

NEWS

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Alumni Profile: Daniel Girard '84

As a student at King Hall, Daniel C. Girard '84 acquired not only a rock-solid grasp of the practicalities of the law, but also a sense of social responsibility that has guided him throughout his successful career in civil litigation. That's partly why he helped to direct a \$95,000 in *Cy Pres* awards from class action suits he prosecuted to the Fair Business Practices and Investor Advocacy Chair at UC Davis School of Law.

Girard, who has successfully prosecuted more than 75 class action matters and who has served since 2004 as a member of the Federal Civil Rules Advisory Committee, was drawn to King Hall by the Law School's reputation for a supportive atmosphere, a pragmatic approach to teaching law, and a low faculty-student ratio. "All of this panned out, and it was really what I was looking for," he said.

Several instructors made strong impressions, including Professor Robert Hillman. "Bob Hillman's Securities Regulation class has really stayed with me throughout my career," said Girard. "I've stayed in touch with Bob and he's counseled me through several key transitions in my career," Girard adds.

After graduation, he worked in San Francisco with Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison, where he had been a summer associate, doing securities issuances for corporate clients including Well Fargo. From there, he went to Lieff, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein, to practice class action litigation, and in 1994, he started his own firm, Girard Gibbs, where he has enjoyed spectacular successes in cases including *In re Corrections Corporation of America Securities Litigation*, a securities class action that resulted in a settlement of \$104 million for his clients.

Girard is most proud of the instances in which he's been able to help people most in need. In *Ho v. San Francisco Unified School District*, he represented Chinese-American families whose admission to district schools was subject to a racial quota system. "We agreed to a settlement on the first day of trial in which the district agreed to do away with the quota system," he said. "Defending the constitutional rights of schoolchildren is a privilege for any lawyer, and I was fortunate to work with an outstanding group of parents and a great trial team on such an important cause."

Girard is also proud of the class action brought against American Fair Credit Association on behalf of consumers who had joined the association in hopes of repairing bad credit ratings but wound up paying excessive membership fees as well as continued fees and facing ruined credit when they tried to cancel. "It was a scheme to entrap people who had impaired credit, and it was very vigorously defended for more than six years, but we succeeded in getting a very good result," said Girard. "This was a settlement of about \$30 million for a very vulnerable class of people, and we're proud of the results we obtained."

As part of the resolution of the case, the court approved Girard's recommendation that a portion of the settlement be directed to support the Fair Business Practices Chair, now held by Professor Hillman.

"Corporations spend millions every year to influence public opinion in their favor. They are skilled in public relations. There are very few people who can frame legal issues from the perspective of consumers and investors," he said. "By supporting the Fair Business Practices and Investor Advocacy Chair, the hope is that this will be in modest step in advancing the views of the investing and consuming public in contrast to the perspectives of corporate America."