

year experience, receiving a remarkable 50 percent survey response rate. She spent part of the summer compiling the results to help her focus her efforts as academic chair during the school year.

But her primary focus during the summer was a job at the firm of Van Bael & Bellis in Brussels. The firm has more than 50 lawyers from around the world, and it was a natural fit for Mason because of its focus on trade law and competition law in the European Union, two areas of special interest for her.

As for her future, Mason hopes to work in U.S. trade law with foreign clients. She also is interested in antitrust law in the global market. She is looking forward to practicing in these areas for a firm after earning her JD. Eventually, though, Mason would like to return to the government, perhaps the Department of Commerce or the U.S. Trade Representative's Office. Later, Mason said, she would like to return to a developing country to assist with legal and economic reform, much as she did in Ukraine.

Such an endeavor would bring Mason's career back to where it began, but with experience gained from Duke Law as well as her work following graduation. Thus, she would be able to accomplish more in the area of legal reform than she could have done when she was with the Foreign Service. She concluded: "As I see the many ways in which students and faculty at Duke are using the law to better the world around them, I become more confident in my own decision to pursue a legal career with the goal of eventually assisting developing countries." ♡



*Jay Barasch '05 is communications chair for the Duke Bar Association. He is interested in pursuing appellate work after graduation.*

## Vik Patel '05 Leads by Example

By Michael Koenig '04

**I**t is difficult to spend much time at Duke Law School without hearing about – or being recruited for – some program or activity led by Vikram Patel '05. But it is not through self-promotion that Patel has cemented a reputation as a leader in the Law School community. Rather, it is through continuous service to that community as well as his pursuit of academic excellence.

Born in New York City and raised in Los Angeles, Patel came to Duke Law School after receiving his undergraduate degree in physics from Pomona College in southern California. Although he considered several law schools, he decided on Duke because he "wanted to be at a place that was characterized as 'cooperative' more often than 'competitive.'" So far, he says, Duke has lived up to that reputation.

Shortly after beginning his Law School career in June 2002, Patel learned of the Dedicated to Durham community service program and immediately signed up. Organized by the Law School's Community Service Board, Dedicated to Durham is a voluntary program in which hundreds of students participate. Volunteers are divided into groups of 10-15 students, and each group spends an afternoon working on a project to benefit various groups and individuals in Durham. Projects range from cleaning up a non-profit nature conservancy to spending time with the elderly. The first project Patel worked on was painting the walls and a staircase at the Durham School of the Arts, after which he had a turpentine shine on his hands for a week. "I had such a good time and was so impressed that something like Dedicated to Durham even existed at my law school, I decided to apply to the Community Service Board," says Patel.

But simply joining the board was not enough, and in the spring he became the Duke Bar Association (DBA) community



VIKRAM PATEL

**"You can't change the entire world in one afternoon, but the few things you do can mean a lot to the people affected – and can mean much to the people who make the changes as well." –Vik Patel**

service chair. Having already coordinated a Dedicated to Durham event in March 2003, he will run two more events in the current school year. Patel, working with the rest of the DBA Community Service Board, also will oversee a number of other service-oriented activities, including "Make a Difference Day" and several charitable drives for food, clothing and blood.

This type of effort is nothing new for Patel. At the age of 24, he already has a significant history of community service. His resume of good deeds includes tutoring school children, volunteering at food pantries and hospitals, participating in speech therapy programs, serving on the community service board of his high school, and coaching a half-dozen youth basketball teams.

Patel describes all of this work as necessary repayment to the community for what he considers the many blessings in

his own life. "You can't change the entire world in one afternoon," explains Patel, "but the few things you do can mean a lot to the people affected – and can mean much to the people who make the changes as well."

As for the future, Patel's dream job is to be a stay-at-home father with four or five children. But he realizes that this is not a practical goal "at least without an extremely understanding spouse."

"I realize that 40 years of earning a paycheck instead of staying home full-time with my kids likely will be in my future," says Patel. As a means to earning that paycheck, Patel is paving the way for himself by coupling his law degree with a master's degree in electrical and computer engineering. Patel sees this joint degree as an opportunity to increase his knowledge base as well as his attractiveness to employers. Although he's keeping his options open, Patel says he is leaning toward becoming a patent prosecutor or intellectual property litigator.

Contemplating his career aspirations, community service is never far from his mind. Patel understands the heavy time demands of the legal profession, which could take a toll on his ability to perform community work and spend time with family. "But I have faith in myself that I can strike a good balance," he says. The key, predicts Patel, will be to use pro bono work to create such good press for his firm that his supervisors will insist he do more of it.

In the meantime, Patel is busy balancing his ambitious academic and service-oriented goals. And he has started on the path to his ultimate goal of "hopefully doing enough right that I don't end up with too many regrets." ♣



*Michael Koenig '04 is executive editor of external content for the Duke Law & Technology Review and is the former co-chairman of the Intellectual Property & Cyberlaw Society. He is from Madison, WI where he attended the University of Wisconsin and received degrees in electrical engineering and computer science. He plans to become an intellectual property litigator.*

## Chao '04 and Teammates Score High in Entrepreneurship Competitions

**F**rank Chao, '04, loves the law, but there's also a lure to the world of business and invention that he finds undeniable. Thus, when Duke Start-Up Challenge organizers held an informational meeting in the last school year about their annual contest for entrepreneurs, Chao was there with an open mind and a few equally interested friends from schools throughout Duke.

The Start-Up Challenge is a University-sponsored entrepreneurial competition that encourages teams of students from throughout Duke to propose business and marketing plans and provides seed capital to top-scoring teams. Judges, drawn from the world of business and entrepreneurship, rate teams on the likelihood of their ideas to succeed in the marketplace.

Chao became part of a seven-member team that developed a business and marketing plan for a proposed medical device to aid with certain heart surgeries. The team placed among the top five in the Start-Up Challenge, which drew more than 50 teams, winning \$20,000 in seed money. The team won another \$100,000 for its project from the Carrot Capital Business Plan Challenge. That competition is run by a non-profit corporation related to Carrot Capital LLC, a New York-based venture capital firm. Chao's team came in fourth in that competition, which attracted hundreds of entrants and also is judged by business leaders.

Chao and his teammates hope to push on with the work of developing a business, but that will require more money and more time to work out. For now, they're basking in the success of placing well in two demanding competitions. "We were very excited to actually have been in the finals of the competitions," Chao said.

The team, called IntraCardia, hoped to market and sell a device that would help doctors, in a minimally invasive surgical procedure, repair holes that sometimes form in children's hearts. If left untreated,

the holes, called atrial septal defects, can cause life-threatening complications.

Dr. Jim Schroeder, a pediatric cardiologist from San Antonio, TX conceived the device. But the product itself was secondary in the competitions to plans to build a company that would market and sell it, and that work was left to the students. Throughout the semester the students worked individually and also gathered as a



FRANK CHAO

group regularly – sometimes for just a few hours but sometimes pulling all-nighters – to talk about what they had learned about

medical research on the subject, insurance implications, patents and other topics that would be vital to creating a business plan for the competition.

Chao said he learned even more than he anticipated about law, business and medicine throughout the process. That was no surprise to Duke Law Professor Jerome Reichman, who taught Chao in intellectual property law. "What this shows is the wonderful interdisciplinary ethos we have here," said Reichman, the Bunyan S. Womble Professor of Law. "It was great to see them ride this all the way to the top."

Chao said the IntraCardia team will use the seed money from the competitions to start obtaining a patent and building a prototype. Millions of dollars will be needed to carry the project through development, government approval, marketing, manufacture and distribution, so the team also will have to raise far more money. But Chao said he and his teammates have plenty of time to think about those issues and still are flush with their early success. "We're certainly proud to have made it this far," he said. ♣