

Relationship Building Leads to Success

Alumna works to replicate experience of mentoring others.

By Angela Lutz

For **Lynn McCreary, '94**, the secret to success lies in relationships. She certainly has a career anyone would be proud to claim. After graduating from Washburn University School of Law in 1994, she worked at Frieden, Haynes & Forbes in Topeka before joining Bryan Cave (now Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner), where she went on to serve as managing partner of the firm's San Francisco office.

In 2010, McCreary joined Fiserv, Inc., a Fortune 500 company based in Brookfield, Wisconsin, that is a leading provider of financial technology solutions. She became the chief legal officer shortly thereafter. In her current role, McCreary, a member of the company's executive committee, is responsible for legal affairs, ethics, and compliance, as well as enterprise risk and cyber security strategy, the latter of which has taken on heightened significance in recent years.

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"Cyber security is a pressing concern for any company that handles data and information," McCreary said. "Because Fiserv serves institutions which are 'systemically important' to the financial industry, maintaining the sanctity, integrity, safety, and security of sensitive financial information is of paramount importance."

As an in-house lawyer, McCreary is fully integrated with Fiserv, allowing her to identify and contribute to solutions before problems arise. Building relationships with her internal colleagues has allowed her to gain a comprehensive understanding of the business, essential to the success of any general counsel.

"If you can see an issue before it becomes a problem, you can work to avoid that problem, but the opportunity to be proactive is certainly enhanced by strong relationships with your business partners who integrate you into their leadership teams," McCreary explained. "Being aligned with and integrated within the business you support is key."

As a leader in her industry, McCreary has the chance not only to foster relationships, but also to help others develop their skills and achieve success. She readily acknowledges that, as she progressed in her career, she had the support of mentors and others who encouraged or challenged her, and she relishes the chance to offer similar support to up-and-coming leaders.

"I am successful because people believed in me along the way. They gave me the opportunity to succeed," McCreary said. "I try to replicate my experience: Believe in your people, give them honest feedback, and put them in positions to succeed. Broadcast their successes and support them when they don't succeed. The hardest aspect of leadership is knowing when you have done all you can to develop someone."

In her own career, McCreary credits Washburn University School of Law with giving her some of the tools and knowledge she needed to be successful in her current role. The desire to give others a similar chance at achieving their personal and professional goals fuels her service as a member of the Law School's alumni board.

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McCreary believes the Washburn faculty's integration of academia and real life made her education even more valuable, as well as her relationships with her teachers and fellow students.

"I loved the closeness of not only the student body but the faculty," she said. "I benefitted greatly from the faculty's ability to incorporate the real world into the theoretical one by



Lynn McCreary, '94. Photo by Jessica Kaminski - The Refinery Photo Studio

introducing outside speakers into the curriculum and weaving real-life experiences into the classroom, which brought the law to life.”

When it comes to balancing her career with her life outside of work – which includes spending time with family, traveling, cycling, and cooking – McCreary doesn’t draw a line in the sand between the two: “My work is very much a part of my life, and my life is very much a part of my work,” she said.

“Being in touch with what’s important to you and making sure that you allocate time to do what’s important to you will allow you to find balance, if there is such a thing,” she added. “It really requires you to be in touch with what’s important and to respect your own priorities, even if that means scheduling personal or family activities and treating them as though they are one of your most important business commitments.”

Going forward, McCreary is excited about the next phase of the Fiserv legal department, which involves more fully leveraging technology to better manage a highly complex and diverse business on a global scale. She also looks forward to building and strengthening relationships with the professionals on her team and helping them, and the business they serve, achieve their goals.

“As I think back on my career, I’m proudest of the teams and groups that I’ve had the opportunity to affiliate with and the things we have been able to build together,” McCreary said. “Throughout my career, I’ve had incredible lawyers, paralegals, business partners, and others who have demonstrated the power of coming together to achieve a common goal. Lawyers are often uniquely situated to help others. Having the opportunity to lead a strong team that contributes to the success of others truly drives me.”