The law has been central to Tom Green since his youth. Green always wanted to be a lawyer, so he carved out a plan to achieve his dream. The first of his family to go to college, he decided he would get his bachelor's degree in three years, then his law degree in another three years. He succeeded in the first part at the University of Illinois by taking extra classes and part-time jobs.

By the time he settled in at Washington University School of Law, he had experience balancing the demands of life inside and outside the classroom. He became involved in the law school community, building strong relationships with faculty and friendships with fellow students—friendships that have often lasted till the present.

After graduation, he took his early career in two directions: public service, working for the St. Louis County law department, and private practice, establishing a small general law office. His next major career choice developed from his legal work and the contacts he made in the development/real-estate field. After leaving the county, he enlarged his firm and decided to specialize in real-estate law. Soon, some of the people he represented in various property and real-estate transactions invited him to invest in their projects.

From that point, his career moved along on parallel paths, as a lawyer in private practice and as a real-estate developer. "The law provided me a direct entry into the real-estate field," Green says. Once that entry was gained, his training, intelligence, and willingness to take risks took over. His success as a real-estate developer and owner grew, and his enterprises expanded to encompass the fields of banking and insurance. He is founder and majority stockholder of Royal Bancshares Holding Company and National States Insurance Company; his law practice shares an address with the latter.
"The School of Law had a great impact on the way my life came out," Green said, "so I have a strong feeling that I should give back to the School for what it has given me." A member of the Order of the Coif and recipient of the Distinguished Law Alumni Award, he is on the School's National Council and was a leader on the executive committee for the Building for a New Century campaign. Working closely with then-Dean Dorsey Ellis and then-Chancellor William Danforth, he chaired the highly successful effort to raise funds to meet the Kresge Challenge. He looks forward to continuing a close working relationship with the current leadership team of Dean Joel Seligman and Chancellor Mark Wrighton.

Why, besides his personal feeling of indebtedness, is he so involved in helping move the law school forward? Green wants to ensure that today's students, with generous scholarship support, can afford the best possible legal education and thus are free to choose any of the careers it makes possible--especially individual practice and public-service law. In Tom Green's view, the kinds of opportunities that he enjoyed, as a result of his legal training, shouldn't be a thing of the past, but a way to the future.