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Law School's Alumni Weekend a Virtual Success

By David F. Morrill

April 19, 2021

William & Mary law alumni didn't let the COVID-19 pandemic get in the way of a good reunion. Thanks to virtual technology, more than 300 alumni "Zoomed" back to the Law School to catch up with classmates and friends for a successful extended Alumni Weekend. (See slideshow above.)

They brought their generosity, too. During the six-day Bash (April 9-14), the Law School announced that this year's reunion classes raised \$2,256,593 in gifts, multi-year pledges and planned gifts by Saturday, April 10. That number will continue to increase until the fiscal year ends on June 30.

The ten classes, including 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016, celebrated milestone reunions from five to 50 years out. Adding to the fun were the "0s and 5s"—the Classes of 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015—whose reunion and fundraising efforts had been cut short by the beginning of the pandemic in 2020.





The collective impact of the two reunion cycles amounted to \$3,136,324 in support of the Law School. As of Saturday night, April 10, this was the combined reunion tally for the 1s & 6s and 0s & 5s.

In addition to the celebration of class gifts, there were plenty of virtual offerings, with alumni participating in a wide range of events. During Friday evening, 11 law teams competed in two sessions of Trivia Night, hosted by Trivia Throwdown Online, a company owned by a W&M MBA Class of 2020 graduate. The contests emulated the feel of classic bar trivia, with tough questions and spirited competition among the class years.

Saturday morning began on a more relaxed note with a yoga session courtesy of Assistant Dean for Development Kelly Graham, an RYT-200 certified yoga instructor. An Undergraduate Admissions Educational Session followed with Valerie Wilkins, Associate Director Alumni Admission & Engagement & Inclusion Initiatives.



Classes of 1970 and 1971

The Classes of 1970 and 1971 convened before noon in celebration of their 50th reunions. Alumnus and former W&M law professor Robert Scott '68 joined in to share memories with some of his former students. Dean Ben Spencer also made an appearance, thanking members of both classes for embodying William & Mary Law's



standard of excellence in their careers and in their lives, and for showing the world what it means to be citizen lawyers.

The toasts continued, literally, with a late afternoon wine tasting session on Zoom. Alumni and faculty participants learned best practices for tasting and judging wines from leading expert Kiera Hill of Vino Culture.

On Saturday night, the festivities continued with Dean Spencer hosting a private reception for members of the Dean’s Council and Reunion Committees, followed by the main event—the Virtual Alumni Bash. The gathering not only allowed everyone to celebrate reunion giving, but also to catch up with old friends and make new ones by entering a series of chat rooms.

The evening concluded with the announcement of reunion giving totals and the awarding of the coveted Red-Hot Reveley Award for Outstanding Class Participation. The Class of 1971 took this year’s honors with 31 percent of the class making a commitment. Following close on their heels was the Class of 1986, with less than a percent difference in participation. (See update below.)

The Reveley Award is a portrait on black velvet of former William & Mary President and Law Dean Taylor Reveley re-envisioned as “The King.” The theme hearkens back to an Elvis shrine that lived in the student lounge during the 1980s and 1990s.



The Red-Hot Reveley Award



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Unlike previous years, the weekend didn't end there. Several online events followed through Wednesday evening, including a conversation with Dean Spencer on Sunday afternoon, an Immigration Law Clinic Open House, and a student panel discussing "The Virtual Law School Experience" on Monday.

Events concluded on Wednesday with William & Mary's new Center for Racial & Social Justice holding a panel on "Current Issues in Criminal Justice Reform," followed that evening by a Faculty Roundtable Discussion on "The Biden Administration's First 100 Days."

That final panel, moderated by student Max Weiss '21 and featuring Professors Allison Orr Larsen, Neal Devins and Rebecca Green prompted one alumna to comment, "Great panel! This makes me want to go back to law school!"

Reaction from other alumni was likewise positive. One graduate wrote, "Thank you for an extremely memorable extended alumni weekend! It was great and I can't wait to see you next time in the 'burg!" Another graduate said, "Well done in the alumni bash. It is quite a production to put on a social event using Zoom, but you all did it and did it well!"

Yet another wrote, "I'm writing to thank you for all your hard work on behalf of our class in making our virtual reunion happen... I couldn't have asked for a better group in our breakout room. The only thing we would have changed is the ability to stay longer."

More than 170 volunteers from the 20 classes helped make this virtual Alumni Weekend a success. By contributing their gifts of time and treasure, they not only helped bring everyone together virtually, but supported today's students, faculty and programs.



Dean Spencer

During his inaugural alumni weekend at William & Mary, Dean Spencer thanked everyone for welcoming him to the community during the past nine months.

“It’s been really nice to be so warmly received, and I am particularly grateful for all of your financial contributions over the past year,” Spencer said. “These are really critical to moving our law school forward.”

Spencer added that he was appreciative for all the calls and e-mails he has received from alumni.

“Your questions and comments have really helped me to get to know you better,” he said. “I’m really excited to work with you to continue making this law school excellent.”

Update: Since Alumni Weekend, the Law School had more than \$15,000 in additional gifts come in for the 1s and 6s. The Class of 1986 had reached 30 percent participation by the Alumni Bash and is now at 32 percent.