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## Patten Family Courtyard Dedicated at William & Mary Law School

By David F. Morrill

November 15, 2021



*Former William & Mary Rector Donald N. Patten Hon. '18 (right) has helped turn the Law School patio into a more inviting, vibrant space that encourages social gatherings, collaboration, and group and individual study. Photo by David F. Morrill*

On the evening of Friday, November 12, William & Mary Law School officially dedicated the Patten Family Courtyard. Formerly known as “the patio,” the Courtyard has been redesigned into a more comfortable space for students and for public events.

The redesign is the result of a generous gift from Donald N. Patten, HON '18.

“We are grateful to Don Patten, not only for his years of service as William & Mary rector, renowned litigator, and force for good in the great southeastern Virginia community, but for his generosity in making possible this dramatic improvement in the Law School’s physical environment,” said A. Benjamin Spencer, Dean of the Law School and Trustee Professor.



The event was the third public event in the Courtyard since the Law School community returned this fall. The semester was kicked off with a faculty reception in celebration of this year's St. George Tucker Award winner, and a month and a half later, the law community welcomed back members of the Class of 2020 and their families for a belated but heartfelt celebration of their graduation.

During that morning's commencement exercises, Patten received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws during the university's in-person commencement exercises for the Class of 2020.

Spencer shared with guests how Patten's support of the renovation has led to nothing but positive feedback about the aesthetics and utility of the Law School Courtyard.

"Every day, I walk by and see our students in a more inviting, vibrant space that encourages social gatherings, collaboration, and group and individual study. Even on cooler days in November, students are finding the sunshine and staying comfortable as they work and visit with one another."

During the event, Patten shared his thoughts on supporting the renovation.

"I thought to myself that this is a great spot for people that are at the school and for the faculty as well to interact with each other, to have networking opportunities to social outreach with each other," Patten said, "It had a lot of opportunities, and I was excited about trying to be part of it."

Patten, whose daughter, Brooks Patten McElwain '95, and daughter-in-law, Stacy L. Patten '98, are graduates of the Law School, thanked the community for including him as part of the Law School family. He has long considered William & Mary as an institution that's been close to his heart.

"I particularly want to tell you that we dedicated this courtyard to my wife, who I lost three years ago," Patten concluded. "I know she's here in spirit; she loved this institution as much as I do."

### **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 first law school continues its historic mission of educating citizen lawyers who are prepared both to lead and to serve.