

## Lifelong Learner: Alumna Nancy Lynch

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*How Strong Start at Locke Lord Propelled Her to University of Wisconsin–Madison Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs*

**Nancy Lynch** was recently named Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, acting as Chief Legal Officer and leading the University’s Office of Legal Affairs and Office of Compliance. She joined the University in 1997 and most recently served as the deputy chief legal counsel in her role as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs. Previously, Nancy was a Litigation Associate in the Chicago office of Locke Lord predecessor firm Lord, Bissell & Brook.

### **Why did you choose Locke Lord?**

I was a Summer Associate drawn to the Firm’s dynamics between Associates and Partners. People were very connected. I had a sense that the Partners really did have an investment in the Associates’ development and experience at the Firm. It was encouraging, and as I rotated through a bunch of different units that summer, it didn’t change, which drew me to take the full-time offer.

### **How did your time at Locke Lord prepare you for your current role?**

I always tell everybody I felt like I won the Partner lottery when I got Chicago’s **Rowe Snider**. He was not just my senior Partner; he was my role model. His mentorship and encouragement early on to think strategically and creatively set me on the right course and provided a very solid base for me to develop my skills as a lawyer. Over my time at the University, I’ve seen his influence play out in how I’ve evolved as a leader and kept moving forward. He was truly instrumental. When I look back now, I see the role it played in how I got to where I am. I feel very lucky and blessed I started at Locke Lord.

### **What has kept you at the University of Wisconsin–Madison for nearly 25 years?**

The diversity of the legal issues and the institution itself as well as the incredibly interesting people and the type of work that gets done here. The University allows me to continue to be a lifelong learner. In order to adequately advise my clients, I have to learn what our faculty, staff and students are doing in and outside of the classroom. They are incredibly creative, pushing boundaries and working on some of the world’s most challenging issues. I’ve never had a boring day here knowing I’m part of that. When you’re on a campus, and there’s a new crop of bright minds every year, you’re always energized, and every day is incredibly new and different. It has been fun, entertaining and I have great co-workers. With the breadth of the work and the challenges working for an institution that has made a huge difference worldwide, I didn’t have a reason to leave.

### **What are you most proud of during your tenure at the University?**

Helping the institution work through a few really challenging crises has been rewarding. We sit in the shadows, but we know that we’re helping people make good decisions. Our office’s work was instrumental to helping the University weather the pandemic. I think it was a big accomplishment for our office — and for me personally — to know we were there to help our University leadership make sure the campus came out of it. Now that we are set

up to be successful in the fall, students can get back to having the experience they are accustomed to and should have.

**What are you most excited about in your new role? How is it different from your current role?**

I do a fair amount of activities in my current role that I will in the Vice Chancellor role, but I will be doing so on a larger stage and will be more focused on being Chief Legal Officer. It will really be on my shoulders to make sure we continue to build on the success we've had in the Office of Legal Affairs and Office of Compliance. I'm excited to continue to work to make sure we put a good strategic plan in place to support our leaders and keep the campus going for another 100 years. What we do now keeps things going in the right direction so we can teach, develop great minds and keep reaching people across the globe. We are just tending the flame right now, and for us, it's a privilege.

**What words of wisdom would you impart to lawyers starting out in their careers?**

Make sure they don't limit themselves, and don't be fearful. Be curious and excited. Be perpetual learners, and don't be afraid to try and do new things. I've had many different practice areas here at the University, and I had to start over with each new area. I had to learn employment, medical malpractice, copyright, First Amendment, data privacy and many other practice areas. That curiosity could lead them to their dream career if they take the chance and push themselves.