

The Stalwart Donaldson

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THE STALWART DONALDSON

W. TAYLOR REVELEY III*

How do you build a law school that makes an enduring difference for the better in people's lives? How do you get a law school to hold fast to its basic beliefs amid pervasive change? You need stalwarts on the faculty like John Donaldson.

Faculty stalwarts like Professor Donaldson bring a lot to the table. They are richly graced with ability, energy, and ambition. They spend this personal capital to nurture the school they serve, not simply to advance themselves. They care at least as much about the welfare of the school as about the glitter of their own careers. Their institutional commitment and loyalty work powerfully for the common good.

Faculty stalwarts like Professor Donaldson are master teachers, devoted to delivering the goods for their students. Stalwarts believe that, whatever else law schools do, their chief end is to teach. They know their students by name long after they graduate. Students and alumni are not unavoidable distractions for stalwarts. They are the point.

Faculty stalwarts like Professor Donaldson are scholars who harness research and analysis to help resolve leading issues of the day. They care intensely about the rule of law and the part lawyers play in it. Far from avoiding the practicing bar, they immerse themselves in it and work to keep it healthy. In like manner, they bridge the gap between the legal academy and the law at work in the lives of courts, legislatures, agencies, law firms, corporations, non-profit organizations, and individual people.

Faculty stalwarts like Professor Donaldson know how deep their school's roots run. They remember their school's triumphs and tribulations over the generations. Most important, they preserve its basic beliefs, even amid howling change. At William & Mary,

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stalwarts remember Jefferson's and Wythe's original intent for this school—that it train citizen lawyers.

Often faculty stalwarts like Professor Donaldson return to teach where they first came as students. Frequently, they stay for an entire career. John Donaldson went to law school at William & Mary. He returned to Williamsburg in 1966 as an assistant professor of law and retires in 2001 as the Ball Professor of Law.¹ Along the way, he has put far more into this splendid old school than he has taken out. William & Mary will sorely miss the Stalwart Donaldson.

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