

# Carolina Law Alumni Make Their Mark Across the Country

CAROLINA LAW

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**U**NC School of Law is, undoubtedly, the state's flagship law school, with nearly 6,700 alumni living and working in North Carolina. But the school also has alumni in all 50 states, as well as some foreign countries.

And the 4,000 or so alumni who live and work outside North Carolina are having as big an impact on the law as those who remain in-state.

"They're out there doing amazing things nationwide, but they got their start at UNC," says Kris Jensen, associate dean for advancement at UNC School of Law. "When they do leave, they leave for significant opportunities."

New York City, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta are major strongholds for Carolina Law alumni, but there are also pockets of UNC lawyers in Dallas, Houston, Nashville, Boston, San Francisco, Chicago and other large cities.

Those alumni are still connected to the school, and they form a strong network that stretches from Silicon Valley to Wall Street; from federal courthouses to corporate boardrooms.

The school coordinates alumni meetings across the country, and alumni often help provide opportunities for Carolina Law students seeking summer associate positions, first jobs and clerkships.

The alumni "really can make an impact for students when they want to look at an out-of-state opportunity," Jensen says.

Four accomplished alumni whose careers reflect the breadth and depth of the legal profession demonstrate how robust a Carolina Law education is.

## From Chapel Hill to the Big Apple

### WES EARNHARDT '04

Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP, New York City

Wes Earnhardt always aspired to be a litigator, to be the lawyer in the courtroom arguing for a client and winning over the judge or jury. Now, 10 years out of Carolina Law and a partner at one of the nation's oldest and most-storied law firms, he does just that.

"I've wanted to be a courtroom lawyer since before I could remember," he says. "I like the idea of helping clients when they really need it. ... I like the chess match aspect of determining what is the best strategy."

Earnhardt, who earned both his undergraduate degree and his J.D. at Carolina, is a partner at New York City-based Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP. Like virtually all of that firm's lawyers, he has learned to be a litigator through the firm's distinctive training program, the Cravath System. It aims to "train our lawyers to be able to walk into any court in the country and do what the client needs," Earnhardt says.

But he learned the fundamentals of legal practice in Chapel Hill, where he immersed himself in writing and advocacy courses.

"Carolina Law School really laid the foundation for everything I [do] now," he says. "I tried to take the opportunity to develop practical skills."

That included taking every writing course and every advocacy course he could fit into his schedule. He remembers arguing a mock appeal to three federal judges as part of N.C. Supreme Court Justice Mark Martin '88's intensive trial advocacy course, and laboring over briefs in Professor William "Bill" Marshall's intensive independent study program.

"That really allowed me to hit the ground running when it came time to practice," he says.

Earnhardt was a summer associate at Cravath and then immediately returned to the firm upon graduation.

Cravath is one of the nation's oldest law firms, founded in New York in 1819. Its partners include a number of figures straight out of the history books, including President Lincoln's secretary of state, William H. Seward, who is remembered for negotiating the purchase of Alaska from

Russia, and John J. McCloy, who advised President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis and later served on the Warren Commission, investigating Kennedy's assassination.

Cravath's training program, where litigation associates are assigned to partners for 18 months to two years and work hand-in-hand with them before moving on to another partner, is designed to expose young lawyers to different ways of practicing law. It also creates a culture of collegiality and mutual support. Partners rely on associates to get work done, so they have a vested interest in the success of those young attorneys.

"Now that I'm a partner, I have a team of associates assigned to me," he says. "Every partner has full incentive to truly train and make better the associates at the firm."

That also means that associates can take on advanced work, if the partner supervising them believes the job will get done well. "We don't set any artificial barriers," he says. "I took probably a dozen depositions as a first year associate ... I argued in court as an associate."

Fortunately, he had a Carolina Law degree.

"One of the great things about Carolina, from my perspective, is that it armed me from the start with those types of practical skills that I could put to use the day I started at Cravath," he says. "I had written briefs ... and had those briefs critiqued by actual state and federal judges."

In addition to complex, high profile business law and tax litigation, Earnhardt also spends part of his time handling pro bono cases — an important focus for all Cravath lawyers. He's taken on landlords who didn't adequately maintain buildings for their tenants, helped battered women get protective orders and win custody disputes, and done work for the Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital.

Earnhardt, though he has no relationship to the racing family of NASCAR fame, is a true Carolina native from small-town Denver, N.C. But his UNC law degree has given him an opportunity to take a different path.

"I really came to New York planning to go back to North Carolina," he says. But that's changed. "Working at Cravath and living in New York City is just an incredible experience that's hooked me."

It shows, he adds, that "going to law school at North Carolina provides you an opportunity to go wherever you want to go."



JEREMY BALES

Wes Earnhardt '04 in New York City