

LAW ALUMNI FUND 1968-1979

Although it is probable that alumni of the University of Wisconsin Law School began making financial contributions well back in its history, the first organized general fund drive took place in 1968-69. It was hoped that the Law Alumni Fund, a source of extra-legislative dollars, would allow expenditures to enhance legal education in Wisconsin.

The beginning of the Law Alumni Fund coincided with an explosion in the number of students attending the University of Wisconsin Law School. It also coincided with a highly inflationary period, during which the cost of legal education was driven sharply upward. The result has been that during most of its decade of existence a substantial portion of the Law Alumni Fund has been committed to student scholarship and loan programs. Dollars received by students through these programs have proven invaluable to their individual legal educations. Over the years, a substantial loan fund has been created and will be sufficient to provide continuing financial assistance unless there is an increase in the number of defaults.

Because of limited receipts in past Fund Drives, only a small proportion of alumni funds have gone to other equally important and much needed projects. Alumni money was involved in the research and planning which resulted in Wisconsin's unique General Practice course, now on its way to becoming a national model for practice skills training courses. Alumni funds have also been used to provide faculty support through such items as professional and continuing legal education tuition, travel, faculty requirement, and secretarial services for specific projects. Often the Alumni Association was called upon to support some project until it could become self supporting or until state funding could be obtained.

Anyone familiar with administrative requirements in a large educational institution such as the University of Wisconsin will realize that access to discretionary funds by the faculty and staff of the Law School can make the academic environment not only more pleasant, but also more productive. Another area in which this environment of learning can be enhanced is through capital expenditures for equipment and materials. Unfortunately, alumni funds have never been sufficient to provide the kind of assistance which they do at some other schools.

THE BENCHERS SOCIETY

The Benchers Society was formed in 1963 for the purpose of honoring distinguished alumni and to raise funds for the Dean's Discretionary Fund. The minimum annual membership contribution has risen over the years and is now \$150 annually. Financial ability is not, however, the sole criterion for membership in the Benchers Society. Total membership is limited to 150 and Benchers must be invited to join by other Benchers. This Society represents not only outstanding graduates and successful lawyers, but also a group of persons who, through their pledge of generosity, have provided a very important part of the Law Alumni Fund over the years.

It is through the Dean's Discretionary Fund, derived from Bencher's contributions, that most of the non-scholarship expenditures as well as some scholarship expenditures of the Association have occurred. An accounting of the use of these funds is made by the Dean to the Board of Directors of the Association. For several years, the Benchers Society funded a portion of the salary of the Assistant Dean for Placement and Development. This allows the employment of an attorney to run the Law School Placement Office, providing counseling to students and serve as the Executive Director of the Law Alumni Association. One of the duties of the Executive Director has been to coordinate the Law Alumni Fund Drive.

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: THE RECIPIENTS' PERSPECTIVE

After each of us has graduated from Law School and gone on to earn our ways in the world, it is easy to forget the difficulties of financing a legal education. We often hear, "Why should I help today's student with financial aids? I managed to get through somehow." We should, however, be aware that the cost of obtaining a legal education is substantially higher today than in the recent past. Combine this with a higher general cost of living and the fact that today's average student is older and may be married with a family, and we begin to see how important scholarships and loans can be. Consider, for example:

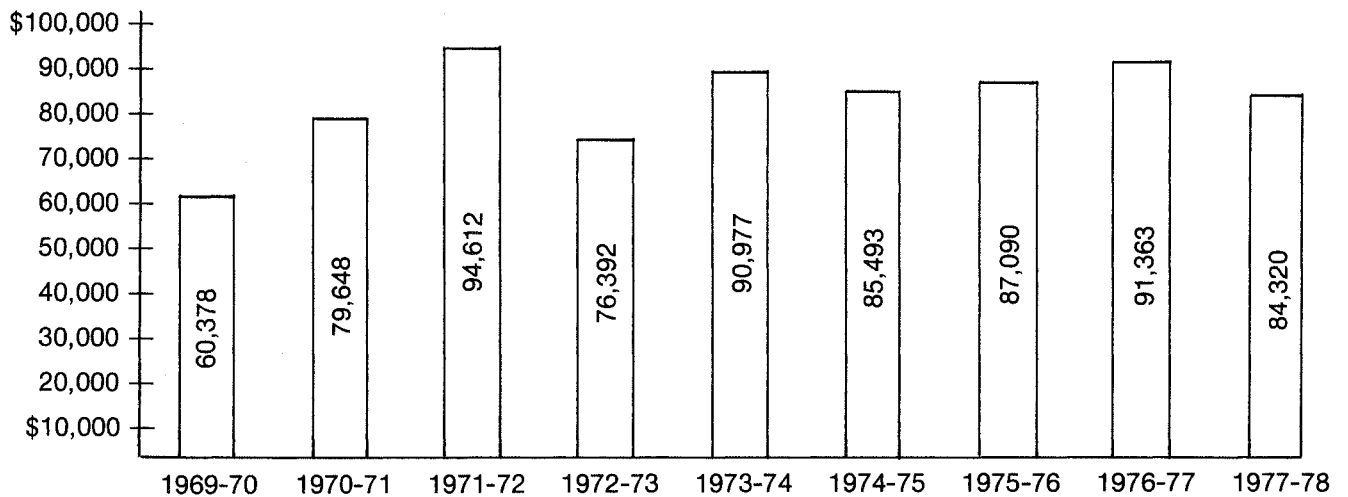
Earlier this year the husband of one of our third year students was killed in a car accident. She was left with two small children, with a third child on the way, and in a real quandary as to how to finish law school. Our Financial Aid Program was able to provide an immediate commitment of additional aid which will allow the student to complete her education.

Short term loans often come to the aid of students. Occasionally credit difficulties threaten the performance of students. A recent loan of \$1100 kept a collection agency from repossessing the car and furnishings of one student. Loans have been made to pay for trips in search of jobs and to pay for clothing for interviews. Often a short term loan fills the gap between starting a job and receiving the first pay check, or until a scholarship arrives.

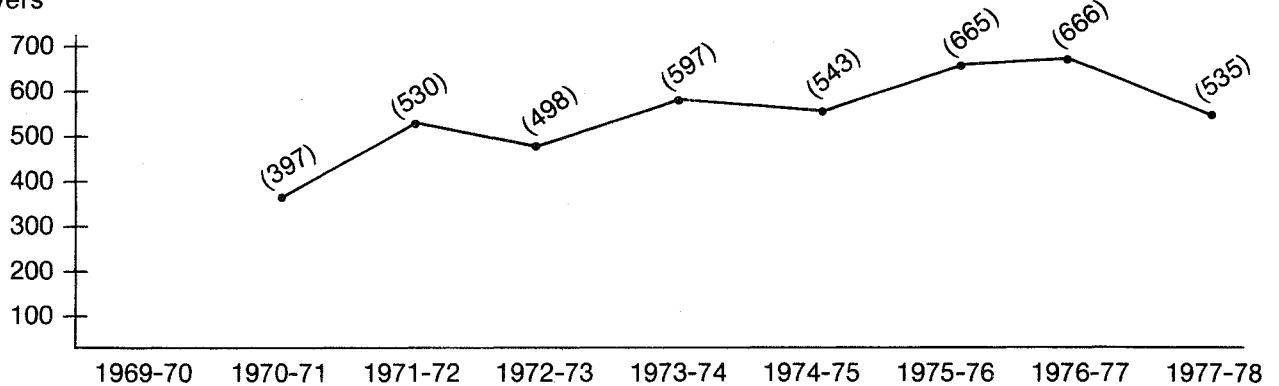
While special state and federal financial aid programs now help many of our students, scholarships and loans drawn from alumni contributions remain an important supplement to the state and federal programs. The total financial assistance package for law students, including loans, scholarships and work-study money, amounted to more than \$1 million in 1977-78. This sum was divided among 381 students, or more than 43% of the student body. WLAA money helps, but its share is failing to keep pace with need.

A DECADE OF ASSISTANCE TO WISCONSIN LEGAL EDUCATION

Total Alumni Gifts



Number of Givers*



*Note that there are more than 6,000 living alumni of the University of Wisconsin Law School.