

# It's All in the *Name*

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## **FOR CHRISTOPHER LAM '02 AND ANNE DUNTON LAM '02,**

giving back by establishing a named scholarship fund for current Carolina Law students was an easy decision. Having directly benefited from scholarship support as newlyweds adjusting to the demands of law school, the couple felt compelled to empower students in the same way. "Having received scholarship aid during our own pivotal Carolina Law experience, we wanted to pay that support forward to today's deserving students," they explained.

Chris attended Carolina Law as a prestigious Chancellor's Scholar, while Anne received other merit scholarships. This crucial support reduced the financial pressures of law school as the couple balanced the demands of newlywed life adjustments and a rigorous first-year legal education. The aid enabled them to focus fully on embracing the transformative opportunities and experiences Carolina Law offered.

Now over 20 years into their careers, the Lams remain deeply connected to the Carolina Law community they credit with helping launch their success. They cherish the lifelong friendships and professional networks forged during their law school days that profoundly shaped their career trajectories.

The Lams stay closely involved with Carolina Law to uphold the tradition of generosity displayed by alumni before them who made their own rewarding law school journeys possible. Having directly benefited from scholarships themselves, they feel honored to extend that same support to talented students, aiming to contribute to the school that laid the foundations for their own accomplishments.

At Carolina Law, the Lams dove into building community and vital skills by participating in trial team and moot court. Reflecting back, they emphasized how making connections through those activities opened doors professionally, leading to summer clerkships and eventual jobs with top North Carolina firms recruiting on campus. The practical skills and professional exposure proved invaluable.



Forming a close-knit group of supportive friends was also critical during the Lams' law school journey. "Our 1L year was also our first year of marriage, so we figured if we could make it through that environment, we could make it through anything!" they recalled. "And what helped us do that was a close group of friends and our primary extracurricular activities," including trial team for Chris and moot court for Anne.

After graduating from Carolina Law, the Lams thrived professionally. As they explained, "We were hired by and worked with Carolina Law alums, and those initial positions defined our career path through the mentorship and opportunities we received."

Drawing on the foundations built at Carolina Law, Chris went on to establish a highly successful litigation and trial practice based in Charlotte, NC. He represents leading companies in resolving complex business disputes and high stakes matters. Chris has been a leader in several professional and civic organizations, including being elected President of the Mecklenburg County Bar, and he has also served as the Charlotte office managing partner for Bradley Arant Boult Cummings for the last five years. His continued engagement with the legal community highlights his commitment to advocacy and pushing for positive change.

Similarly, Anne leveraged her experience at Carolina Law to build a rewarding family law practice that was initially litigation focused and then transitioned to a collaborative law approach. Though she stepped back from legal practice after the birth of their second daughter, Anne's experiences at Carolina Law continue to shape her service in various volunteer positions and nonprofit work.

To empower future legal leaders, the Lams established a scholarship with a multi-year commitment. This fund is designed to assist Carolina Law students involved in moot court and trial advocacy, as those activities held great importance during their Carolina Law experience.

Christopher Lam '02 and Anne Dunton Lam '02.

“We hope our scholarship helps relieve students’ financial burdens so they can fully immerse themselves in preparing for impactful careers,” expressed the Lams. “Our aim is to underscore the value of lifelong membership in the Carolina Law community, which supports and connects alumni long after graduation.”

Being part of the Carolina Law community enriched the Lams’ lives and careers in unexpected ways well beyond their school days. The strong statewide alumni presence across the North Carolina bench and bar allowed them to establish an invaluable network of lifelong relationships with fellow graduates who became trusted colleagues, mentors, and referral sources. These connections provided balance and community amidst building demanding yet rewarding careers.

The Lams hope their example might inspire fellow alumni to consider giving back as well by becoming involved with and supporting the law school. They have seen firsthand the immense need for alumni support to ensure Carolina Law’s continued upward trajectory and excellence. The Lams believe contributing, even in small ways, creates meaningful impact at Carolina Law and in the lives of students.

That same spirit of giving back motivates **WALTER FISHER ’86**, who was inspired to pursue law school after seeing local attorneys stepping up as civic leaders and driving community progress in his hometown of Liberty, South Carolina. Their influence demonstrated to him the positive impact a legal career could provide. After witnessing those hometown role models facilitate business deals and assume leadership roles, Walter set his sights on law school as a way to give back through his own career someday.

Arriving at Carolina Law without existing connections, Walter found his footing through a study group whose members quickly became his closest, most trusted friends – relationships he still fondly recalls today. As Walter described, “The study group members quickly



Walter '86 and Michele Fisher.

became close and enduring friends and today remain some of my most trusted and important personal relationships.”

Walter also developed an influential mentorship with renowned former Chancellor William “Bill” Aycock ’48, gaining invaluable career and life advice. As Walter shared, “I had the privilege of getting to know, on a personal and close basis, former Chancellor and then-current law Professor William (“Bill”) Aycock... I was able to actually witness the remarkable legal mind and humanity that Professor Aycock possessed.”

After graduating, Walter’s sharpened legal skills from Carolina Law equipped him to build a successful commercial real estate law practice marked by strong leadership. He began his career at the Kennedy Covington Lobdell & Hickman law firm in Charlotte, which later merged into the global firm of K&L Gates in 2008. While at Kennedy Covington and K&L Gates, Walter was selected and elected to serve in various firm leadership roles. In May 2014, he and several colleagues moved their practices to open the Charlotte office of Troutman Sanders (now Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders). Walter served as Managing Partner of that office for nine years; and during that period, the office rapidly expanded from 11 to around 70 attorneys.

Known for his intellect and integrity, Walter has provided sage counsel on complex commercial real estate projects across the country over the course of his accomplished career. He credits his Carolina Law education with honing the analytical acumen and judgment that enabled his success navigating such multifaceted transactions.

Beyond his legal practice, Walter has engaged extensively with nonprofit boards, aiming for community impact. As he shared, "Throughout my career, I have been a member of many non-profit committees and boards and have chaired a number of those boards." Walter views civic engagement as a key responsibility parallel to his vocation.

In gradually deepening his lifelong relationship with Carolina Law as an alumnus, he served on alumni boards and eventually as president of the Law Alumni Association. This engagement granted him insights into the school's needs and mission. It was through this active alumni role that Walter developed a greater understanding of Carolina Law's urgent needs, especially since the early 2000s.

When Dean Martin H. Brinkley arrived and outlined an ambitious strategic vision for the school, Walter felt compelled to significantly expand his support. As he described, "Martin brought into clear focus the extremely precarious position of Carolina Law and the threats that existed. Martin's vision for Carolina Law was captivating to my wife Michele and me, and we were inspired to further increase our financial and volunteer commitments to the school."

Inspired by Dean Brinkley's bold vision, Walter and Michele have opted to make their scholarship gifts immediately available to assist students in financial need rather than endowing a fund. Walter expressed his hope that "students who receive scholarship support will become excellent legal practitioners devoted to service in their communities."

Walter and Michele's support of Carolina Law grew after their daughter Elizabeth Fisher '19 enrolled in 2016. As

Walter shared, "She had a great law school experience, reinforcing in our minds the underlying quality of the school and the strength of the extraordinary faculty and the programs and opportunities offered to students." Elizabeth's journey gave them an inside view into the heart of Carolina Law today.

Walter was encouraged by the culture of close and warm relationships between today's Carolina Law students and faculty members, a phenomenon that was less common in his own era. He cited the opportunity Elizabeth had to co-author an article with her mentor, Professor Andy Hessick. Professors Hessick, Mary-Rose Papandrea, and others encouraged her judicial clerkship pursuit, shaping her career path, while Dean Brinkley and Professor Melissa Jacoby provided ongoing career and writing guidance. As Elizabeth fondly recalled: "It speaks volumes to me that the faculty members are invested in our careers at such an early stage."

During her clerkship with Judge David B. Sentelle '68 of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, Professor Hessick thoughtfully connected Elizabeth with Carolina Law adjunct and Wiley Rein, LLP Partner, Rick Simpson '77. They now work closely together at Wiley and currently are co-teaching Carolina Law's esteemed Supreme Court Program, which provides students the opportunity to assist with representation of clients before the United States Supreme Court, giving them invaluable experience in high-level appellate advocacy.

In Walter's view, the current law school environment, which promotes and encourages close relationships between faculty and students, reflects a positive and healthy evolution compared to the more formal and "distant" relationships that typically existed between faculty and students during his time at Carolina Law. As he described, "Having gained insights through Elizabeth's recent law school experience, Michele and I think the law school environment today is a vast improvement over what existed in the 1980s." Witnessing the Carolina Law

of today through Elizabeth's experience further reinforced for Walter and Michele the value of giving back and the importance of supporting current and future students.

Like the Lams, the Fishers are seeking to make an impact beyond their personal careers by supporting the next generation of lawyer leaders. To make their support even more impactful, the two couples decided to establish named scholarship funds. The Anne and Christopher Lam Scholarship Fund and The Walter and Michele Fisher Scholarship Fund will be a significant legacy they leave behind, providing crucial assistance for generations of students to come.

The Lams and Fishers share a commitment to service and leadership, upholding the Carolina Law tradition of graduates who serve communities in North Carolina and beyond with integrity and purpose. Their named scholarships represent investments in tomorrow's principled attorneys, judges, and advocates who will advance justice and strengthen the school's mission of excellence long into the future. ♦



The Fishers and family.