

# Lawyer with 'drive to give back' drives back to teach

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It happens every payday. The checks go out to the Law School faculty and Instructor Harry Ruffalo ('67) gets zip.

But Ruffalo is not being slighted. He teaches a weekly course on a pro bono basis as a way to meet an old debt.

"If you want to get mushy about this, the Law School provided me with a wonderful career, and this is my way of paying it back," said Ruffalo, managing partner of tax for the worldwide operation of Arthur Andersen & Co.

Once a week during the fall semester, Ruffalo leaves his Deerfield, Illinois, home at about 5:00 am and drives to Madison to teach.

"I get to Madison between 7:00 and 7:10 am," he said. "I prepare for class, then teach from 8:50-10:50. I usually get back to the office around 1:15."

Not only does Ruffalo teach for free, he also doesn't ask to be reimbursed for the 280 miles that he logs each week driving to and from Madison.

"It's totally free," he said.

If his compensation—or lack thereof—is unusual, so is his course. Called **The Business of Practicing Law**, it focuses on how to manage a law firm.

The course syllabus includes managing for profitability, practice development, ethical and professional considerations, defining a firm's vision, marketing strategy, client segmentation, communications, understanding client psychology, establishing client referrals, networking and engaging new clients.

"A dose of reality is what it is," Ruffalo said. "The students tell me that this is probably one of the more practical courses they've had."

College courses that concentrate on the business side of law are relatively rare and often are addressed only in non-credit workshops or seminars.

The course, which Ruffalo said could have been called **The Business of Being in the Professional Services Business** is designed to be interactive.

"I give them reading the week before," he said. "Then, I make up some vignettes, hand them out, and get them to think about it. It's really a discussion on what they would do and how they would handle it. We talk about the fact that they have to be practice developers, they have to create relationships. We talk about the concept of how to serve your clients or at least meet their expectations.

"A typical student's reaction to the coursework is 'My God, how can one person be expected to do all this stuff?'" Ruffalo said.

Ruffalo said his students are hungry for war stories and as Arthur Anderson's manager of tax operations, he has plenty.

"We have 7,000 tax professionals in about 90 countries. My job is making sure our standards of practice are upheld worldwide."

Because of his global responsibilities, Ruffalo occasionally misses class.

"I'm on an airplane about 60 percent of my life," he said. "That's another factor that comes into play. Fortunately, my partners have substituted for me. I think that's good for the students to get different perspectives."

"I'm in the process of packaging this course," he said. "I'm packaging it as a course that prepares people to work in a service environment. This can be a prototype that could be taught by our people in just about any major law school."

Dean Daniel O. Bernstine, who helped bring the course into being now is pleased with its benefits.

"Law schools need to help introduce students to all the various 'real worlds' that lawyers will practice in. Harry's course is a great introduction for the majority that will be engaged in private practice. And, of course, no one minds getting a quality course and instruction for free!"