

2014

Letter to Graduates and Friends of Marshall-Wythe (December 2014)

Davison M. Douglas

William & Mary Law School, dmdoug@wm.edu

Repository Citation

Douglas, Davison M., "Letter to Graduates and Friends of Marshall-Wythe (December 2014)" (2014). 2009–present: Davison M. Douglas. Paper 8.

<http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/dmdouglas/8>



December 2014

Dear Graduates and Friends of Marshall-Wythe:

As we approach the end of the fall semester, I have been reflecting on the good fortune that our Law School has enjoyed. Many law schools are struggling to deal with the sharp national decline in applications over the past four years. Some law schools have had to resort to faculty and staff layoffs. But we are thriving as never before.

Our Students

We continue to receive more applications than most other law schools in the United States, and in August 2014, we enrolled yet another exceptional group of first-year law students. Our 1Ls have a median undergraduate grade point average of 3.79, a number exceeded only by Yale, Harvard, Stanford, Chicago, Penn, and Virginia. This is the highest median undergraduate grade point average in our history. Moreover, almost 30 percent of our first-year class graduated *summa cum laude* from their undergraduate institution.

Once again, the largest number of our first-year law students come from the Commonwealth of Virginia. But our 1Ls completed their undergraduate studies at a wide variety of colleges and universities across the nation. Here are some of the undergraduate institutions from which at least two of our 1Ls graduated:

Cornell	United States Military Academy
Dartmouth	University of Michigan
Georgetown	University of North Carolina
Harvard	University of Virginia
Johns Hopkins	Virginia Tech
Notre Dame	William & Mary
Princeton	

In addition, this year we have 36 foreign lawyers who are pursuing a one-year LL.M. degree in the American legal system. These lawyers are from Belarus, China, India, Korea, Qatar, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela.

Twelve percent of our 1Ls are the first person in their family to graduate from college; one third are the first in their family to attend graduate or professional school. A majority of our 1Ls are women. Many of our new students also serve in the United States Armed Forces, continuing a long tradition of William & Mary law students engaging in military service.



Our Legal Training

Our law school continues to emphasize the importance of strong writing skills. To that end, we now have eight full-time members of the faculty who teach legal writing.

Our students fare exceptionally well in national student writing competitions. One of the most prestigious national student legal writing awards is the Burton Award. Only a dozen or so Burton Awards are conferred each year. Last spring, John Hoke, who now practices corporate and securities law with McGuire Woods in Charlotte, became the most recent William & Mary law student to win a Burton Award. In fact, our students have won five Burton Awards during the past eight years, one of the best success rates of any law school in the country. In the meantime, Colleen Smith, a third-year law student, recently won a national legal writing prize for a paper on food and drug law. She will clerk for a federal judge in Alexandria next year.

Our focus on legal writing is part of a larger effort to make sure that our graduates are well-prepared to succeed after graduation. The *American Lawyer* recently surveyed almost 5,000 mid-level associates at large law firms. These lawyers were asked to assess how well their law school had prepared them for law firm practice. Our graduates gave us high praise for their legal training. Indeed, only five law schools fared better in this assessment than did William & Mary.

Our Employment Opportunities

The legal job market continues to be very challenging, but we remain among that small group of law schools with a strong employment record.

Many of our students aspire to work in large law firms. About 50 students in the second-year class will be working next summer for a law firm with at least 100 lawyers in cities such as Baltimore, Charlotte, Los Angeles, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Richmond, San Diego, and Washington, D.C. This year, Covington & Burling in Washington, D.C., has hired more of our second-year students than any other law firm.

A substantial number of our students aspire to pursue careers in the public sector. According to the most recently available data, for the Class of 2012, a higher percentage of our graduates secured government or public interest jobs than did the graduates of any other law school.

Each summer, thanks to the generosity of our alumni, we fund public service fellowships for more than 100 students who wish to work in the public or non-profit sector in either the United States or abroad. During the summer of 2014, Kaylee Gum, a second-year student who is serving in the United States Air Force and who is fluent in Arabic, worked in Baghdad helping to establish legal aid offices for Iraqis who cannot afford legal assistance. As tensions mounted in Baghdad, she relocated to the Kurdish section of Iraq so that she could complete her duties in a safer environment.

Our Faculty

Our faculty continue to be enormously successful as both teachers and scholars. Last spring, our graduating students honored Professor Jeff Bellin with the Walter L. Williams, Jr.,



Memorial Teaching Award. Professor Bellin, who joined us two years ago from the SMU Dedman School of Law, teaches and does research in the fields of criminal justice and evidence.

Since 2013, faculty have published (or will soon publish) articles in many of the nation's leading law reviews including the *California Law Review*, *Columbia Law Review*, *Cornell Law Review*, *Duke Law Journal*, *Michigan Law Review*, *Northwestern University Law Review*, *University of Chicago Law Review*, *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, *Virginia Law Review*, and the *Yale Law Journal*.

Professor Tim Zick recently published a major book entitled *The Cosmopolitan First Amendment: Protecting Transborder Expressive and Religious Liberties* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). One reviewer wrote that "Professor Zick's masterful work demonstrates quite persuasively that we now live in a globalized marketplace of ideas and why this fact requires us to consider carefully how other democratic polities define the shape and scope of expressive and religious freedoms."

Some of our faculty's work has gained notice in the popular press. Professor Allison Orr Larsen has a forthcoming article in the *Virginia Law Review* in which she examines the use of amicus briefs in Supreme Court litigation. A few months ago, the *New York Times* featured Professor Larsen's article in a news story, and Stephen Colbert subsequently interviewed her about her research on the popular comedy television show, *The Colbert Report*.

Our Law School Building

One of the most exciting ventures at the Law School is the planned construction of the James A. and Robin L. Hixon Center for Experiential Learning and Leadership. Named for two members of the Class of 1979, the Hixon Center, a 12,000-square-foot building addition on the north side of the Law School, will house our nine legal clinics, our Legal Practice and Legal Writing programs, and our leadership activities. We plan to complete construction in late 2016.

During the summer of 2014, we completed three renovation projects. First, we renovated one of our large classrooms, Room 127, installing extensive wood paneling and the latest in classroom technology. A few weeks ago, we dedicated this classroom in honor of Professor John Donaldson '63, a much beloved member of our faculty who taught thousands of William & Mary law students before his retirement in 2001. The bronze plaque soon to be displayed outside of the Donaldson Classroom includes these comments by former William & Mary President Timothy J. Sullivan:

Every great institution owes its greatness to the sustained devotion of large-hearted men and women who define personal ambition in terms that transcend personal gain. Because greatness is rare, such persons are few. Professor John Donaldson belongs in that small company. When the William & Mary Law School's modern history is written, John Donaldson will be remembered as one of the heroes of the story.

Two individuals funded this renovation: Randy Hawthorne, who graduated from the Law School in 1970, and his wife, Shelby Hawthorne, who, like Randy, received her undergraduate degree



from the College of William & Mary. At the same time, they also made a generous commitment to student scholarships.

Second, we converted the student lounge into an attractive bistro that serves food throughout the day and provides seating for about 50 people. Law students are using the bistro as a comfortable study and meeting space throughout the day and evening.

Third, we removed all of the auditorium seating from the McGlothlin Courtroom and replaced it with new desk seating, which has allowed us to use the Courtroom as another classroom. Given the expansion in our curriculum, another room that can function as a classroom is most welcome!

Finally, we recently dedicated the first-floor reading room of the Wolf Law Library to the memory of Harvey Chappell '50. Chappell was one of Virginia's truly great lawyers and an extraordinary friend of our Law School. During the past 20 years, more than 140 law students have received financial aid from the Chappell scholarship endowment.

Future Challenges

One of our most critical challenges going forward is making sure that a Marshall-Wythe education remains both affordable and of the highest quality possible. Thanks to the generosity of our alumni, we are able to offer more financial aid to our students than ever before. As a result, the amount of debt that our students have had to take on has significantly declined over the past two years. This financial aid also helps us to continue to attract the very best students.

Securing additional private support for financial aid remains one of our top priorities. Hank '66 and Dixie Wolf recently made a very substantial commitment to student financial aid, and many of our alumni have joined them by establishing scholarship endowments.

With the support of our alumni and friends, the nation's oldest law school continues to be one of its most distinguished. We remain steadfast to our original mission of training exceptional citizen lawyers who serve the greater good.

Our best days do indeed lie ahead of us!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave".

Davison M. Douglas

Dean and Arthur B. Hanson Professor of Law