One of the great strengths of the UNM School of Law is its close connection to a very vibrant legal community. Many of you have been able to keep up with interesting happenings at the School of Law because you were able to join our faculty, alumni and students for these wonderful events, or perhaps you have heard by word of mouth, or visited our website which we update weekly with important law school news.

This Snapshot is designed to provide a lively and readable picture of some of the most exciting recent highlights here at the School of Law. We have added dynamic new faculty, had wonderful visitors, and enjoyed the incredible support of members of the New Mexico Judiciary, the Legislature, our alumni, and other generous donors and friends. It has been a great year!

The faculty and I wish to thank you for supporting our important work in developing lawyers and leaders for New Mexico and beyond. We could not do it without you.

With gratitude,

Kevin K. Washburn
Dean & Professor of Law

“Warm wishes to you from all of us in the UNM School of Law community.”

— Dean Kevin Washburn
Professor Jim Ellis Promoted to Distinguished Professor of Law

PROFESSOR JIM ELLIS HAS BEEN PROMOTED TO DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, the highest faculty rank at the University of New Mexico. This prestigious designation is reserved for only a handful of professors, those who have demonstrated outstanding achievements and are nationally and internationally renowned as scholars.

Since Ellis joined the faculty in 1976, he has worked steadily to explore and understand the rights of people with mental disabilities and how the law should protect these special people. The result of Professor Ellis’s methodical work has been nothing less than the creation of a new field of academic study on the law of developmental disability. Along with his scholarship, he has drafted model legislation and tirelessly testified before state legislatures across the country in support of bills to protect and advance the rights of people with developmental disabilities. He has written amicus briefs on behalf of major national mental health organizations in virtually every case heard by the U.S. Supreme Court involving the rights of people with mental disabilities since 1985. He even argued a case in the United States Supreme Court, winning handily.

Ellis routinely assembles a team of students and faculty members as an informal seminar to help participate in drafting the amicus briefs he undertakes. “For more than 25 years, Jim has made an unparalleled educational opportunity available to our students at UNM that does not exist anywhere else in the country,” said Professor Chris Fritz, an occasional participant in these seminars.

For his steadfast devotion, Ellis has received many honors, including being named Lawyer of the Year in 2002 by the National Law Journal. In 2007, the UNM Board of Regents presented him with a Meritorious Service Award, a rarely bestowed honor given to staff and faculty members in recognition of extraordinary and distinguished service to the university. And now, in 2011 Prof. Ellis has deservingly received the prestigious designation of Distinguished Professor, making him the highest ranked professor at the School of Law.

“Jim Ellis simply is a national treasure... We are lucky to have had him changing the world from his perch here at UNM for so many years.”

— Dean Kevin Washburn
INAUGURAL LECTURESHP

The U.S. Senator Dennis Chavez Endowed Lectureship on Law & Civil Rights

The Honorable Mary H. Murguia of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit presented the inaugural U.S. Sen. Dennis Chavez Endowed Lectureship on Law & Civil Rights, offering examples of how the New Mexico senator’s unyielding commitment to preserving civil rights continues to be important today. Professor Norman Bay, a friend and colleague, introduced Judge Murguia, the first Latina to serve as a federal district court judge in Arizona. Judge Muguia shared an impactful and emotional account of her own inspiring rise through the legal system.

During her visit to the UNM School of Law, Judge Murguia enjoyed lunch with members of the Mexican American Law Student Association and spent time with our faculty, members of the Senator’s family and judges on the New Mexico Court of Appeals.

This new lecture series was established as an endowment by the Dennis Chavez Foundation, led by the late senator’s family, to memorialize Chavez’s legacy as a public servant and a champion of civil rights. Throughout his life, Chavez, a populist from Albuquerque’s South Valley who rose to become a nationally renowned U.S. senator during the mid-20th century, spoke for equality and fairness and against discrimination and bigotry.

More than 250 people attended the Oct. 20 lecture at the UNM School of Law.

“My grandfather’s devotion to public service, his championing of civil and individual rights and his courage to speak up would serve us well today.”

— Gloria Tristani (’90)
Granddaughter of Sen. Chavez
Professor Dawinder Sidhu Follows Passion into the Law

AS A COLLEGE STUDENT, PROFESSOR DAWINDER “DAVE” SIDHU HAD A DEAL WITH HIS FATHER, A PHYSICIAN. “The deal we had was that I could major in anything I wanted so long as I also took the requisite pre-med courses,” he said. This allowed Sidhu, who joined the UNM law faculty in August 2011, to pursue his interest in philosophy.

After taking a course in the philosophy of law at the University of Pennsylvania, Sidhu became fascinated by the law and made the difficult decision to break the promise to his father. “I knew I wanted to study and be part of the law after that course,” he recalled.

He earned a master’s in government from Johns Hopkins University, after which Sidhu went on to The George Washington University Law School. He admitted that law school started out as a purely intellectual exercise in understanding the framework and contents of the United States government.

Then, Sept. 11, 2001 arrived. Within hours, his focus had shifted. Sidhu was sitting in class as a first-year law student when the towers were struck. After receiving a number of emails about discrimination already being aimed at Sikhs, Sidhu, a Sikh himself, had found his sense of purpose as a lawyer.

“That day gave my interest in the law immediate practical meaning. I realized that I could use my legal training for the benefit of my family and my community, and I became more dedicated to civil rights in general,” said Sidhu. His academic interests also include national security, constitutional law, employment discrimination and education law.

During law school, Sidhu worked for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. After earning his J.D. in 2004, he joined the policy arm of the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, at its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Three years later, he began a year-long clerkship with U.S. District Judge David G. Campbell in Phoenix. That year confirmed Sidhu’s interest in law teaching.

Under Judge Campbell’s tutelage, Sidhu said he learned as much, if not more, about the law than in all three years of law school combined. He felt compelled to pass along to law students what he had learned.

After the clerkship ended, he began laying the groundwork for an academic career. He held research posts at the Georgetown University Law Center and Harvard University. Last spring, he was an adjunct professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law.

He also began writing at a furious pace, and already has produced a significant body of work. Most notable are, First Korematsu and now Ashcroft v. Iqbal: The Latest Chapter in the Wartime Supreme Court’s Disregard for Claims of Discrimination, published in the Buffalo Law Review in 2010, and Shadowing the Flag: Extending the Habeas Writ Beyond Guantanamo, scheduled for publication in an upcoming issue of the William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal. He has also worked on several high-profile cases in the national security arena.

Sidhu now shares his enthusiasm and knowledge with students in his constitutional law class.

“I enjoy exploring the subject matter much like Judge Campbell did with me, through a respectful back-and-forth dialogue,” he said.

Outside of work, Sidhu admits to being obsessed with professional ice hockey and the HBO-series “The Wire”. He already has discovered the Frontier, and looks forward to many more visits to the university-area landmark, though he would not divulge whether he prefers red or green chile.

“That’s personal,” he said with a smile.
Professor Max Minzner Combines Love for the Law and Math

AS A LAW PROFESSOR, MAX MINZNER HAS FOUND A WAY TO BLEND HIS PASSION FOR THE PARTS OF MATHEMATICS AND THE LAW THAT excite him the most. “I love the reasoning and formal logic of math, but I wanted to apply it in a real-world setting,” he said. “I like to get on my feet and talk, and as a law professor, I get to combine all of that.”

Minzner, who joined the UNM law faculty in August 2011, pursued an undergraduate degree in mathematics and political science at Brown University, and quickly followed that up with a law degree from Yale Law School.

After clerking for Judge Pamela Rymer of the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals and working as an associate with Davis Polk & Wardwell in New York City, Minzner was ready to spend more time in the courtroom. “I wanted to try cases,” he said simply.

He had spent the summer after his first year of law school working in the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Albuquerque, where Norman Bay, now a colleague on the UNM law faculty, was his supervisor. Influenced by the quality of the lawyers and the work they did that summer, when he decided to become a prosecutor, Minzner applied to become an assistant U. S. attorney, and joined the office in Brooklyn, New York.

“I enjoyed the autonomy and the opportunity as a young lawyer to manage my own cases, under the supervision of excellent prosecutors,” he said.

For the next four years, Minzner served as lead or co-lead prosecutor on a number of significant cases, including United States v Espinoza, in which he prevailed in the conviction of a defendant accused of transporting 500 kilograms of cocaine worth $10 million from Los Angeles to New York. The case involved the largest seizure of cocaine in Long Island history up to that point.

As much as he liked this work, Minzner also harbored an interest in academia. That’s not surprising, given that his mother, the late-Honorable Pamela Minzner, was the second woman to join the UNM law faculty before she went on to become a New Mexico Supreme Court justice.

In 2006, Minzner joined the faculty of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. “As a law professor, I have enjoyed the opportunity to engage in scholarship and write about topics that I am interested in,” he said. “But the real joy is that I get to launch students on their careers and hear back from them when they are in practice.”

Minzner has focused his teaching and scholarship on criminal law and civil procedure. One of his recent articles is titled, Putting Probability Back into Probable Cause, published in the Texas Law Review in 2009.

Another article, to be published in the William & Mary Law Review in 2012, is titled, Why Agencies Punish, and came about after Minzner spent a year as special counsel to the director of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s Office of Enforcement. The article looks at what administrative agencies are trying to accomplish when they engage in enforcement actions.

At FERC, Minzner was reunited with Bay, who has been on leave from the faculty to serve as director of FERC’s Office of Enforcement.

He is delighted to return to his hometown and the UNM School of Law, where he spent the 2009 spring semester as a visiting professor. “I’m looking forward to building a relationship with the students and the faculty,” he said. “The intimate size and warm atmosphere of UNMSOL makes establishing those relationships easy.”

Outside of the classroom, Minzner enjoys playing bridge and reading. In late October, he and his wife, Mary, welcomed their first child.
A SUPREME VISITOR

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor Visits With Students

U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR PROVIDED A GLIMPSE INTO THE WORKINGS OF THE NATION’S HIGHEST COURT during a lively question-and-answer session with law students at the University of New Mexico School of Law on Sept. 8.

Professors Antoinette Sedillo Lopez and Eileen Gauna ('85) moderated the afternoon discussion, during which Justice Sotomayor answered questions posed by UNM law students that touched on her developing judicial philosophy and the role of the high court. She shared personal anecdotes and encouraged the students to strive for greatness in their legal careers.

At the conclusion of the closed session, Student Bar Association President David Odegard ('12), along with other SBA officers, presented Justice Sotomayor with a handmade vase from Jemez Pueblo. The vase was presented on behalf of the entire student body to commemorate the justice’s visit.

At the request of Justice Sotomayor, who wanted to underscore the important educational purpose, her UNM visit was limited to UNM School of Law students, faculty and staff.

Prior to her law-school appearance, Justice Sotomayor enjoyed a luncheon with students from the Tribal Law Journal (TLJ) and Indian law faculty at University House. She shared her personal background and then graciously answered questions posed by TLJ members, providing encouragement to the students.

Immediately following lunch, the justice met with Native American Community Academy (NACA) high school juniors and seniors at a reception hosted by the TLJ. NACA students are currently attending classes next door to the law school in the building that previously housed the New Mexico Court of Appeals.
Honoring Scholarship Donors and Recipients

A TOUCHING, AND WONDERFULLY ENTHUSIASTIC GROUP, COMPRISED OF GENEROUS SCHOLARSHIP DONORS, 2011 student scholarship recipients and family members, former recipients of these law school scholarships, judges, lawyers, faculty and alumni alike, enjoyed lively conversation and emotionally stirring presentations as part of a new luncheon held on the law school’s back patio designed to recognize the accomplishments of these students and the life-changing generosity of the donors whose endowed scholarships they receive.

Each coming year will feature one of the law school’s scholarships, its donors, the story of how it came to be established, and the lives it has changed. This year’s luncheon featured the Carlos F. Vigil Memorial Scholarship, established in 2000 to honor the legacy of Carlos Vigil, a Santa Fe lawyer who dedicated his practice to serving low-income clients in northern New Mexico before his death.

His widow, Andrea Vigil, spoke to the gathering, along with friend, Janet Clow (’75), and Christina Vigil (’04), no relation, a former recipient of the scholarship who shared a moving tribute detailing how receiving this scholarship shaped her young self-image, drove her to greater successes in law school and contributed to the accomplishments she has achieved in her impressive legal career.♦

“The Carlos F. Vigil scholarship was given to me during a time in my life filled with financial uncertainties, self-doubt and many other challenges. The gift serves as a constant reminder for me to passionately advocate for the under-represented communities, much like Carlos Vigil did.”

— Christina Vigil (’95) (no relation) Former recipient of the Carlos F. Vigil Endowed Scholarship
The 2011 Lineup:

- Tracy Hughes, former general counsel, NM Environment Department
- Greg Nibert, Roswell oil and gas lawyer, and Chaves County Commissioner
- Judge Matt Reynolds of the Seventh Judicial District
- Jason Marks ('04), PRC Commissioner

Stay Tuned for the Spring 2012 Lineup

CLE credit is available

The School of Law's Natural Resources and Environmental Law Program, along with the Utton Center, has sponsored this series to educate students and attorneys on current New Mexico legal topics. By bringing in experts involved in high-profile and timely issues, our goal is to enrich the experience of our students and strengthen the school's connection with practitioners and natural resource professionals. We are grateful for the financial support of the Natural Resources, Energy and Environmental Law Section of the State Bar."

—Professor Reed Benson