

# Taking Care of Business

*Washburn Law's female professors lead the way for women attorneys.*

*By Annie Flachsbarth, BA '07*

The area of corporate law conjures up images of boardrooms with men in high-backed chairs sitting around large tables, as it has traditionally been a male-dominated field. At Washburn University School of Law, however, women make up 80 percent of the tenured and tenure-track faculty who teach courses in business and transactional law, altering the gender dynamics and preconceived notions about this field.

“Just go to the closing of a deal and look around the room. You’ll see—it’s all men,” said Professor Amy Deen Westbrook, co-director of the Business and Transactional Law Center at Washburn Law.

In spite of near gender balance among law school students, women remain under-represented in the legal profession, particularly in corporate law. BTLC co-directors Westbrook and Professor Andrea J. Boyack model a new dynamic that isn’t so male dominated to a new generation of lawyers.

Women striving to succeed in transactional law have long battled stereotypes about their ability and accomplishments in the field. But Boyack knows the idea that women cannot be aggressive and effective corporate lawyers is “an outdated myth.”

“In transactional practice, you’re trying to achieve a ‘win-win.’ You’re trying to put together a deal—to imaginatively solve issues and negotiate,” said Boyack. “And many women are particularly skilled in this area—they have the creativity, communication, and people skills to excel.”

Boyack and Westbrook bring to Washburn Law their more than 20 years combined experience in corporate law practice in New York and Washington, D.C. Boyack spent more than a decade practicing structured finance, securitization, acquisitions, and real estate financing in some of the most prestigious national law firms and served as in-house counsel to a Fortune 500 company. Westbrook spent years structuring



Each of the eight female tenured and tenure-track professors who teach business and transactional law bring their own unique expertise to the classroom, expanding the learning opportunities for Washburn Law students. **From Left** – Mary Kreiner Ramirez, Emily Grant, Patricia Judd, Andrea J. Boyack, Aida Alaka, Lori A. McMillan, Janet Thompson Jackson, and Amy Deen Westbrook. Photo by Peggy Clark.

and negotiating international transactions, including project finance, acquisitions, joint ventures, and trade arrangements, representing both companies and sovereign nations.

“It’s very different from when we went to law school. When our students graduate, they’ve already seen a contract, they’ve already seen what the deal looks like, and what the paperwork looks like,” said Westbrook. “We’re not just explaining the business concepts, we’re showing them what the transactions look like—helping them to be fully equipped to get to work after school.”

Last fall, *preLaw* Magazine recognized Washburn Law as among the top schools in the nation in transactional legal education. The school was one of only 21 to receive the top ranking of “A” for its program of Business and Corporate Law and was one of 11 to receive an “A-” ranking in Taxation Law. *preLaw* noted the competition in the area of business and corporate law is particularly strong, as more schools offer concentrations in that area than any other specialty. Washburn Law’s high marks in this area are attributed to the breadth and quality of its transactional and business law curricular offerings and the Law School’s Small Business & Nonprofit Transactional Law Clinic, an integral part of the Business and Transactional Law Center and the only transactional law clinic in the state, led by yet another of Washburn Law’s talented female faculty, Professor Janet Thompson Jackson.

According to Boyack, the female faculty is helping to set a model for female attorneys to consider business and transactional law by showing women can excel in this area and are, in many cases, naturally suited to practice in business and transactional law. Half of the nation’s attorneys focus on transactional work, so creating pathways to this type of legal practice helps prepare law students for the real world and broadens their opportunities.

In addition to increasing student interest in transactional legal work and preparing them for law practice, Washburn Law’s female faculty also model work-life balance that makes a career in the law sustainable. That sustainability in a law career is challenging, particularly for women — women today are more than twice as likely to leave their firms seeking better work-life balance. But all eight of Washburn Law’s female business law professors model a professional life that includes both work and family.

“We all have kids, and we’re all showing that, yes, it is hard, but that you can balance both career and family,” said Boyack. “It used to be that you had to make a choice. But the world is changing, and we’re helping to give it a nudge.”

## *At a Glance: Areas of Expertise*

### **Aida Alaka**

Employment Law  
Pre-Trial Advocacy  
Legal Analysis, Research, & Writing

### **Andrea Boyack**

Contracts  
Debtor/Creditor Relations  
Property  
Real Estate Transactions

### **Linda Elrod**

Family Law  
Child Advocacy  
Divorce Practice  
Comparative Family Law  
Family Law Seminar

### **Emily Grant**

Legal Analysis, Research, & Writing  
Decedents' Estates and Trusts & Future Interests

### **Janet Thompson Jackson**

Property  
Race and the Law  
Entrepreneurial Law  
Small Business and Nonprofit Transactional Clinic

### **Patricia Judd**

Intellectual Property  
International Intellectual Property Law  
Copyright Law  
Advanced Intellectual Property Law  
Global Intellectual Property Enforcement Law  
Remedies

### **Lori McMillan**

Business Associations  
Comparative and International Taxation Law  
International Taxation  
Law and Economics  
Taxation of Business Enterprises  
Taxation of Individual Income  
Tax Policy

### **Mary Ramirez**

Criminal Procedure I & II  
Criminal Law  
Antitrust Law  
White Collar Crime

### **Amy Westbrook**

Business Associations  
Financial Institution Regulation  
International Business Transactions  
Securities Regulation