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Roger Williams University School of Law

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Newsroom

Boss '97: GC at Care New England

Alyssa Boss '97, Senior VP and General Counsel for Care New England, talks about her career experiences -- and her work with current RWU Law students.



Alyssa Boss '97 graduated with RWU Law's second law school class and she hasn't stopped learning since. As Senior Vice President and General Counsel for the [Care New England Health System \(CNE\)](#), Boss finds challenges every day on the job in keeping up with changes in health law. "It's just rapidly evolving," she says. "Regulations are changing all the time."

A network of hospital buildings sits outside Boss's Providence office. "It's challenging, and I like challenges," she says. "This enables me to be exposed to medicine and science, the people who work in it, and to learn about and support what they do in a way that's very fulfilling for me."

Surprisingly, working in the health care system isn't what some TV dramas make it out to be. "The hospital lawyer running around dealing with end-of-life decisions" is far from the real thing, Boss says. "What we do is contracts, research on regulatory issues and advising all of our internal clients. It's not the bio-ethical role that some people picture."

Boss transitioned to CNE from one of Rhode Island's most prominent private law firms. "I was really proud of making partner at [Hinckley Allen](#) before coming here. It's a great firm," she says. "I feel so fortunate to be where I am. I've been helped along by a lot of great people." She counts a handful of mentors who've helped shape her career, including former General Counsel of CNE and RWU Law Board of Director Connie Howes as well as the law school's [Professor Anthony Santoro](#).

“Connie really helped by being a role model to me. She was someone that I wanted to emulate,” says Boss. “Professor Santoro pushed me to think of myself achieving more than I had pictured myself achieving,” during law school and beyond.

“For me Roger Williams was an opening to go to law school,” says Boss. “I’ve been reengaging with the University in recent years through participation in RWU Law’s [Corporate Counsel Clinical Externship Program](#).” Boss has had several RWU law students working with her for years through the program, and has one currently working under her.

Full Interview

Could you describe a typical workday here in the office at Care New England?

I’m the corporate general counsel. A big part of that is being a corporate lawyer and a big part of that is being a health regulatory lawyer. But in the general counsel role a lot of it is also strategic, an executive leadership role participating in a lot of meetings. Advising the board, advising executives on issues, and then overseeing the work of the other attorneys in my department, as well as the outside counsel we work with.

What would someone find surprising about your job?

I think a lot of people have the perception that working for hospitals in the health care system is like something out of a TV drama about physicians and the hospital lawyer running around dealing with end of life decisions and things like that. I think people would be surprised that very little of what I do has to do with litigation or specific patient issues. It’s not the bio-ethical type role in which some people picture a hospital in-house lawyer.

What changes have you seen in the practice of law during your career?

It’s certainly become more welcoming for women than it used to be. I’ve been very well supported in all of my jobs, and I think that’s been a change from what it used to be. Because there’s a lot more hands-on training that has to happen. I think people coming out of law school don’t realize how much learning happens after law school, and how much development still has to go on, building up knowledge and expertise to get to your ultimate career goals.

I understand that you transitioned to Care New England from Hinckley Allen & Snyder. Could you describe how the two worlds are different and similar?

There's a difference between, first of all, working for a private partnership like a law firm and working for a non-profit. There's a difference in the setting and the culture that's very different. In terms of the legal practice, what's different is that in a law firm you really are moving from one client to another client. That can actually be really exciting. There's a lot about working in a law firm that I really liked. I liked being exposed to a lot of different transactions, different people and different clients.

But when you're in-house, you really form a bond to the client, because you have one main client – which is the corporation – and then you have all the subsidiaries; the operating units and all the people within them. But it becomes more – it sounds corny, but more like a family, including functional and dysfunctional elements. So there's a greater feeling of intimacy in your work; a greater feeling of interpersonal connection with your work. I think that's the biggest bonus for me of being in-house. For the most part you establish great working relationships and closeness with a lot of people, and that's really great.

Do you have a mentor, or have you had a mentor at any time?

Connie Howes was the general counsel for CNE when I was in my last year of law school, and I interned with her. Then she went on to be the president of Women and Infants Hospital of Rhode Island. She was a tremendous help and support to me, and continues to be. Tony Santoro too. He was a great help to me when I was at RWU Law. Even in my first job I called and reached out to him a couple times for advice. He was great.

They've helped shape my career a great deal. Connie really helped by being a role model to me. She was someone who I wanted to emulate; I wanted to visualize myself in that kind of role and see how I could achieve it. Professor [Tony] Santoro pushed me to think of myself achieving more than I had pictured myself achieving before. Not just settling; not having low aspirations. My husband's like that, too. He always thinks I'm just terrific and can do anything. He's great. He never wants me to settle for anything.

What does RWU Law mean to you?

For me, Roger Williams was an opening for me to go on to law school. For me it was a tremendous educational experience. I've been reengaging with the University in recent years through participation in [RWU Law's [Corporate Counsel Clinical Externship Program](#)]. It has been great working with Professor [Cecily] Banks. For the externship program at Roger Williams, they place students interested in corporate in-house experience at different corporations around the state. Professor Banks reaches out to me early in

the semester with potential candidates. I interview two or three people and hopefully I find someone who's a good match. I've had some good luck with that. They come and they work here. We have an RWU Law student working here right now.

What would be some of your proudest moments in your career?

I was really proud of making partner at Hinckley Allen. It's a great firm. I was very proud to have made partner before coming here. Another moment was when I succeeded Tom Courage to this position and became general counsel [at CNE]. That was probably the pinnacle so far. Tom Courage, who is another great mentor, was the general counsel when I started here. He's been absolutely tremendous and supportive.