Law in America's Service: Professional Training in the Birthplace of American Democracy

William & Mary Law School
Law and Taxation

The increasing importance of special training in tax law, coupled with a recognition of the need for competently trained persons to serve the nation in any capacity in which a thorough comprehension of all phases of taxation is an essential requirement, led the Marshall-Wythe School of Law in 1954 to offer the degree of Master of Law and Taxation.

An outstanding collection of tax materials to support this advanced study has been added to the present law library. Two members of the faculty, specialists in tax law, and in tax economics and administration, are responsible for the tax work in this program.

Students having the first professional degree in law are admitted to the program on a highly selective basis. A large amount of individual research and much practical work in all aspects of tax problems are features of the study. Although the program is relatively new—the Marshall-Wythe School of Law, in fact, being the pioneer in a program designed to cultivate proficiencies in accounting, tax economics and political science as well as in law—graduates are already making worthy contributions to developments in this field.

Extending the special interest in tax law to the legal and accounting professions in Eastern Virginia, the School annually sponsors the Tidewater Tax Conference. Attended by several hundred accountants and attorneys, the conference is conducted by experts in the major fields of taxation and deals with the complex problems arising in this important area.

Special Activities

The William and Mary Law Review, begun in 1949, is largely a student-edited and administered publication. It has grown larger and more significant with each issue, and in the future may be supplemented by other specialized studies in law, government and citizenship.

The George Wythe chapter of Phi Alpha Delta, the Student Bar Association, and the William and Mary Law School Association are three complementary organizations affiliated with the school. Equally important in developing a close social relationship within the law school family is the law wives’ association, which co-sponsors a number of student projects during the year.

William and Mary now regularly participates in the National Moot Court competition, and intramurally maintains moot court practice in both trial and appellate procedure. In the new law building, plans call for completely furnished court rooms suitable to both trial and appellate practice.

A bi-monthly News Letter issued by the law school keeps students, faculty, alumni and friends informed of all current activities.

For Information

Catalogs and other materials on the B. C. L. and M. L. T. programs of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law may be obtained by writing:

Office of the Dean
Marshall-Wythe School of Law
College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia
Footsteps of Giants

At Jamestown, the seeds of constitutional government under the guarantees of the English common law were planted with the colony. Here, in 1619, the first legislative body in North America assembled and began the unbroken American principle of representative self-government. A century and a half later, thirteen colonies were to revolt when this principle was flouted, and at Yorktown, some twenty miles from where English colonization began, independence and the guarantee of the rule of law was won in 1781.

To Williamsburg, some six miles from Jamestown, the government of the colony was transplanted in 1699. This was the government which was to foster the great political leaders whose unflattering commitment to basic legal and political rights was to help unite the colonies in their resolve for independence. Here Wythe, Mason, Jefferson, Henry, Randolph and Pendleton pronounced many of the fundamental propositions of American constitutional government. In the restored city of Williamsburg today, the reality of this deathless heritage impresses itself upon our own time.

The College of William and Mary educated many of the men whose profound arguments subsequently led to independence and the creation of a new constitutional framework. To serve the needs of the new nation, in 1779, Governor Thomas Jefferson as a member of the College's board of visitors encouraged the creation of a chair of "law and police (i.e., government)," and the first formal training for law in a college or university in the United States was established. George Wythe, signer of the Declaration of Independence, distinguished attorney and later an equally distinguished jurist, became the professor of law. John Marshall, whose career as Chief Justice of the United States was to become legendary, was one of the first students to enroll under him.

The Law ... Today's Study, Tomorrow's Challenge

The National, Worldwide and Space Age problems of the 1960's are all having their impact on today's practice and public service. Broader and at the same time more specialized training is required of the professional man. Today's law curricula are continually being revised to take these problems into account.

The law, it is often said, is a seamless web—and also an unbroken series of principles by which public and private welfare has been advanced. The Anglo-American common law tradition has had, and still has, a fundamental importance in this advance. This is clearly evident at the School of Law at the College of William and Mary in its record of initial leadership, in the Jamestown-Yorktown-Williamsburg environment where the American political idea took root, and in its present-day degree program.

The school today offers the Bachelor of Civil Law (B. C. L.), the equivalent of the more common LL.B. It is of historical interest that William and Mary and Oxford University, the two oldest law curricula in the Anglo-American or common-law area, both offered the B. C. L. as the first professional law degree.

Today's curriculum affords a variety of specializations in legal study. Thus, in addition to the basic program preparing the student for general practice, there is a combined course in business administration and law, and the course leading to the graduate program in law and taxation. Pre-legal study complementing formal law courses permits specialization in such fields as labor relations, criminal law, patent law, insurance, business and corporate practice, and international law.

All first year subjects in law are required. These consist of the basic courses in contracts, torts, property, procedure, family law, legal writing, business associations, and criminal law. One-half the remaining work is elective.

Students have the opportunity to participate in moot court work both at the trial and appellate levels.

The Student Bar Association which is affiliated indirectly with the American Bar Association and the local chapter of the Phi Alpha Delta professional legal fraternity arrange for speakers on subjects of current interest to the profession.

The law library, which contains some twenty-six thousand volumes, receives the latest decisions and administrative rulings as quickly as they can be printed and sent.

There is every opportunity for those who wish to labor in the law to do so to the limit of his own enthusiasm and interest.

Scholarships and grants are available to a limited extent to students of good character and exceptional scholastic records.