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Letter to Friends of the William & Mary Law School

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Dear Friends,

This glorious school is much like a fine old painting, in my view, magnificent when created in the late eighteenth century and now rapidly appreciating in market value. Our challenge today is to be good stewards of what we have inherited from George Wythe, St. George Tucker, and so many other extraordinary forebears.

The Law School cherishes its historic roots and its enduring mission to educate citizen lawyers. These themes were richly sounded at the Class of 2006’s graduation, held in May under an enormous tent stretched across the Sunken Garden. The setting was apt as both the Sunken Garden and the Law School are products of the Jeffersonian imagination. Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, now Chancellor of William & Mary, was graduation speaker. She spoke about the importance of lawyers to the public good and she engaged the centrality of judicial independence to the rule of law.

Student demographics

A photo of the Class of 1940 hangs outside the Faculty Room in the North Wing. It shows seven men and one woman (one classmate
did not make the picture). Of these 1940 graduates, one died in combat during the Second World War. The rest survived to support Marshall-Wythe vigorously. But they were a tiny handful! Our goal now is to graduate at least 200 JDs per class to build an alumni body large enough to spread the Law School’s influence far and wide. There were, in fact, 206 graduates in the Class of 2006. This year, as last year, there are more than 200 students in each of the three JD classes.

Class of 2009

To produce graduates, there must first be 1Ls. The Law School continues to attract students of high caliber. For the Class of 2009, we again had more than 20 applicants for each available place. Thus, 4,209 people applied, coming from all 50 states, DC, and 41 other countries. The class that emerged was 204 strong, representing 114 different undergraduate institutions (this is a striking range of colleges and universities,) 39 states, DC, China and Korea. The class arrived with powerful academic credentials – a median undergraduate grade point average of 3.64, and a median LSAT score of 165 (93rd percentile). The 1Ls’ average age is 24 (a little younger than usual). Forty-five percent of them worked full time before law school, and their nonacademic credentials are as compelling as their GPAs and LSATs (musicians, linguists, athletes, and much more, with a strong record of service to others). In short, another great class!

International reach

The Class of 2009 is joined this year by the LLM Class of 2007, 13 strong (the largest ever) and by three exchange students, two from a law school in Madrid and one from a law school in Vienna. These LLM and exchange students call 10 countries home – Austria, China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Great Britain, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea and Thailand. The Law School is beginning to cast its net well beyond the United States. With a growing number of international students, a strong group of faculty members dealing with global matters, a new “study abroad” option for our 3Ls, and a superb summer program in Madrid, we recognize that lawyers these days often work beyond their communities, states, and nations.
Service to others

As befits a school founded by Thomas Jefferson to train citizen lawyers, there is a powerful tradition of service at Marshall-Wythe. It is manifest in many ways, one of the most striking being how many students spend their summers. Last summer, for instance, 90 of them contributed their time and talent to 78 non-profit or public organizations in 19 states, DC, Argentina, China and South Africa. To help them keep body and soul together while doing good for no pay, the Law School came up with $277,000, using resources drawn from the Public Service Fund, the dean’s discretionary cache, and federal work-study monies. A full public service grant from the Law School during summer ’06 was $3,600.

New faculty

We continue to grow the full-time faculty (having already grown the adjunct faculty extensively). Three splendid people have joined us, B. Glenn George as a full professor, along with Angela Banks and Nate Oman as assistant professors. Glenn George, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, earned a JD from Harvard, where she won the Williston Contract Competition and helped lead the Harvard Voluntary Defenders. After practicing with Gibson Dunn in Los Angeles for five years, she began her academic career in law at William & Mary. She then taught at Colorado and UNC Law Schools, also holding senior administrative posts at both. Angela Banks, a summa graduate of Spelman College, was a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University, where she earned a Masters of Letters. She, too, went to Harvard Law School, serving on both the Law Review and the International Law Journal. She practiced at Wilmer, Cutler in DC, clerked on the Tenth Circuit, and has been a legal adviser in The Hague for a judge on the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal. Angela will join us in January after finishing her time as a Reginald F. Lewis Fellow for Law Teaching at Harvard. Nate Oman received his BA from Brigham Young University, where he was a Presidential Scholar. He, also, went to Harvard Law School. While at America’s second oldest law school, Nate served on the Law Review (where he was a member of the articles committee his third year) and on the Journal of Law & Policy. He clerked on the Eighth Circuit and practiced at Sidley Austin Brown & Wood in DC before coming to us. All three new full-time faculty members are teachers and scholars of distinction.
The Wolf Law Library, The Sullivan Lecture Hall

The Law School continues to be transformed thanks to the generosity of its graduates and friends.

Hank and Dixie Wolf made a multi-million dollar gift in 2006 – by far the largest in the school’s history – to help fund the new law library. They did so, in Hank’s words, in appreciation of Marshall-Wythe’s historic importance and their commitment “to do everything we can to embrace it and to make it flourish.” A 1966 graduate of the Law School, Hank has spent most of his career at Norfolk Southern Corporation and is widely recognized as one of the most able chief financial officers in the country. On November 10th, at the unveiling of a drawing of the finished building that will bear his name, he quoted a 17th century writer that “a good library is a good kingdom.” The Wolfs’ hope is that the new library will be a “great kingdom” for all who work and study here.

At their 30th reunion in April 2005, members of the Class of 1975 presented Tim Sullivan with a piece of mahogany paneling and announced that they would fund, in his honor, the transformation of one of our largest classrooms, 120, into an elegant, state-of-the-art lecture hall. Tim joined the faculty in 1972, the same year the Class of 1975 began its studies here, and was appointed dean in 1985, a post he held until he was elected College president in 1992. Evan E. Adair ’75 spoke on behalf of the class at the dedication of the Sullivan Lecture Hall on November 17th. Evan said his and his classmates’ respect for Tim sprang from recognition that he was someone who went “beyond the basic measure.” “It is a pleasure to do something to thank you for all you have done,” Evan said, “and to do so in a way that will help students today and tomorrow.”

I value highly my ties to Marshall-Wythe and greatly appreciate your commitment to it. You have my best wishes for 2007.

Cordially,

[Signature]

W. Taylor Reveley III