

Todd Klipp: Vice President and General Counsel of Boston University, Boston, MA

GCC Profile

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By Jen Woods

After working at private law firms for seven years, Todd Klipp decided it was time for a change. More than 20 years ago, he made the transition from private practice to in-house...and now probably has "one of the best law jobs available," he said.

Klipp, Vice President and General Counsel of Boston University, worked at two large law firms in New York and Boston before he began working in-house. "I saw what they [law firms] had to offer, experienced the pressure to specialize, and decided that I wanted a more diverse practice in a different environment," he said.



Klipp joined the Office of the General Counsel as Assistant General Counsel in January 1984 and then became Deputy General Counsel in May 1985. Since July 1987, Klipp has served as General Counsel of the fourth-largest private university in the country. "For me, in-house work has been much more enjoyable and rewarding. In nearly 23 years at BU, I've never missed private practice," he said.

Advice to Young Lawyers

Klipp advises aspiring general counsels to "try to develop a broad base of knowledge and experience because it will come in handy down the road."

Boston University was especially appealing, Klipp said, because of the sophistication and small size of the seven-attorney office. "It is also rewarding to be a part of and support an institution of higher education," said Klipp, who is also an adjunct law professor at the school.

Like most general counsels, Klipp is equipped to handle a wide array of issues at any given time. "We joke—though it's true—that it's easier to describe what we don't do than what we do," he said.

Klipp, who is also Secretary of the Board of Trustees, spends the majority of his time overseeing the work of the office administration, supervising outside counsel, and handling matters related to non-profit governance. Some of the larger areas of his practice include litigation, corporate, employment, and real estate work. However, "we do almost everything else, except for domestic relations and criminal defense," he said.

Throughout his tenure, Klipp has been involved in many high-profile legal matters, including litigation with Coretta Scott King over the ownership of personal papers Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave to the university. He also handled the legal issues surrounding the termination of a university president before he even took office. In addition, Klipp has been involved with a major federal grant to build and operate a national Biosafety Level 4 (BSL-4)

laboratory, as well as the university's development of an environmental field station in Ecuador's Amazon River basin.

Every day is different for Klipp, who said that one of the most enjoyable aspects of his job is the "varied and challenging legal issues" he faces on a regular basis. He also credits his "terrific" clients and colleagues with making his work day enjoyable. "Being a general counsel can be an incredibly rewarding career," he added.

Some of the biggest challenges that general counsels face day-to-day are "the sheer volume and diversity of work and the need to be competent (if not expert) in many different areas of practice at the same time," he said. Therefore, Klipp advises aspiring general counsels to "try to develop a broad base of knowledge and experience because it will come in handy down the road," he said.

Law was always an area of interest for Klipp. "As a kid, I was always fascinated by the law, and I thought I might want to become a lawyer when I grew up. However, it wasn't until the year after I graduated from college (when I dabbled in the working world and graduate school) that I became convinced I wanted to study law," he said. Klipp earned his J.D. degree from Fordham University School of Law in New York, where he graduated in the top ten percent of his class.

Klipp is admitted to practice in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, New York, and various federal courts. He is a member of the National Association of College and University Attorneys, the Massachusetts Bar Association, and the Boston Bar Association. He is also a participating lawyer at the Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Boston Bar Association.

Despite Klipp's busy work schedule, he is very active in the community. Klipp is a member of the board of trustees of the Lexington Christian Academy, a private Christian secondary school, and a Sunday school teacher at the Trinity Covenant Church. He is also a member of the board of directors of Leadership Transformations, Inc., a ministry devoted to the spiritual growth and development of church professionals and lay leaders.

On the Net

Boston University

www.bu.edu

National Association of College and University Attorneys

www.nacua.org

The Boston Bar Association

www.bostonbar.org