

2014

Law School Dedicates John E. Donaldson Classroom

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By Brooke Shaffer J.D. '17

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William & Mary Law School formally dedicated the John E. Donaldson Classroom (Room 127) on Nov. 6 in honor of John E. Donaldson J.D. '63, the Ball Professor of Law Emeritus. The fully refurbished, high-tech classroom was made possible by the generosity of Randy S. Hawthorne A.B. '67, J.D. '70, M.L.T. '71 and Shelby M. Hawthorne A.B. '67, M.A.Ed. '75.

The classroom dedication was one of only three in the Law School's 235-year history. Donaldson joins the ranks of two revered Law School deans, William Spong and Timothy Sullivan, whose names adorn Rooms 119 and 120.

Donaldson joined the faculty in 1966 and spent the next 35 years teaching tax law, trusts, and estates. Dedicated to both teaching and service, he received numerous awards throughout his career, including the Thomas A. Graves Teaching Award (1988), the Walter L. Williams, Jr. Teaching Award (1993), the Law School Association's Citizen-Lawyer Award (1997), and the Thomas Jefferson Award (2001).

Donaldson's impact on the Law School, the College of William & Mary and the Williamsburg community was clear, as neighbors, colleagues and generations of alumni filled Room 127 to celebrate its dedication.

"Part of my job as dean is to go around the country and talk to different alumni. One of the things I always ask is, 'Who were the professors that meant the most to you?' I hear a lot of names, but I think the one I hear most often is John Donaldson," said Dean Davison M. Douglas. "He taught literally thousands of students, and they all remember him with great respect and with great affection."

One of those students, Randy Hawthorne, wanted to make a financial gift to the school while honoring his teacher, friend and mentor. Hawthorne took multiple courses under Donaldson, beginning with a business law class during his senior year at the College of William & Mary. He then worked alongside Donaldson at a local Williamsburg accounting firm during his time at the Law School.



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"John Donaldson has had a huge effect on my life, as he had on countless William & Mary law students' lives throughout the years," said Hawthorne. "He's the person who actually persuaded me to go to law school, and strangely enough we're still friends," he joked.

During his tenure at William & Mary, Donaldson has seen the school come a long way from its humble origins in the basement of Bryan Hall dormitory, where he attended classes as a member of the Law School's class of 1963. Today the Law School's campus stretches along South Henry Street, and the Donaldson Classroom is being enjoyed by a new generation of students.

"There is nothing that gives me greater honor than to have my name associated with this room, which is a symbol of the progress that's been made at the Law School over these years," said Donaldson. "It is a remarkable progress made possible by the contributions of loyal alumni."

About William & Mary Law School

Thomas Jefferson founded William & Mary Law School in 1779 to train leaders for the new nation. Now in its third century, America's oldest law school continues its historic mission of educating citizen lawyers who are prepared both to lead and to serve.