Letter to Graduates and Friends of the William & Mary Law School

W. Taylor Reveley III
William & Mary Law School
Dear Graduates and Friends,

The Law School is off and running for its 226th year. Marshall-Wythe’s roots run deeper in American history than those of any other law school. These roots are a source of prestige and confidence for us. Comforting as it is to cherish the past, however, our focus is forward. In my view, Marshall-Wythe’s prospects have never been stronger.

The J.D. Class of 2008 and LL.M. Class of 2006

We continue to attract students of high caliber. More than 4,100 people applied for the Class of 2008 from all 50 states, D.C., and many foreign countries. The class emerged 204 strong from 111 undergraduate institutions, 31 states, and points abroad. Its academic credentials are powerful — a median UGPA of 3.63 and a median LSAT score of 164 (91st percentile). Our new students are athletes, musicians, linguists and more. Over half have already worked full time. Their recommenders wrote enthusiastically, for instance:

“This is one of the most thoughtful and intelligent young men I have taught and I’ve been teaching for 20 years.”

“This is one of the most inspiring and self-motivated students I have encountered.”

“Once in a while, a teacher comes across an individual as completely splendid and well rounded as [Ms. X], whose intelligence, maturity and energy inspire one with complete confidence in her future success.”

The J.D. Class of 2008 is joined by the LL.M. Class of 2006, one of the largest we’ve had, with 12 masters students from China, Great Britain, Kazakhstan, South Korea, and Uzbekistan.

We have also recently welcomed five visiting law students who had to flee New Orleans. Three are from Tulane and two from Loyola.
Law Camp 2005

The new 1Ls came to school for a week by themselves for welcoming events, opening ceremonies, and Legal Skills classes. Law Camp 2005 did its job, judging by the reactions of the 1Ls:

“This orientation week was the most organized and informative of any orientation I’ve ever been to.”

“Fantastic primer on what is to come. Legal Skills was comprehensive, informative, and usually fun. Great program.”

“This week has been very helpful in orienting 1Ls to law school. I feel much more confident about classes and the Socratic method.”

“This week has been inspiring and extremely educational. It has made me proud to be a law student here.”

No question, one of Marshall-Wythe’s significant comparative advantages is the Legal Skills Program, 18 years old and newly invigorated.

Public Service

The Classes of 2006 and 2007 had good summers. In addition to those who clerked for law firms, 90 of our students worked for 72 governmental and not-for-profit organizations in 19 states and Azerbaijan, Brazil and Myanmar. The students were paid little or nothing by the groups for which they worked, though the Law School was able to award an average of $3,000 per student to help with summer expenses, using resources from the Public Service Fund, the dean’s discretionary cache, and federal work-study funds.

Student Body Growth

For the first time, the Law School has 200 or more students in each of the 1L, 2L and 3L classes. At long last Marshall-Wythe is growing an alumni body of serious size. This matters to our financial future. Last year, less than 10 percent of the school’s operating budget came from Virginia taxpayers. The rest came from other sources – student tuition and fees, gifts from alumni and friends, yield on endowment, and grants. With growing alumni numbers and tuition, Marshall-Wythe will have the financial strength for continued progress, indeed, to regain its historic primacy.

Annual Giving Tops $1 Million Again

Recent experience with one aspect of private support — annual giving — bodes well for the future. On June 30th of this year, annual giving totaled $1,201,253, up 8 percent over the prior year, exceeding $1 million for the third year in a row, and nearly triple the amount raised only seven years ago. This year more than 30 percent of our graduates supported the school financially.
Home Improvements

Since classes began in January 1780, the Law School has been located in 11 different places, starting in the Wren Building and George Wythe’s house (still standing in Colonial Williamsburg). Sometimes classrooms have been in one place, library materials in another, and offices in a third. For the last quarter century, however, we’ve been ensconced on South Henry Street, safe from eviction by other William & Mary baronies. A huge amount of renovation has taken place in our 1980 building during the last few years. This past summer, the final 1980 classroom was renovated, and we tackled the old bathrooms — the short marble stalls are gone! More important, construction of the new Law Library began. It will be a materially larger, more attractive facility than the 1980 model, and it will be at the cutting edge technologically. If the vagaries of state regulation, weather, and construction go our way, the library’s new addition will come on line late next spring, and the existing library will be gutted, rebuilt and meshed seamlessly with the addition in time for classes in mid-August 2007.

The Class of 1975 Timothy J. Sullivan Classroom

Next summer, room 120, the large classroom next to the Spong Lecture Hall, will be transformed into the Sullivan Lecture Hall. The Class of 1975, at its 30th reunion last April, gave the funds to clothe room 120 in the same wood and cloth now gracing room 119. Having the Spong and Sullivan Lecture Halls next to one another will be perfect, because Bill Spong’s and Tim Sullivan’s deanships were back to back, and their 16 years of uninterrupted leadership gave new life to the country’s oldest law school.

Faculty

Work to grow the faculty continues, with great success. Nancy Combs, whom we added to our number in 04/05 but who spent last year in the Netherlands, has arrived in Williamsburg. Nancy graduated first in her law school class at Berkeley, clerked at the United States Supreme Court for Justice Kennedy and has been the legal advisor to a judge on the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague. She will receive her Ph.D. in public international law from Leiden University this December.

Laura Heymann went to college at Yale and law school at Berkeley, where she was Order of the Coif. She clerked for Judge Patricia Wald on the D.C. Circuit, practiced law at Wilmer Cutler, and served as assistant general counsel for America Online. Laura comes to us from George Washington University Law School where she was an administrative fellow in the Intellectual Property Law Program and a visiting associate professor of law.

Michael Green will join us second term. He went to college at Berkeley, graduating summa cum laude. He earned both a J.D. and a Ph.D. in philosophy from Yale, then clerked for Judge Richard Posner on the Seventh Circuit, and practiced law at Paul, Weiss in New York City. He has been an assistant professor of philosophy at Tufts University and is now a professor of law at George Mason.

Gene Nichol, William & Mary’s new president as well as a former law professor here and a former director of our Institute of Bill of Rights Law, is once again a member of the Law School faculty, as is his predecessor, Tim Sullivan. Gene and Tim have both resisted my blandishments to teach a course at Marshall-Wythe, though Gene will be teaching a freshman seminar in the College.

The Appointments Committee is again in full cry, looking for people who will be not simply serious scholars but also first-rate teachers and citizen lawyers within the Law School and beyond.
Kelly '43 Endows Chair For Teaching Excellence

Teaching does remain central to our mission, even as we devote increasing resources to scholarship. Teaching received renewed emphasis earlier this year when one of the Law School’s most devoted and distinguished alumni, Herbert V. Kelly of the Class of 1943, endowed a chair for excellence in teaching. The chair’s first incumbent will be chosen during 2005/06.

2005/06 St. George Tucker Adjunct Professor

Alongside the Law School’s full-time faculty is our adjunct faculty, which has grown from 40 professors to nearly 70 during the last few years. Adjuncts are vital to our Skills and Trial Ad programs and to the breadth of our upper-class offerings. They teach as a labor of love, not because the school lines their pockets with gold.

Each year, one of our most successful adjuncts is named the St. George Tucker Adjunct Professor of Law. The 2005/06 incumbent is Christie S. Warren. Professor Warren went to law school at UC/Davis. As a litigator, she tried over 100 cases, including many involving the death penalty, while working for public defender offices in California. While a fellow at the United States Supreme Court, she worked in the office of then Chief Justice Rehnquist. Christie has conducted many important international consultancies. At Marshall-Wythe, she has been deputy director of Courtroom 21 for international programs and the advisor to our Moot Court Program. Christie has persuaded international organizations to provide summer internships for our students, and taught a great variety of courses and seminars, ranging from comparative constitutional systems and Islamic law to advanced appellate brief writing.

Board of Visitors

With the August 2005 appointment of Alvin Anderson ’72 to succeed Hunter Andrews on William & Mary’s Board of Visitors, three Law School graduates now sit on the University’s BOV. Alvin joins Anita Poston ’74 and Hank Wolf ’66, all serving as citizen lawyers in the tradition so cherished at Wythe’s and Marshall’s law school.

Cordially,

W. Taylor Reveley III
Dean and Professor of Law