

Donald E. Kelly â€™87 Named a Top 100 Trial Lawyer for 2014

By Margaret Spillett

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Donald E. Kelly '87

, a partner at Tully Rinckey PLLC in Syracuse, N.Y., was invited into the prestigious Top 100 Trial Lawyers organization based on his peer nominations and third-party research of his more than 18 years of experience as a criminal defense attorney.

He traces his initial interest in law school back to Dr. Stephen Baron's Constitutional Law class at Oswego. "That gave me the confidence that I could excel in law school," Kelly says. "I cannot overstate the value of Dr. Baron's kindness and guidance in helping me develop, not only as a person but as a lawyer as well." In addition to nurturing his competitive spirit playing pickup football games in the lot across from Scales Hall (where he served as a resident assistant) and rooting on men's hockey in the chilly Romney Field House, Kelly says his Oswego experience and the support of faculty, like Dr. Baron and Dr. Frances Koenigsberg, helped him obtain an internship with the New York State Legislature his senior year and opened the path to his future. "I landed my first job as a result of that experience and the contacts I made during my time in Albany, and it paved the way for my entry into law school two years later," he says. Since earning a J.D. at Syracuse University College of Law, Kelly has been lead counsel in several high-profile homicide and narcotics cases and has successfully secured the outright dismissal of cases for clients charged with murder and drug felonies as well as lower-level felonies and misdemeanors. After serving as lead attorney on more than 50 jury trials in his own criminal defense practice, Kelly joined Tully Rinckey in 2012. He also served on the board of directors for the Onondaga County Bar Association's Assigned Counsel Program for six years, including three as vice president. He is also a senior hearing examiner in the Syracuse Parking Violations Bureau.