

2017

Law School Dedicates Hixon Center for Experiential Learning and Leadership

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By Jaime Welch-Donahue

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New building to accommodate burgeoning legal skills training opportunities for law students

William & Mary Rector Todd A. Stottlemeyer '85, William & Mary President Taylor Reveley, and William & Mary Law School Dean Davison M. Douglas welcomed alumni and friends to the Law School on February 8 to celebrate the latest addition to the Law School campus - the James A. and Robin L. Hixon Center for Experiential Learning and Leadership.

The dedication of the two-story, 12,000-square-foot center marked the culmination of a 16-year building program, which has more than doubled the physical size of the school and has also included the addition of the North Wing and the Wolf Law Library. [View the slideshow](#) showing the architectural drawings and construction photos.

Stottlemeyer thanked James A. Hixon, J.D. '79, M.L.T. '80 for his generosity and leadership, and Reveley hailed Hixon as a "deeply loyal and a steadfast sustainer of Marshall-Wythe" in remarks to a jubilant crowd of more than 150 alumni and friends gathered for the celebration in Penny Commons, a soaring, glass-walled atrium space within the center.

Hixon, a member of the university's board of visitors, and his late wife Robin met as students at the Law School; both graduated in the Class of 1979. "Robin's Garden," a landscaped courtyard encircled by the North Wing, was made possible by the family's support. A significant gift made by Jim Hixon during the leadership phase of William & Mary's For the Bold Campaign was the catalyst for the center becoming a reality.

According to Douglas, the new space reflects the school's "strong emphasis on preparing students to practice law the day they graduate."

"The vision that Jim Hixon had with us of expanding what this school does to train our students and to prepare them to be citizen lawyers comes to fruition in an important



way tonight," he said.

Hixon recently retired from Norfolk Southern Corporation, where he was executive vice president, law and corporate relations. "I think as a graduate of the Law School that it is very important that you do what you can to give back. It is what gave me my training," he said. "I think it is important that you help future generations of lawyers."

The center's first floor features offices for managing attorneys to meet individually with students enrolled in clinics, multiple client interview rooms and student work areas, and two spacious multipurpose conference rooms for use by the school's nine clinics. The Legal Practice Program and the school's leadership activities encompass the second floor. The space provides offices where legal writing faculty can provide one-on-one instruction to students, two classrooms, and a new courtroom that provides additional space for trial and appellate advocacy training. Visitors can access the center from the school's lobby or through entrances in Penny Commons. From the entrance facing South Henry Street, people may enter or exit the commons via a walkway that winds alongside a planned garden area.

James D. Penny J.D. '83 and Pamela Jordan Penny '77 were among the alumni and friends whose support for the building was highlighted at the event. Jim serves as the Law School's campaign chair, and the Pennys made a significant gift in support of the atrium space that now bears their name. He shared with the audience the couple's belief "that great physical spaces have the ability to inspire." It was their hope, he said, that Penny Commons "will be an inspirational gathering space for law students, faculty and staff, and visitors to the Law School, particularly those who come to this space looking for legal advice and representation from our legal clinics."

In addition to the contributions of Jim Hixon, and Jim and Pam Penny, the Cabell Foundation provided generous support. A number of the building's other benefactors were also recognized during the dedication, including,

The Gladys and Franklin Clark Foundation, key supporters of the courtroom;

Edwin S. Waitzer J.D. '85 and Katharine B. Waitzer, for support of the Waitzer Clinic Suite Conference Room;

Edward R. Blumberg J.D. '75 and Iliana P. Blumberg HON '15, for support of the Blumberg Classroom;



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The Elliott Family, in memory of Robert C. Elliott II J.D. '69, for support of the Elliott Clinical Interview Room;

The Class of 1974, in memory of their classmate Lewis B. Puller, Jr. '68, J.D. '74, namesake of the Puller Veterans Benefits Clinic, for support of the Class of 1974 Puller Clinic Office;

Dennis F. Kerrigan J.D. '91 and Vanessa G. Kerrigan '84, J.D. '91 in honor of Professor and Associate Dean Robert E. Kaplan, for support of the Kaplan Faculty Office; and

Home Depot, for support of the center and the Home Depot Clinical Faculty Office.

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.