

UNH LAW

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Center for IP Opens
9 Ways to Get Involved

Peter Lando JD '91:
Sharing his Success with
his Alma Mater



GIVING BACK

At UNH Law, Peter and Michelle Lando found each other, fulfilling careers, and their philosophy of stewardship

BY DANIELLE KRONK BARRICK

To know Peter Lando is to know his alma mater. That's where he met his wife, Michelle, and found his chosen career. It's where his firm has recruited many of the lawyers who've helped to make the firm he co-founded, Lando & Anastasi, so successful. And it's also where he has generously invested, both personally—as a volunteer, teacher, and trustee—and financially.

But to understand Peter's commitment to UNH Law, it helps to know a little about his first days at the school, nearly 25 years ago. Peter and Michelle Lando met at UNH Law in 1988, when he was a first-year student and she was a 2L, Michelle LaRoche. They shared a focus on IP and a mailbox, which turned out to be key: "We shared the 'L' box, of course," says Peter, "and I recalled meeting her, and just thinking to myself, 'Well at least her last name begins with an L, she wouldn't have to change her initials.'"

But, like a law degree, love did not come easily. There was the demanding coursework, the class year difference and the fact that Peter always thought Michelle was dating other people. (They were her study partners, it turned out.)

During late nights at the computer lab and in the few classes they had together, Peter and Michelle did forge a friendship, bolstered by their common interests. Says Michelle, "We discovered that we both had chemical engineering degrees (his from Drexel University, mine from the University of New Hampshire) in common. Since there are not many Chem E's, we had instant karma, and I knew that I liked him for a reason."

And then there was Michelle's class graduation party, at Pats Peak. To hear him tell it, he asked her out. Her version? She invited him. The parts they agree on: That Peter didn't have the money to buy his ticket to the party, and that Michelle paid (she may have held this over his head a few times). At the party, they danced, and Peter asked her for her phone number. She told him to look it up.

"This was silly since he knew where I lived," says Michelle. "92B Washington Street, the spot where the new building for the Franklin Pierce Center for Intellectual Property is being built today."

Michelle helped Peter find summer work at Cabot Corporation in Billerica, MA, where she would begin work full-time in the fall. Peter's summer job there turned into part-time work during his third year, ensuring that the two continued to see each other frequently. This worked out well: "By March, I asked her to marry me," Peter said.

They married in October of 1991. Michelle continued to work at Cabot, and their mentor at the global performance materials company helped to connect Peter with his first job out of school, at the Boston IP firm Wolf Greenfield & Sacks.

Fresh out of school and busy with work, Peter and Michelle maintained strong ties to the then-Franklin Pierce Law Center. "When we graduated, we were eager to just get our careers going," Peter says, "but we still tried to find time to extend ourselves by coming up and interviewing students who were graduating, or teaching, or sitting on panels, or by just making ourselves available to 1Ls – whatever the need was. And, of course, donating whatever we could financially."

In 2002, their first child, Sophia, was born, forever changing her parents' priorities and perspectives. Michelle took an extended maternity leave and then returned to work part-time. For Peter, it was a chance to really see what working parents—especially working moms—go through.

"I used to think I understood what working mothers go through, but when it was actually happening in our world, I developed a whole new level of appreciation for their situation," he says. "Once Sophia was born, I saw firsthand the balancing act that working mothers handle every day, and I have tremendous respect for that."

This new perspective was to factor largely in Peter's next venture. In 2003, he and two other shareholders at Wolf Greenfield decided to start their own firm, based on a unique set of principles.

"The co-founders and I felt that it was time to start something different, to get back into what we always believed a law firm ought to be," Peter says of the firm. "That's what we modeled this firm on."

"There's a classic struggle in the practice of law—the pressure on practitioners to bill more hours and have their billing rates go higher and higher versus the competing pressure from clients to keep the budget down and to get things done in a timely manner and to be responsive," Peter says. "And, of course, the constant through it all is that clients want—and deserve—a high-quality product."

"The model here was to bring the highest quality practitioners together, and we have been very fortunate in that regard," Peter says. "People are just impressed with the way these UNH Law graduates come out; they're ready to hit the ground running. They're bright technically, but they have a legal perspective that most law school grads don't because they've been exposed to so much. It's an impressive group we have from the school."

And what's so special about a UNH Law education?

"It's a different shade of green," Peter says. "When people come out of law school, they know enough to get into trouble. But when the Pierce grads, or the UNH Law grads, come out, they're practice ready, particularly in IP, but also in other areas. They're coming out ready to write briefs and prosecute patents,

"Stewardship: To us, that means extending that same good fortune that we know to others... The school means a lot to us. It's not only the place where we met, it's the place where we learned the fundamentals of our practice."

– Peter Lando JD '91, Lando & Anastasi

Peter and his partners had an innovative strategy to address this. "We work to eliminate that struggle with a lower billable-hour target, and a lower hourly rate," Peter says. "We manage the expense side really tightly, and we get a much higher realization on the revenue side, meaning our clientele recognizes we give an incredibly high-quality product for what we charge, and they're willing to pay. The net result is that we end up being very profitable, and at the same time afford our attorneys the flexibility to spend extra hours volunteering, on boards, or in other ways involved in organizations as I do, going to continuing legal education and training, or, when client demands are great, to work more. In our experience, this flexibility lets our attorneys balance their work and personal lives, and leads to more productive, sharper attorneys."

And today, many of those attorneys at Lando & Anastasi are also graduates of UNH Law. To date, nine alums work alongside Peter at Lando & Anastasi: Keith Noe JD '91, a partner; and associates Nicole Palmer JD '05; Thomas McGinnis JD '06; Sandra Congdon JD '06; Gregory Gerstenzang JD '07; David Roccio JD '08; Michael Mathaisel JD/LLM '09; Nathan Harris JD '09; and Julia Mathis JD '10. And there's Ian Mullet, a 3L and the firm's 2011 summer associate.

Peter said the firm did not specifically set out to hire so many UNH Law alums, but often, he says, they were the most qualified candidates.

with some knowledge of trademark and copyright and the international scene."

Peter continues: "It's much easier to work with them because the foundation of knowledge is there. And as someone who trains these folks, I can now start at a higher level and start to teach them about context and its importance, counseling, and an appreciation and understanding of the business needs of clients. This makes it easier to train and to grow an attorney."

Keith Noe, the firm's hiring partner, echoes that: "Other schools just don't seem to have the depth of talent that UNH Law has," he says. "Although we certainly have hired many attorneys from other law schools in the Boston area and beyond, we have found that UNH Law consistently offers us more candidates, often-times having better credentials. The results speak for themselves."

The alums appreciate their firm's strong ties to the school.

"We take a lot of pride in our UNH Law connection, and I think we see ourselves as ambassadors of the school within the IP community," says Nicole Palmer, who started at the firm as a summer associate in 2004 and has since been called one of the rising stars in IP law by *Boston Magazine*. "It's nice to have that common ground with colleagues, and the link is definitely a strong undertone around the firm. We recognize that our individual success, that of our firm, and that of our law school are all intertwined at some level. The connection strengthens our professional network

and encourages us to remain active as alumni.”

Many maintain strong ties of their own. Julia Mathis, and Nathan Harris, recently began organizing informal alumni events in the Boston area.

“We’ve had better than expected turnout and received tons of positive comments from the other alumni,” Mathis says. “We find that these events help to recreate that feeling of community our school fostered.”

Michael Mathaisel still lives in Concord. Since he graduated, he has volunteered as a judge for 1L moot court and mock trial events. “As a law student, I always felt comfortable and welcome at the school, and that is one reason I enjoy returning to visit the place and the people,” he says.

Lando & Anastasi’s success has in some ways paralleled UNH Law’s rise in reputation in the Boston area. In the early years of Peter’s career, he says, he felt he had to fight to be noticed by a legal community with its roots in the well-known Boston area schools.

“I would always feel like I had to work twice as hard as those folks,” he says. “Now my partners and I decide whether to hire them.”

In 2004 and 2006, Peter and Michelle welcomed their sons Michael and Christopher into the world.

As they raised their family, they focused on living out the lessons they were teaching their children.

Peter has a name for that: “Stewardship.” “To us, that means extending that same good fortune that we know to others,” he says. “Stewardship manifests itself in giving back your time, your talents and your treasure, and we believe that to the extent people are able, they ought to do just that. In our experience, it makes life more complete.”

“And an extension of that is the basis for why Michelle and I

support UNH Law so strongly,” Peter says. “The school means a lot to us. It’s not only the place where we met, it’s the place where we learned the fundamentals of our practice as IP lawyers. All of that means so much to us in terms of a fulfilling professional life.”

Both Peter and Michelle have brought their experience back to the classroom at UNH Law as adjunct professors. Peter taught patent practice in the mid-’90s, and Michelle has taught licensing and IP management since 2009.

Last May, Peter was invited to join the UNH Law’s Board of Trustees, just after Pierce Law decided to affiliate with the University of New Hampshire. “There have been some very, very big decisions in the past year, from the affiliation to the new dean to, most recently, freezing tuition,” Peter says. “And there’s been a great deal of activity in the last year at the school.”

Not least among that activity: The construction of the school’s new Franklin Pierce Center for Intellectual Property, slated to become a global hub for the intersection of intellectual property and economic development. This year, Michelle and Peter pledged a generous gift to the Center, which will stand on the site of Michelle’s former apartment, where Peter spent many nights cooking dinner for



her as she studied for the bar exam.

Says Michelle: “We feel extremely blessed for all that we have—most especially our three children—and, as time allows, we try to share our blessings in areas that have special meaning to us. Sometimes we are able to give of our time, sometimes we are able to give of our talent. But when time is too precious or our talent is lacking, we make financial contributions to help support our passions in some small, but meaningful way.”