennett to maintain a dynamic Mentor/Mentee Program. To that end, she introduced a three-tier approach to the program this year that has increased the networking opportunities for the students as well as created an additional networking opportunity for alumni and friends of the law school.

In previous years, first-year students were matched one-on-one with alumni or friends of the law school. If the mentor was not able to attend the kick-off reception, the student couldn’t participate fully in the networking opportunities. This year, the Professional Development Office and the Admissions Office worked together to match the students with recent graduates, those who graduated within the past five or six years, while the more seasoned law professionals served as table hosts at the kick-off event. Students and their mentors were assigned to tables with those of like interests and/or similar demographics.

“We used different selection criteria this year to better match the interests of the students with the mentors,” Bennett noted. Having more recent graduates added to the mix provided the students with input from those who recently graduated from law school and experienced all the trials and tribulations that go with it.

The results benefitted the students two-fold: If a student’s assigned mentor could not attend the reception the student could still network with the table hosts and share in conversation with those assigned to their table. “It created a whole different feel that facilitated more discussion. It got people talking,” Bennett said.

Similarly, the mentors had the opportunity to network with senior attorneys and legal professionals throughout the evening. “The additional benefit was to allow our new attorneys to network with our senior attorneys,” Bennett added.

India Keefover, a first-year student, was grateful for the opportunity to connect with alumni. “I think that the fact that the school connects 1Ls with alumni of all ages is great. I signed up because the mentorship program connects current students with recent graduates. Talking to someone who has just lived through what I’m going through is a tremendous support and reminder that ‘I will get through it.’”

At the reception, Keefover spent time talking with **Dr. Max Halley, '66**, and Kansas Supreme Court Justices **Nancy L. Moritz, '85**, and **Lee Johnson, '80**. “The reception made me excited because it made me realize what it means to be attending Washburn Law—it’s a family. All of the Washburn Law alumni I have encountered are proud to have called Washburn home and they have all gone on to do great things for the community and the legal profession as a whole. I am honored to be a part of this family and excited to see what the future holds,” Keefover said.

The Mentor/Mentee Program encourages mentors to make at least one substantive contact with an assigned student, and they are encouraged to invite their assigned student to lunch, for an office visit, to accompany them to court, and/or to participate in other relevant learning experiences.

“This program is about keeping them connected: the students, our alumni, and the friends of the law school,” Bennett concluded.

The Mentor/Mentee Program is sponsored by the Professional Development and Alumni Services offices.