

First in Georgia: Three-year J.D. and M.B.A. launched

To help meet the growing demand for lawyers with business acumen, the law school has partnered with the UGA Terry College of Business to allow students to graduate with both a law degree and a Master of Business Administration in only three years.

This time-shortened dual degree will prepare students with the skills required for successful careers that combine law and business, including banking, entrepreneurship, finance, international business or commercial interests.

"Students participating in this three-year dual degree will have a distinct competitive advantage when they graduate," Dean Peter B. "Bo" Rutledge said. "In only three years, students will earn a law degree and an M.B.A., saving both time and money while gaining the necessary knowledge to succeed in today's marketplace."

Business Law and Ethics Program Instructor Carol Morgan (J.D.'79) said businesses today face a growing number of challenges as a result of an increasingly global economy and continually changing regulations, among other factors. "Employees with a strong background in both law and business, especially from nationally

recognized schools such as ours, are a valuable asset to any law firm serving corporate clients or a company's in-house legal department," she said.

Morgan added that the combination of the coursework and professional development opportunities offered through the J.D./M.B.A. program enables graduates to make meaningful contributions to their clients and workplace.

UGA is the only school in Georgia – and one of only a few nationwide – to offer a true three-year J.D./M.B.A. dual degree.

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—Dean Bo Rutledge

Program creates student mentorships

Under the leadership of Georgia Law Dean Peter B. "Bo" Rutledge, the school has taken proactive steps to fully embrace the need for authentic relationships between – and support for – all members of the law school community. This coming fall, Georgia Law will take this concept one step further by ensuring that all first-year students have a network of support when they arrive on campus.

The system of support will consist of a faculty member, an upper-level law student and a Georgia Law graduate or legal professional. This will be in addition to the Career Development Office counselor who will be appointed to the student.

"The goal of the mentor program is to give students as much support as possible," Associate Director of Student Affairs Alex D. Sklut (J.D.'11) said. "Our first-year students will have multiple people to approach with questions, and the program will allow for more individualized attention. Another

benefit is that these students will have someone to talk to on a more casual basis versus having to make an appointment with someone in a particular office."

The mentor matching process will be based on surveys filled out by the mentees and mentors, and eventually the program will be expanded to all students – regardless of what year they are in in law school – so they will at a minimum have a mentor network of four individuals.

Sklut said most of the matching will be based on interests and hobbies or other common areas such as undergraduate school/degree or hometowns or location of practice. "We feel students will naturally find the professors who align with their desired practice areas. They will also find ways to connect and network with alums in their intended fields. We do want to guide students about jobs, but this process is about them having a general resource about life as well as law school concerns."

There are not any time or meeting commitments for mentors or mentees, and the communication method will be what works for each pair. However, a few mentor/mentee events will be held throughout the year to provide an additional connection time for those who are interested.

"We do not want to over structure these relationships so that they lose their flexibility and personalization," Sklut said. "The key will be a genuine connection that will last and be fruitful for more than just three years of law school and hopefully continue as these students transition into practice and throughout their careers. Law school is not easy for most people. At Georgia Law, we want belonging to our community to be established at the beginning."

Those interested in mentoring should contact Alex Sklut at (706) 542-5167 or asklut@uga.edu. All mentors are supported by the Office of Student Affairs and are provided with a comprehensive resource guide.