

# ALUMNI

## PROFILE

BOB ESHELMAN:

### Corporate Counselor to Quintessential Seattle *By Clark McCann*



When Bob Eshelman (BA 1975), a Tacoma native, decided to pursue his college education at the University of Washington, it was a natural choice. His mother was a UW graduate, as was his older brother, and both had good things to say about their Husky experiences. Eshelman started out majoring in pre-med but switched to business in his sophomore year. “One of my first business classes was accounting,” Bob recalls, “which I loved. I was really inspired by one of my professors, John Rhode. He clearly influenced my decision to major in accounting.”

Eshelman joined a fraternity, but his active social calendar didn't distract him from his rigorous studies. He

excelled in his studies and graduated with a 4.0 GPA. Armed with his undergraduate accounting degree, Eshelman headed to Stanford to study law. “Even though I was a little apprehensive about the academic challenges I might face at one of the nation's most prestigious law schools, I discovered that my

UW education was solid preparation for demanding graduate work.”

While pursuing his law degree, Eshelman had summer internships with two of Seattle's most prestigious law firms. When he graduated in 1978, he had offers at both, and chose *Shidler, McBroom, Gates & Lucas* (now *Preston Gates & Ellis* following its 1990 merger with *Preston Thorgrimson Ellis & Holman*) to start his law career. “It was an exciting time,” Bob recalls. “I was eager to expand my knowledge of issues pertaining to corporate law. And the firm, of course, had some really outstanding people—including Bill Gates, Sr., and Bill Neukom. I also had the privilege of working alongside some brilliant newcomers, like Connie

Proctor, who started on the same day I did and is now a UW Regent.”

During his career at the firm, Eshelman specialized in corporate issues surrounding contracts, stock options, public offerings, and mergers and acquisitions. In 1986, he was the partner-in-charge of the team that worked with Microsoft to take the company public. And in 1992 he helped Starbucks—another of Seattle's iconic companies—with its initial public offering.

In 1993 he accepted a job with Microsoft as a senior attorney in its law department. “At the time,” Eshelman recalls, “the company had fewer than 20 in-house attorneys, and now it has more than 400 worldwide.”

During his career at Microsoft, Bob spent much of his time working on acquisitions. The acquisitions included Vermeer Technologies (FrontPage web authoring product), WebTV, Hotmail, Great Plains Software, Visio, and many others. He also worked on the creation of the MSNBC joint venture between Microsoft and NBC.

Eshelman found that practicing law within a corporation was even more rewarding than working for a firm: “When you're providing legal advice to a corporation as an outsider, you don't take a direct role in making actual decisions. And this can be frustrating sometimes. At Microsoft, however, when we worked on acquisitions, I was

very much involved in making business decisions based on our legal analysis, and this could be very exciting.”

After working for Microsoft during a decade of spectacular growth and profitability for the company, Eshelman retired as deputy general counsel, finance & administration, in 2001. Since retirement, he's enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time with his wife, Pam—also a UW grad—and their two daughters. Amy, 20, is attending Stanford, and Mollie, 18, is a freshman at Santa Clara University.

Bob and Pam are active in the community, and both serve on the board of the Roosevelt High School Foundation, which was formed in 2002 to build an endowment for the long-term support of students and programs at one of Washington's top public high schools. It has raised more than \$400,000 since its inception.

Eshelman is engaged in the life of the UW Business School and concerned about the challenge of turning out young men and women who are equipped to be the business leaders of tomorrow. He worries that the Business School may be getting so difficult to get into that only those with superior grades will be admitted. “It's been my experience,” Bob says, “that grades are not always the best indicator of future performance in business—and I'd hate to see that potential wasted by excluding talented young people from pursuing business education.”

Now that both his kids are in college, Bob is looking forward to being able to travel with Pam without the constraints of school schedules. He enjoys playing squash several times a week and continues to hope he can get his golf handicap below 20. ■

### Reaching Out At Home and Away

*By Maureen Crawford,  
Alumni Relations Manager*



In the coming year, the Business School and Alumni Association will be reaching out to our alumni outside of the Puget Sound region. We will host alumni receptions in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Portland and New York. We welcome our alumni in those areas to come and mingle with fellow grads, meet Dean Jim Jiambalvo and learn about what's new at the UW Business School.

Our regional receptions kick off on October 26 at the City Club of San Francisco, followed by a January 25, 2007, reception at the Jonathan Town Club in Los Angeles. We'll be coming to Portland and New York in the spring.

In addition to these regional events, there are several opportunities to stay connected a little closer to home:

**Husky Networking Night** – Wednesday, November 8, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the Bank of America Executive Education Building, Douglas Forum. Do you have an interest in sharing your experience and advice with undergraduate business students? If so, consider volunteering for Husky Networking Night. This informal networking reception provides undergrads an opportunity to learn about careers first-hand by talking to alumni. There will be a special reception for alumni before students arrive. For more information, contact Sara Sheridan at 206-221-6602 or [saras10@u.washington.edu](mailto:saras10@u.washington.edu).

**Alumni Reception with the Dean** – Wednesday, November 29, 2006, from 6 to 8 p.m., University of Washington Club. Meet Dean Jiambalvo and learn about his vision for the Business School. This event is also a great local opportunity to network with fellow Business School alumni, faculty and staff. To register, go to [UWalum.com](http://UWalum.com) or call 206-543-0540

**CEO Lunch Series** – February 6, March 6, April 3, 2007, at Seattle's Columbia Tower Club; May 1 at the Harbor Club in Bellevue. The CEO Lunch Series is your chance to learn from prominent business leaders such as Carlos Guangorena of Plaza Bank and Paula Reynolds of Safeco Insurance. The May event in Bellevue will be our first-ever lunch on the Eastside. More information and on-line registration will be available in December at [UWalum.com](http://UWalum.com).