



# 2015 Dean's Report

from Peter B. "Bo" Rutledge, Dean & Herman E. Talmadge Chair of Law

## Dear Georgia Law graduates and friends:

2015 presented a year of unprecedented challenges for your law school. A shrinking applicant pool, fierce competition for top-flight students, declining enrollment and a disrupted job market confronted this school, like many of our peers, with difficult choices. Grow the student body or cut the budget? Raise tuition or hold the line on value? Stay the course or re-examine settled practices with regard to curriculum?

Despite these challenges, it was an incredible year. We admitted a record-setting entering class, secured a significant number of new gifts and received unprecedented national recognition for faculty achievements – all while keeping the tuition increase to under 2 percent. Many people deserve credit for these accomplishments.

I first want to thank our alumni and alumnae leaders: **Kathelen Van Blarcum Amos** (J.D.'82), chair of the Board of Visitors; **Jennifer Auer Jordan** (J.D.'01) and **Daniel B. "Dan" Snipes** (J.D.'95), outgoing and incoming presidents of the Law School Association; and **Catherine Henson Curlet** (J.D.'11), president of the new Young Alumni/Alumnae Committee. These individuals provided guidance on strategy, fundraising and engagement, and your law school is stronger for their involvement.

Credit also goes to my predecessor, **Rebecca Hanner White**, who stewarded this institution for over 11 years and, like those before her, left a solid foundation upon which we continue to build.

Finally, credit extends to the law school staff and faculty, all of whom work tirelessly to recruit and train top-flight students and help them find quality jobs in an increasingly competitive marketplace. This team also took time this year to examine the core challenges confronting the law school and reflected upon our role in legal education as well as within the university.

What emerged is a clear mission: *to provide first-rate legal training, to foster world-class ideas and to serve our state and nation – all at a good value.*

The following elaborates on these goals and provides insight into how they are being realized today.

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Associate Professor  
Mehrsa Baradaran



Professor Elizabeth  
"Beth" Chamblee Burch



Professor Elizabeth  
Weeks Leonard (J.D.'99)

## DELIVERING FIRST-RATE LEGAL TRAINING

This year's **entering class broke a record** – 189 students from 25 states and 75 undergraduate institutions boast **the highest median undergraduate grade point average in our history** – a **3.71**, and they had a median LSAT score of 162.

Our **Atlanta campus will open in January**. That program will combine externships in the government, nonprofit and corporate sectors with coursework taught at the new facility. Initial placements include the offices of the Governor and Attorney General, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia and Access to Law, among others.

Last month, we announced the **nation's first law school clinic dedicated to the assistance of victims of child sexual abuse**. Alumnus Marlan B. Wilbanks (J.D.'86) generously donated the initial funding for this new experiential learning opportunity, which will be known as the Wilbanks Child Endangerment and Sexual Exploitation (CEASE) Clinic.

**We strengthened our legal writing program**. The Martin/Carnes writing competition, named after alumnae and U.S. Court of Appeals Judges Beverly B. Martin (J.D.'81) and Julie E. Carnes (J.D.'75), provided nearly 50 rising second-year students the opportunity to strengthen their legal writing abilities. We are planning to add a stand-alone legal research course, an upper-level writing class and a new capstone writing requirement.

Beginning next fall, we will offer a new **three-year J.D./M.B.A. dual degree**. This strengthens our connection with the Terry College of Business and allows interested students to earn two marquee graduate degrees and develop skills demanded by today's employers and clients.

We recently completed a **comprehensive re-examination of our curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of today's students and employers**. Changes include a revamped first-year curriculum that offers students foundational courses essential to their professional goals as well as new courses keyed to the demands of the current legal market.

Our moot court and mock trial program continues to allow our students to hone their oral and written advocacy skills. Over the last five years, our teams have brought home **nine national, eight regional and three state titles**. In October, another victory was tallied in the annual Florida/Georgia–Hulsey/Gambrell Moot Court Competition bringing UGA's overall record in this tournament to 22-9-2.

## FOSTERING WORLD-CLASS IDEAS

Many of our instructors are national intellectual leaders. A terrific example is Associate Professor Mehrsa Baradaran, whose book, *How the Other Half Banks*, was **published by the Harvard University Press** this fall. She and her work continue to receive national attention, including a Capitol Hill discussion on banking reform.

Professor Elizabeth "Beth" Chamblee Burch received the American Law Institute's Young Scholars Medal this year for her innovative analysis of aggregate litigation. This honor, **one of the most prestigious scholarship awards in the country**, is presented every other year to only one or two early-career professors.

Named professorships and chairs help recruit and retain great faculty, and three will have new titles in January. Professor Burch will hold the Charles H. Kirbo Chair, and Professors Baradaran and Elizabeth Weeks Leonard (J.D.'99) will hold J. Alton Hosch Professorships.

# 3.71

2015 median  
undergraduate grade  
point average – the best  
in our history.

Thanks to a generous gift from longtime professor and Callaway Chair Emeritus Verner F. Chaffin (LL.B.'42) and his wife, Ethel, we are also in the process of filling the **Verner F. Chaffin Chair in Fiduciary Law**.

The **Dean Rusk International Law Center** continues to enhance our world-class reputation. It provides education, service and scholarship in international, transnational, comparative, global and foreign affairs law and policy. Law school graduates and guests were recently invited to visit the center's renovated facility that now includes the **Louis B. Sohn Library on International Relations**.

### SERVING OUR STATE AND NATION

Instilled with an ethic of service during their time at Georgia Law, many of our students follow in the footsteps of the long line of public servants who are among our alumni/alumnae body. In order to maintain that important tradition, we are proud to offer students opportunities to interact with current and former government leaders.

Thanks to the generosity of Allen W. Yee (J.D.'03), students will learn from judges serving as the **B. Avant Edenfield Jurist in Residence**. This new position, named in memory of the 1958 alumnus and longtime friend of the law school, will allow any Article III judge in the country to spend a period in residence and teach a mini-course on the topic of the jurist's choosing. The inaugural holder of this position will be U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia Chief Judge Lisa Godbey Wood (J.D.'90), who will teach a course on sentencing next fall.

Through our Sanders Political Leadership Scholar position, former **U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss** and his former chief of staff, **Georgia Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Camila Knowles**, are teaching a class in political leadership and the law. Topics include ethics, campaign finance and negotiation, with guest speakers such as U.S. Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates (J.D.'86), Governor Nathan Deal, Georgia Speaker of the House David Ralston (J.D.'80) and Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed.

We encourage our students to consider judicial clerkships upon graduation. This provides a valuable training ground and exposes them to judicial service. Over the past five years, our graduates have secured **90 federal and 61 state clerkships** located in every federal judicial district in Georgia, in the 11th Circuit, and in other states and circuits throughout our nation. This fall, not only are our graduates clerking in every federal judicial district in the state, their service extends nationally to federal appellate courts in places like Seattle, Washington, and Lexington, Kentucky.

### A GOOD VALUE THAT AFFORDS OPPORTUNITY

Public law schools have historically been a great investment. Students could attend at a reasonable cost, obtain a high-quality education and graduate with a manageable level of debt. However, as state support declined, public law schools, including Georgia Law, faced pressure to increase tuition and, as a result, from 2005 to 2014 our tuition and fees more than doubled.

Committed to ensuring that every student can graduate with a level of debt that allows him/her to pursue public or private career opportunities, we implemented a two-fold strategy this year that will allow us to continue to attract the best and brightest.



Former U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss taught the course Political Leadership and the Law as the school's Sanders Political Leadership Scholar this fall.

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First, **we held the line on tuition and fees, increasing these costs by no more than \$340**, which represents the lowest percentage increase in the last 15 years.

Second, thanks to an anonymous group of benefactors, we established the **Challenge Fund**. This fund **matches new and increased contributions to the Law School Fund through June 30, 2016**. Hitting our goal of \$2 million will allow us to award a record-level of financial aid – an additional 33 half-tuition scholarships – and to support many essential activities like the advocacy program, student initiatives, judicial clerkships and faculty research.

If you think back upon the financial decisions you made entering or upon graduating from law school, it is easy to understand how financial aid can make an incredible difference in the life of today's students. I want to sincerely thank those who have already accepted the Challenge, which you can learn more about at [www.law.uga.edu/georgialawchallenge](http://www.law.uga.edu/georgialawchallenge).

The Challenge Fund is just one example of the authentic relationships that stand behind everything we do and that mean far more than a discount on tuition. In fact, every student who receives a named scholarship also receives a new mentor – the donor or the donor's representative.

A great example is the recent transformative gift made by **Georgia State Representative Stacey Godfrey Evans** (J.D.'03), who endowed a full scholarship for first-generation college graduates who choose to attend Georgia Law. Stacey and her family recently met the recipient, a young man from Perry, Georgia, and they now stand by him as he pursues his dream to become a sports attorney.

Along those same lines, another graduate, who asked to remain anonymous, contributed **\$500,000 toward the scholarship fund named for legendary Professor R. Perry Sentell, Jr.** (LL.B.'58). While recipients will not have the opportunity to learn directly from Professor Sentell, they will learn about the profound effect he had on many Georgia Law graduates.

## THE YEAR AHEAD

While we accomplished a great deal this year, more work lies ahead. A signature goal for 2016 is to develop a robust mentoring program so that **every new student has an alumnus or alumna in their corner from the moment they arrive in Athens**. A number of alums already have volunteered. Please email the school's Associate Director of Student Affairs Alex D. Sklut (J.D.'11) at [asklut@uga.edu](mailto:asklut@uga.edu) if you are willing to be a part of this new program.

As we seek to expand our clinical and experiential offerings, we plan to create **a new clinic to serve the needs of Georgia's veterans**. Participating students will advocate on behalf of those who served our country and have unmet legal needs. Fundraising is already underway for this new effort, which we hope to formally announce in the next several months.

This report conveys some of the great work taking place at your law school. I invite you to visit the campus in Athens or our new Atlanta facility in the coming year, and I hope you are making plans to join us at the **Second Annual Alumni/Alumnae Weekend in Athens on March 18 and 19, 2016**. More details on that weekend and other upcoming law school events can be found on the law school's website.

Finally, none of what we do would be possible without the generous support of all of our donors. Please take a few minutes to review this year's **Honor Roll of Donors** at [www.law.uga.edu/annual-report](http://www.law.uga.edu/annual-report) and join me in thanking all who have invested in our law school and in the future of our students. I look forward to sharing continued success.



Georgia State Rep. Stacey Godfrey Evans (J.D.'03) (left) talks with second-year student Trevon Smith, the inaugural holder of her scholarship that was recently established for first-generation college graduates.

I want to sincerely thank those who have already accepted the Georgia Law Challenge.



The University of Georgia

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