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### Randi Weingarten '83, a Crusader in the Fight for Worker's Rights and President of the 1.7 million member American Federation of Teachers, Talks of Her Passion for Public Service

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

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## RANDI WEINGARTEN '83, A CRUSADER IN THE FIGHT FOR WORKER'S RIGHTS AND PRESIDENT OF THE 1.7 MILLION MEMBER AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, TALKS OF HER PASSION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE



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By awarding remarkable alumni while raising funds for Cardozo scholarships, the dinner is both a celebration of past achievement and a springboard for future accomplishments.

March 22, 2019

Dean Melanie Leslie interviewed Randi Weingarten '83, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), in front of an audience of students, faculty and staff on March 20.

“Having a law degree is an opportunity that opens a bunch of doors,” said Weingarten.

Weingarten was elected to AFT in 2008. Under her leadership, the union grew to 1.7 million teachers, educational professionals and nurses. She has launched initiatives to reform struggling schools. She’s also tackled issues such as increasing teacher salaries, improving test scores and ensuring students have the chance to graduate “without having a debt sentence.”

Dean Leslie asked Weingarten how her time at Cardozo shaped her

career.

“I really learned a lot here. I actually learned to work hard,” Weingarten said. She said it was the combination of classes and relying on classmates in teamwork that made Cardozo unique. “It takes a community.”

Before law school, Weingarten's work ethic was shaped by her mother, who worked as a public school teacher in Nyack, New York. As a young girl, Weingarten watched her mother go on a 14-week strike. She said teachers lost two days of pay for every day on strike.

“People that we love... are going bye-bye because of budget cuts,” Weingarten said. “The only way you create power for regular folks... is through unionization.”

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