


Giving Back





Alumni Philanthropy Driven by Passion & Purpose

BY SARAH KELLOGG

Propelled by a strong sense of purpose, gratitude, and passion, GW Law alumni are giving back to the law school in record numbers.

The reasons for giving are as varied and personal as the individuals and families who donate. While some choose to endow scholarships, others invest directly into programming in favored practice areas, and others still donate their time to expand programs and services to aid students and graduates.

This year has been a particularly distinguished year of philanthropy for GW Law, and the alumni who have contributed to that success have been motivated by their desires to advance the fortunes of the law school, its students, its graduates, and the world at large. Their gifts reflect the foundational importance of a GW Law degree and how it helps shape careers and lives.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA GODEASSI

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– Bobby Burchfield

Furthering Scholarship

FOR BOBBY BURCHFIELD, JD ’79, GIVING BACK TO GW Law is about more than writing a check, it’s about transforming a lifelong passion for free speech and the First Amendment into a means to teach the next generation of lawyers about the significance of free speech to the American enterprise.

“I think free speech is under assault today,” says Burchfield. “Without free speech, we can’t have free and informed elections. We can’t have criticism or praise of our officeholders. We can’t debate the big issues of the day. We can’t even engage in day-to-day commerce. Free speech is at the center of the great experiment that is America.”

Burchfield pledged \$4.5 million from the Burchfield Family Charitable Foundation to create the Burchfield Professorship of First Amendment and Free Speech Law. It is the largest gift made to date by that foundation, as well as the largest gift in GW Law history. This latest philanthropy follows Burchfield’s creation in 2008 of an endowed scholarship to support GW Law students and many years of service on the Dean’s Advisory Council.

“I do think that if you were to choose a place, frankly any place in the world, to have a prominent professorship in free speech, you would choose Washington, D.C.,” says Burchfield. “We are unique in having this ingrained commitment to free speech at the center of our government.”

The Burchfield Professorship of First Amendment and Free Speech Law “brings the imprimatur of a world-class attorney to GW Law,” says Dean Dayna Bowen Matthew, “and will be highly sought after by top free speech scholars from around the nation.”

“Our constitutional law faculty are remarkable scholars and practitioners, and this gift is a game-changer that will allow us to attract a prominent free speech expert who solidifies GW Law as a premier school for serious First Amendment scholarship,” she states. “This is a transformative gift that will have a profound and enduring influence not only on GW Law but also on the national First Amendment discourse. It serves as an example to others who



Bobby Burchfield

wish to invest in attracting highly distinguished scholars to the GW Law faculty.”

A high school and college debater, Burchfield credits his successful career as a trial and appellate lawyer to the legal bedrock formed at GW Law, where he was editor-in-chief of the *GW Law Review*. Before his retirement in 2021, Burchfield’s 42-year distinguished career included service to three U.S. presidents, the leader of the U.S. Senate, and the majority leader of the U.S. House. He also argued two important free speech cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

“I’ve worked hard, but I wouldn’t have been in a position to do as well as I have done without a lot of good fortune,” says Burchfield. “Part of that good fortune was my decision almost 50 years ago to go to GW Law.”

By endowing the professorship, Burchfield is hoping to elevate GW Law’s standing as a leader in the free speech conversation that is taking center stage today, particularly on college campuses where he believes academic freedom and free speech have come under threat when they should be principal virtues.

“The cure for foolish, offensive, or false speech is more speech,” Burchfield says. “This is the issue of our age. I hope this professorship will put GW Law at the forefront of the civic discourse on the First Amendment and free speech in our country and around the world.”



Olajumoke "Jummy" Obayanju



Mike Michel

Improving Access

GIVING BACK DOESN'T ALWAYS TRANSLATE INTO A financial contribution to the law school. Sometimes the gift comes in the form of volunteer hours. Such is the case with the newest of the Dean's Advisory Councils, the GW Law Public Interest Advisory Council (PIAC), which is the primary advisory body for the Public Interest/Public Service program.

For the PIAC's first chair, Olajumoke "Jummy" Obayanju, JD '16, the opportunity to help law students looking to launch careers in public interest or public service law was paramount, although she also felt compelled to create a council that represented the breadth and depth of the public interest law community.

"The diversity of the council in terms of gender, race and class years opens doors for alumni who traditionally have not had the opportunity to contribute in this way," says Obayanju, who is the director of the National Racial Equity Initiative (NREI) for Social Justice with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. "There was intentionality in our solicitation efforts in every person we called and asked to participate."

Membership on the council is drawn from private practice, corporate practice, government practice, nonprofit organizations, and the judiciary. The PIAC, which is GW Law's most diverse advisory group, counsels the dean, the Public Interest Program director, and the faculty director while also assisting the faculty and staff in preparing students for careers in the nonprofit and government sectors. The first meeting of the new council was in December 2021.

"We hope to increase awareness of the public interest law program, increase opportunities for paid public interest internships, and create a pipeline of public interest career opportunities for law students and alumni," says PIAC member Mike Michel, JD '15. "We believe the council's work will decrease the financial

burden and other barriers to entering and remaining in public interest law."

Both Michel and Obayanju felt the call to volunteer because of their own wishes to serve the law school, law students, and the greater community of public interest lawyers. Most importantly, they know that their work here could help law students who may never get a chance to explore public interest law because the pressures of school, tuition, and career expectations may prove to be too difficult to overcome.

"Although many students come into law school wanting to give back to their communities and be helpful in ways that are tangible to the real lives of real people, the structure of legal education is not set up to always encourage that continued drive to public service or public interest law when leaving law school," says Michel, an associate with Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney. "This is a way to give a voice and opportunity to those students and alumni who would not otherwise have one because there had been no council speaking for them."

Opening Doors

AS THE FAMILY OF THE LATE LARRY D. HARRIS, JD '75, considered how best to honor his life and legacy, there was only one answer that made any real sense: give back to the institution that meant so much to him while he was alive, GW Law.

"Both my husband and I grew up without financial advantages, and we learned from our families what an important difference a good education can make," says Maryanne Lavan, Harris' wife. "Larry was proud of being a lawyer. He thought he got a great legal education at GW, and that was why we gravitated to a scholarship immediately."

By endowing the Larry D. Harris Memorial Law Scholarship, the Lavan/Harris family will provide an annual full tuition

“Larry and I had a fundamental belief that education changes lives.”

– Maryanne Lavan

GW Law scholarship in perpetuity. Scholarship recipient preferences reflect many of the things that Harris held dear: membership in the Black Law Student Association (BLSA), plans to practice government contracts/government procurement law, and/or current or prior military service.

“Larry was such a proud GW Law graduate, and this gift is the perfect blend of things that were very important to him,” says Lavan, whose husband had a distinguished career in government contracts and procurement law before his retirement.

Lavan says by prioritizing BLSA membership, the family is looking to support one of his lifelong passions. He was closely involved in the founding of the GW chapter of the BLSA, and he was particularly enthusiastic about recruiting more students of color into law school and supporting them once they were there.

Lavan said the qualifications of recipients were a critical factor for her son and daughter, Zachary and Mikayla Harris, who worked with her to envision the appropriate memorial for their father. Mikayla Harris is currently at Yale University Law School, and Zachary Harris recently graduated with a degree in journalism from Northwestern University.

“Larry and I had a fundamental belief that education changes lives,” says Lavan. “It changes the trajectory of an individual’s life and the trajectory of a family’s life, even more so when students do not have the burden of a loan when they come out.”

As an ROTC scholarship recipient, Harris prized military service. He fulfilled his ROTC obligation by joining the Army Judge Advocate General’s Corps (JAG) as a commissioned officer after he graduated from GW Law. “Service was always important to him,” says Lavan.

Dean Dayna Bowen Matthew says the generous gift will help increase diversity in the legal profession. “Nearly 50 years after Larry Harris graduated from GW Law, Black lawyers are still grossly underrepresented in the legal profession—less than 5 percent of U.S. attorneys are Black, a figure that has not changed in a decade,” she says. “We are so thankful to the Lavan/Harris family for this incredible gift, which will significantly contribute to equalizing opportunity for capable attorneys to train at GW Law.”

Expanding Opportunity

PHILIP AND SARA DAVIS KNOW FIRSTHAND HOW the generosity of others can change your life for the better, setting you on a course for a lifetime of professional fulfillment.

“I attended both undergraduate and law school on scholarship,” says Philip Davis JD ’73. “At GW Law, I was fortunate enough to receive a Trustee Scholarship. Given that Sara and I are both grateful to have been beneficiaries of others’ generosity, this scholarship seemed an appropriate vehicle to give back and hopefully make a difference in someone’s life and legal career.”

Davis and his wife are endowing the Philip and Sara Davis Scholarship in Government Procurement to provide a need-based scholarship for a law student studying government procurement law. “GW Law has played an important role in Philip’s life and mine,” says Sara, who earned an MBA from the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. “It has been a meaningful relationship, and we want that to continue.”

A former partner and now senior counsel with Wiley Rein’s government contracts practice, Davis has been instrumental in recruiting GW Law students into Wiley’s thriving practice. He hopes the “scholarship will continue and strengthen the pipeline of talent moving from GW Law to Wiley.”

Government contracts law is especially appealing because of the diverse nature of the practice—from the range of federal agencies to which practitioners are exposed to the variety of products/services they buy, Davis says.

“This variety has been and remains for me the most stimulating aspect of the practice,” he states. “It’s the prime reason a government contracts attorney gets up in the morning. This scholarship will give the opportunity to experience this stimulating legal practice to someone who might not otherwise have the chance.”

Davis believes a scholarship in procurement law is a perfect fit for GW Law because of its “unparalleled procurement curriculum, and its top-quality professors in the subject.” “This is where the government contracts practice is centered in the United States,” he says. “If you’re working in government contracts, you want to be in D.C.”



Philip and Sara Davis



Larry Harris

Advancing Achievement

THANKS TO A GENEROUS BEQUEST FROM AN anonymous donor, GW Law will soon be the home of a new Intellectual Property & Technology Law Clinic (IPTLC).

“This is a real ‘pay-it-forward’ type of gift from a generous alumnus who had a prestigious career in IP law,” says John M. Whealan, associate dean for intellectual property law, “and it’s especially important when one considers the number of students and clients who will benefit from it in the future.”

The new clinic, made possible by a substantial estate gift, recognizes the donor’s distinguished career in IP law and the importance of providing students with in-depth practical experience that will enhance their doctrinal education. “There’s no doubt in my mind that this exciting new clinic will help to further enhance our law school’s highly rated intellectual property curriculum,” says Dean Dayna Bowen Matthew.

An officer in the U.S. Navy, the donor’s decades-long, Washington, D.C., IP practice included arguing successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court in a pivotal patent law case. The gift will allow between eight and 12 students to enroll in the IPTLC every semester.

“I think this clinic’s founding story is a telling one as it captures the collaborative and innovative spirit of GW’s Clinical Program and its growth,” says Laurie S. Kohn, associate dean of the Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics. “The idea grew out of

the visioning process of various programs, which was undertaken when Dean Matthew arrived. Among the top five priorities identified by both the Intellectual Property Program and the Clinics was the launch of an IP Clinic.”

The IPTLC will provide law students access to deep learning opportunities and professional development experiences in patent and trademark preparation and prosecution, copyright registration, and litigation. The IPTLC is seeking to be registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to apply for and obtain both patents and trademarks.

“I think the clinic will complement our existing transactional clinic, the Small Business and Community Economic Development Clinic,” says Kohn. “Led by Professor Susan Jones, the clinic has already been handling innovative trademark work. There will be a nice synergy between those two clinics. In addition, we hope to expose students to intellectual property litigation practice in the new Copyright Claims Board, which will dovetail with our other litigation clinics.”

Presently, the Clinical and the IP and Technology programs are in the process of determining how best to meet the professional development needs of IP students, focusing on winning approval for the IPTLC curriculum and hiring new faculty. The IPTLC’s first students will enroll in spring 2023.

“The clinic will teach the students how to be real IP lawyers,” says Whealan. “We teach them the theory in class, and this will allow them to apply it to real clients with real issues.”