

**Many USC Law alumni** offer their time and resources in support of the law school. Some have returned to the classroom to impart wisdom and experience to students. This collection of profiles highlights four outstanding USC Law adjunct professors — who also happen to be USC Law alumni.

## A win-win situation

*Adjunct professor shares mediation skills, USC Law students benefit*

Mike Young '85 always planned to dedicate some part of his career to teaching. His father was a faculty member at UCLA, and Young saw him as the epitome of a college professor.

"He always focused on the teaching part of his profession, and I looked up to that," says Young, a partner and head of the Intellectual Property Practice Group at Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava MacCuish in Los Angeles. "I've always tried to tailor my class so that the students would not only enjoy learning but want to learn."

Ten years ago, Young approached USC Law with the outline for a course in negotiation and mediation, at the time a burgeoning area of law practice and study. Young designed his course to focus on skills development. His students engage in 10 different negotiation and mediation exercises during the semester, which the class then discusses as a group.

"I wanted to take the fear out of negotiations, to allow students to understand how and why the process works, and then to negotiate themselves — and do it frequently," Young said. "There is a lot of negotiation in life, and if you apply these skills properly, you can often resolve conflicts in ways that aren't destructive to a relationship. It makes solving problems a lot more fun."

Nancy Grant '07 says she took Young's course as a 2L partly because it went beyond lecture and theory and focused on practical skills.

"The skills that Professor Young teaches for successful mediation or negotiation — active listening, empathy, and coming up with creative solutions to satisfy both parties' goals — can be used in everyday life," Grant says.

The mock negotiations and mediations that distinguish Young's classes from the norm were a step outside Grant's comfort zone — in a positive way.

"I was nervous knowing that I would be practicing mediations in front of the class and one-on-one with my peers, but I figured that the classroom would be a safe environment in which to hone these skills," says Grant, who after graduation will join Allen Matkins' Los



Angeles office. "Professor Young is a passionate and enthusiastic guy. He smiles a lot, and you can tell he clearly enjoys what he does."

Young began mediating in 1989, inspired in part by a USC Law Roth Lecture presented by U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Ralph K. Winter, Jr., that Young attended as a student. Litigation as a method for resolving disputes moved slowly, was expensive and often bogged down in unnecessary procedural skirmishes, Winter noted at the time. He challenged law students to become part of the solution.

When Young started mediating he realized it provided resolution that avoided many of the litigation and trial pitfalls Judge Winter raised.

"It's efficient, it's faster and you can get better results," says Young, who also founded and chairs his firm's Neutral Services Department. "You can settle cases where both sides actually win. So I started seeing the power of mediation as my way of helping the system operate."

"That's not to say I don't love a good trial," he says. "I'm not afraid of conflict, but I look to resolve it in the most constructive and advantageous way. Sometimes that's trial; but more often it is through negotiation."

— Lori Stuenkel