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The Georgia State University College of Law: The First Three Years

Georgia State University College of Law

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The Georgia State University College of Law: THE FIRST THREE YEARS

E. R. Lanier

The College of Law at Georgia State University has a keen appreciation of its role as an urban law school. Because of its central location in Atlanta's metropolitan area, the College is able to provide members of Atlanta's legal community with readily available legal resource materials and unique continuing legal education opportunities, in addition to fulfilling its primary role of offering a quality legal education to its students. The purpose of this article is to introduce those not already familiar with the Georgia State University College of Law to the resources and programs of the College that are presently available to serve the needs of the local bar as we complete our first three years of operation.

AN OVERVIEW

Since its opening in the fall of 1982, the College of Law at Georgia State University has assumed a significant role in legal education in Atlanta, within Georgia, and throughout the southeastern region of the United States. The College is one of a handful of ABA-approved law schools in the nation—and, indeed, the only such institution in Georgia—which offers both a traditional, full-time course of study leading to the Juris Doctor degree and a part-time track leading to the same end. The GSU College of Law had its birth in response to a recognized need for a state-supported, urban-based and -oriented, and moderately priced legal education which would be convenient both to traditional students just entering post-graduate, professional study and to those who, in mid-career, have realized the potential offered by formal legal education and admission to the bar. While the majority of the programs and operations of the College are designed to address these considerations, the College of Law has also committed itself to providing quality legal educational opportunities to the practicing bar as evidenced by its recent establishment of a permanent Center for Continuing Legal Education. In the three years of its life, the College has assembled all the components which, under national accrediting standards and accepted expectations, form a quality law school.

Housed in approximately 70,000 square feet of space on the first level of the Urban Life Building on the Georgia State campus, the College is located within minutes' walking distance of all state and federal courts—both trial and appellate—found in Atlanta. It is equally accessible to the state capitol complex, federal administrative offices, private law firms and business offices in and near the downtown Atlanta area. Provisionally accredited by the American Bar Association in February, 1984, the College offers a course of study leading to the award of the Juris Doctor degree. A joint J.D.-M.B.A. degree program, in conjunction with the College of Business Administration at Georgia State, is open to students meeting the admissions criteria of both colleges.

In recognition of its basic mission, the College has scheduled its curricular offerings in the day and evening to permit progress toward the award of the Juris Doctor degree on either a part-time, fifteen-quarter basis or in a traditional three-year, nine-quarter program. No formal division exists between these options. Both the full- and part-time programs are governed by the same academic criteria and requirements; both are subject to the same admissions standards; both are taught within the same facilities and by the same faculty. Equality between the two programs is a pervasive policy and is a primary philosophical cornerstone underlying all functions of the College of Law at Georgia State University.

STUDENT BODY

Almost 600 students are enrolled in the College, drawn from more than 25 states and seven foreign coun-

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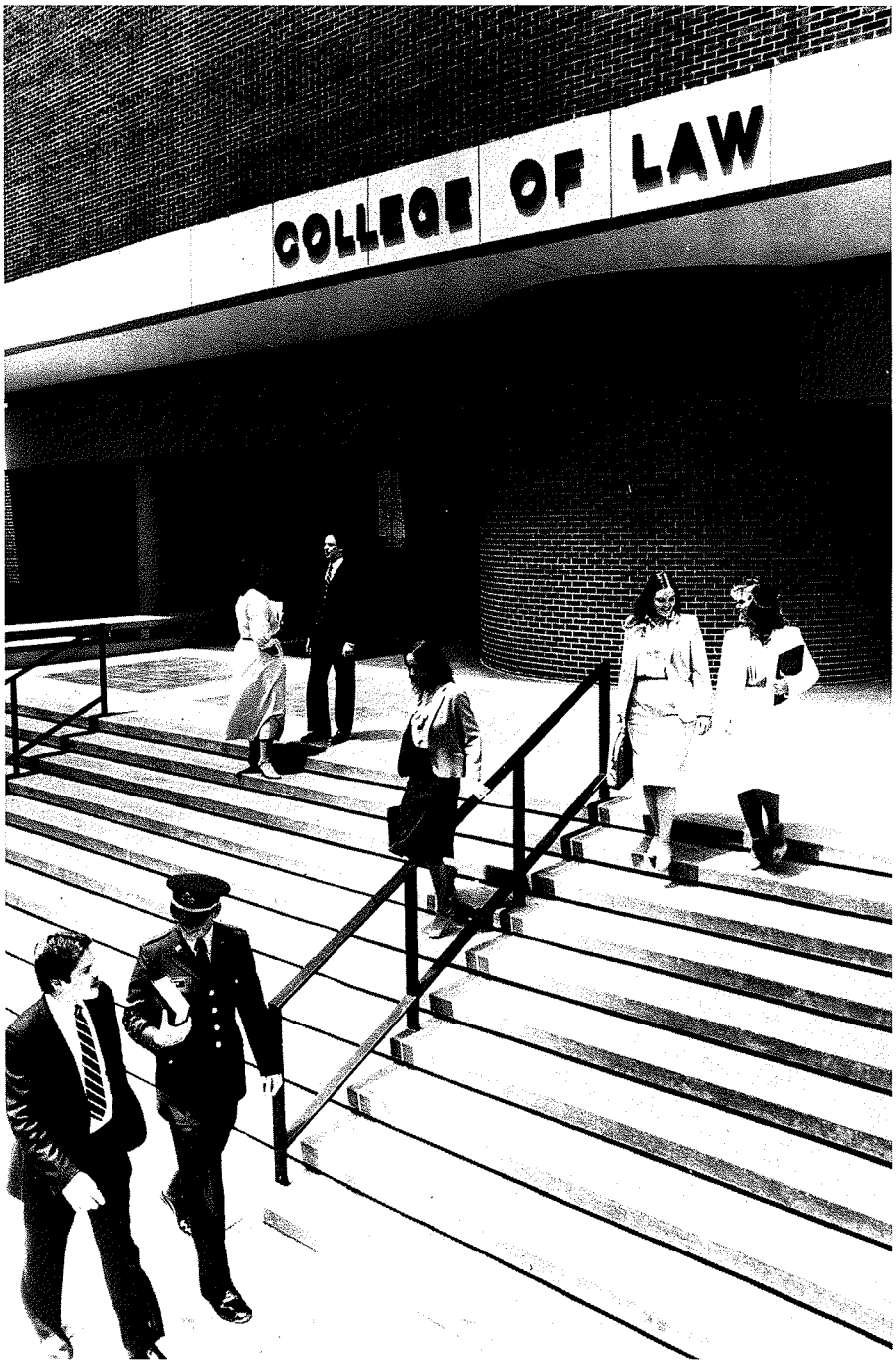
About the Author: *Dean Lanier has served as Interim Dean of the Georgia State University College of Law since July 1, 1985. His prior professional experience includes an association with Gambrell, Russell, Killorin, Wade and Forbes from 1968 until 1973, when he took a leave of absence for service with the Marine Corps as a rifle platoon commander in Vietnam. He first joined the faculty at Georgia State in 1972 as an Adjunct Professor in Law and was later selected as one of the first faculty members of the College of Law when it opened in 1982. He has also served on law faculties at the University of Bielefeld in West Germany and at the Ecole Superieure de Commerce de Paris. Dean Lanier received his J.D. from Emory University, an M.S. in comparative urban studies from Georgia State University, and an A.B. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*



tries. Of these, 40 percent are registered in the full-time (nine-quarter) program and 60 percent in the part-time (15-quarter) track. Fifty-five percent are male, forty-five percent female; twelve percent are minority persons. Of the alumni of the College who have stood the Georgia bar examination thus far, eighty-six percent have been successful. The GSU Intrastate Moot Court Team last year, competing against teams from other Georgia law schools, captured both the best oralist and second best brief prizes at the competition in Macon. Under the sponsorship of two German foundations, a select group of students and faculty travel to Germany each summer for an intensive study program in German and European law. Last June saw the publication of Volume 1, Number 1, of the *Georgia State University Law Review*.

FACULTY

The full-time teaching faculty now consists of 21 professors drawn from across the nation and having academic credentials from over 20 law schools coast to coast including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Berkeley, and others. Most of these have earned advanced degrees and several hold the Ph.D. in various disciplines. Last year, a member of the College faculty was designated by Delta Theta Phi International Law Fraternity as the most outstanding law professor in the United States. As a group, the faculty has been extraordinarily active in the governance of the College and has contributed its legal education experience at other law schools to the rapid development of the programs and structures within the GSU College of Law. Since the strong policy of the College prohibits any form of discrimination or distinction between the full- and part-time tracks to the J.D. degree, the same faculty teaches both day and evening courses.

While the College has yet to offer any traditional courses through the use of adjunct faculty, plans are in place to capture the specialized expertise of the Atlanta bar where this approach is appropriate. Courses in aviation law, specialized fields of tax law, and government contract law will be taught by members of the bar in Atlanta. A model for the employment of adjunct faculty was established last year when over a dozen members of the Atlanta trial bar and bench began serving as part-time instructors in the year-long civil litigation courses sponsored under the aegis of the College's clinical education program. The success of this program augurs well for the extension of this relationship between the College and the Atlanta bar. Attorneys wishing to participate in these programs may contact Dean Lanier at 404-658-2048.

LAW LIBRARY

The library is a primary resource of the College of Law. Growing rapidly since September, 1982, it now contains over 118,000 volumes of books and microform holdings. With a projected annual acquisition rate of over 15,000 volumes, the collection will continue to grow and improve in support of the expanding programs of the College. The library facilities include a microform room, video viewing room, photocopy room, and several student study rooms.

The collection is an important resource not only for students and faculty of the College but for members of the larger legal community as well. Besides offering multiple sets of all federal and regional reporters, the library's collection includes all state annotated codes, state attorney general opinions, and selected state administrative codes. Digests, legal encyclopedias, citators, and other indexing devices provide access to these materials. Other components of the collection include law reviews, loose-leaf services, legal treatises, and form books. The entire collection is organized in the familiar Library of Congress classification system and is accessible through the new computerized on-line card catalog.

Computer assisted legal research, LEXIS and WESTLAW, are available but presently restricted to student and faculty use. Computer facilities provide access to self-instruction programs in legal topics, bibliographic data bases, cataloging, and interlibrary loan arrangements.

The Law Library is also building a large collection of microform materials, including the U. S. Supreme Court briefs and records from 1832 to date, the U. S. Supreme Court oral arguments from 1952 to the present, the Congressional Record from 1873 to the present, the Code of Federal Regulations from 1938, and the Federal Register from 1936 to date. Hard copies of these materials can be made from the microform materials.

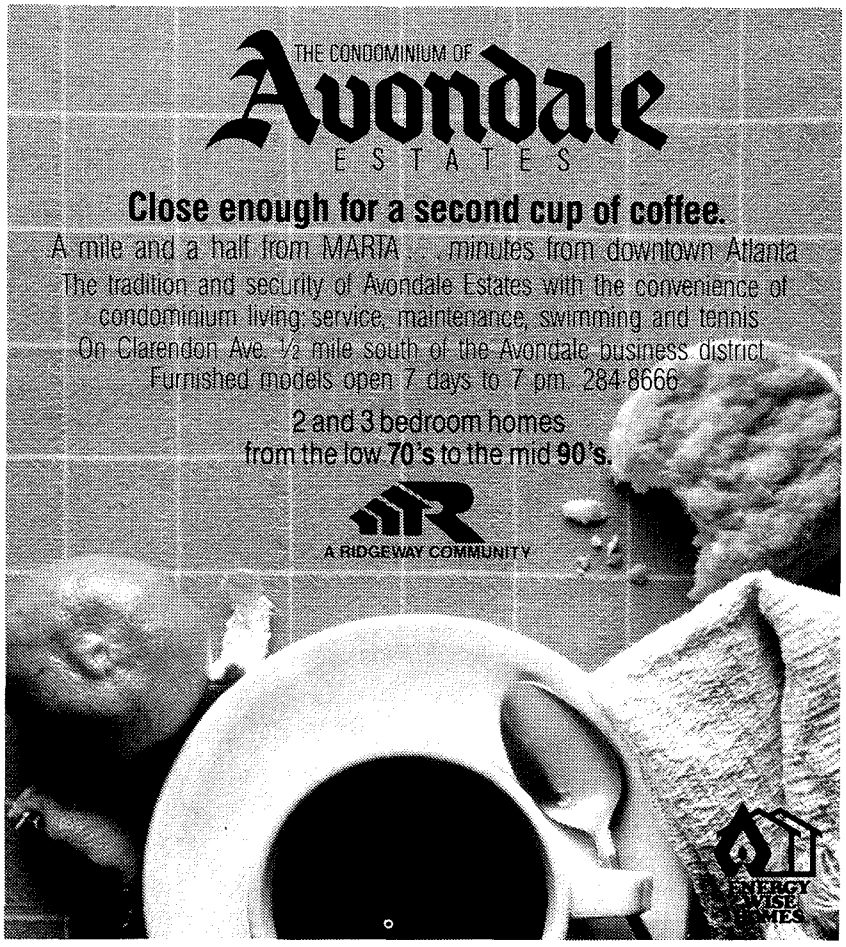
Since all of the College's Continuing Legal Education programs are videotaped and maintained in the Law Library, those attorneys unable to attend a particular CLE session are able to view the program in the library at a later time. Attorneys may reserve the video equipment prior to viewing.

The Law Library was designated an official depository for federal government publications in 1984. As a federal depository, the Library receives congressional publications and federal agency materials in microform and in printed form. These, together with the other resources of the collection, are freely available to the bar.

In addition to its American holdings, the library is building substantial research collections in English, Canadian, German, and international law generally.

The success of a law school library depends, however, as much on the quality of the services it provides as on the strengths of its collection. At GSU, the library staff includes five professional librarians and ten support staff members. For the convenience of students, faculty, and members of the legal community, the professional staff is available seven days a week. In addition, evening reference service is also provided.

Since the written law in all its forms is the basic working material of the practicing attorney, the staff of



the Law Library is committed to providing accessible, well-organized materials and services to members of the local legal community. Attorneys may use any of the materials of the College on the premises and facilities for photocopying are also available. The library is open during the week from 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.; on Saturdays, from 9:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m.; and, on Sundays, from noon until 11:00 p.m.

THE CENTER FOR CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

The broad educational mandate of the College of Law encompasses not only the traditional and part-time law student but extends to embrace the practicing bar as well. The rapidly changing face of modern law and its increasing complexity have joined to create a pressing need for a convenient forum for post-admission legal education; the recent adoption of a Mandatory Continuing Legal Education system in Georgia came in recognition of these conditions. It was in response to these factors that the College of Law at Georgia State University established its Center for Continuing Legal Education in the summer of 1984.

An analysis of the CLE opportunities afforded under the auspices of the Georgia Institute for Continuing Legal Education persuaded Dean Ben Johnson that a need existed for intensive, in-depth and extended CLE course offerings for the practicing bar. From this consideration emerged the dominant philosophy of the CLE program at GSU which has, since its inception, emphasized relatively long-term programs (typically extending to four, five or six weeks), offered in the evening hours (usually one or two nights per week), at the campus of the College in downtown Atlanta.

This combination of need, market, and convenience has met with spectacular success. By the end of November, 1985, 21 CLE programs at the College of Law had drawn in excess of 1200 registrations; over 260 hours of CLE instruction had been provided to the bar, together with an additional 21 hours of instruction in Legal Ethics. The range of subjects in the programs spanned the interests and needs of the practitioner—securities regulation, divorce practice, bankruptcy, tax, and workers' compensation took their place beside trial advocacy, products liability, will drafting, and proof of damages, among others.

In December, 1985, Georgia State presented its first Legal Ethics CLE Seminar under the leadership of William P. Smith III, the General Counsel for the State Bar of Georgia. This Ethics program will be sponsored several times each year in order to provide the Georgia attorney a convenient opportunity to fulfill the MCLE Ethics requirement.

The ability of the College to fulfill the goals and objectives of the GSU CLE Center is due in large part to the unparalleled professional spirit of the fine Georgia attorneys, judges, and law professors who have given generously of their time, talent, and energy to share their expertise with fellow members of the bar. The College of Law is grateful to these lecturers and authors for their participation in these CLE programs.

CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION

The Georgia State University College of Law has chosen clinical education as one of its principal areas of emphasis. A large measure of the success of these clinical programs is attributable to the active participation and support of the Atlanta legal community.

To achieve its goal of providing a wide diversity of simulated and actual practice opportunities for its students, the College of Law has retained a full-time, tenure-track faculty member trained in clinical education with the primary objective of creating and administering simulated trial skills courses as well as internship programs with various

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state and federal agencies in the Atlanta area. Now that the College of Law is into its fourth year of operation, these programs are well under way.

The first clinical program of the College was a required year-long simulated civil trial skills course which all students must take in their second year of legal studies. This course is taught by three full-time and twelve adjunct faculty members (all of whom are practicing trial attorneys or judges from the Atlanta community) who teach sections of about a dozen students each. The course is structured around a personal injury lawsuit in which the students, in the role of the plaintiff's or defense attorneys, follow the case from the initial client interviews, through discovery, depositions, and motions practice. The course culminates in a jury trial in the third quarter. First-year law students participate in the course as parties, witnesses, and jurors.

Together with this simulated trial skills course, which provides students with a foundation for practice under Georgia statutory third-year student practice provisions (O.C.G.A. §§ 15-18-22 and 15-20-1), the second area of emphasis for the clinical programs is internship opportunities for academic credit in various state and federal agencies throughout the Atlanta area. The students work from ten to 15 hours a week at the particular agency and, in addition, attend a weekly classroom seminar and write a research paper each quarter on the substantive matter involved in their work. At present, there are more than 40 students participating in internships at the Georgia Supreme Court, various local Superior and State Courts, the DeKalb County Solicitor's Office, the Fulton County and Federal Public Defender's Offices, the United States Comptroller of the Currency, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, the Atlanta City Council, the Southern Prisoners' Defense Committee, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. More internship programs are being developed as student interest in them increases.

Another area of emphasis for second- and third-year students is an

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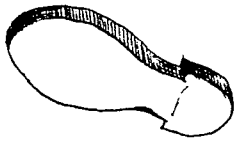
Gain a Step!



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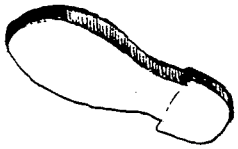

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The Georgia State University College of Law

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Alternative Dispute Resolution clinical program in which participating students mediate actual disputes in conjunction with, and under the supervision of, Atlanta's Neighborhood Justice Center. As a prerequisite to participation in the actual mediation of disputes, students take a course in Alternative Dispute Resolution taught by two full-time faculty members of the College and they attend an intensive training session conducted by the staff of the Neighborhood Justice Center. Students then have the opportunity to mediate disputes referred to them as certified mediators through the Neighborhood Justice Center.

In the very near future, the College of Law anticipates establishing an in-house clinical program in which students will represent clients in actual cases in a variety of legal settings. Although the precise contours of this clinical program are yet to be set, this phase of the development of the skills courses represents another aspect of the College of Law's overall commitment to clinical education. It is a firm goal of the administration and faculty of the College to train law students to be competent and qualified attorneys. These clinical courses are viewed by the College of Law as vital and necessary adjuncts to sound and challenging substantive courses taught in the traditional manner.

CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT OFFICE

The Placement Office is available to assist both employers interested in hiring College of Law graduates, and students seeking part-time work, summer clerkships and full-time employment. Employers are welcome to visit the College of Law and to participate in the annual on-campus interview program. If an employer is unable to interview at the College, the Placement Office will disseminate information about the employer so that interested students may submit resumes to the Placement Office, after which the Office will forward them to the employer. The Placement Office also assists employers with immediate openings by posting job notices on the bulletin board in order for students to contact these employers directly. The Placement Office maintains a library of resource materials (including employer information such as law firm, government, and corporate resumes; judicial clerkship information; and legal and non-legal employment directories) as well as a posting board for interview and job announcements.

During the Fall, 1985, recruiting season, numerous employers participated in the on-campus interviewing program and many in the resume distribution program; moreover, a large number of positions, both full-time and part-time, were listed on the job notice bulletin board. These employers represented law firms, accounting firms, corporations, and government agencies. Of the 48 graduates of the Class of 1985, 83 percent were employed by the end of last summer, well in excess of the comparable national average. Fifty-eight percent of these were in private practice; nine percent in corporate positions; 17 percent in government/judicial clerkships; and 16 percent in miscellaneous employment (including academic).

Last fall, the College of Law co-sponsored, with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, the 1985 Southeastern Public Interest Symposium and Job Fair. The Job Fair facilitated the recruitment of law students in the states of Georgia, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee by public interest law employers.

The Career Planning and Placement Office is located in Room 168 of the College of Law and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., Monday through Friday (404-658-2062), and its Director is Betty B. Cunningham. The College of Law is a member of the National Association for Law Placement.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

A rose may well, in the final analysis, simply be a rose, but fungibility is no virtue among law schools. No law school today can long endure—much less propser—without a keen sense of its own identity, a sure sense of direction, its mission and purpose, and above all, the moral courage necessary to translate these into a living reality. The College of Law at Georgia State University inherited these as its birthright, and this patrimony was nurtured in the early years in the capable and caring hands of Ben F. Johnson, its first Dean:

> . . . [T]he College of Law is the creation of the Board of Regents to fulfill its responsibility to the citizenry of this State . . . [T]his is no routine expansion, much less another institution merely to balance law schools between its two comprehensive universities, and certainly no move merely to perfect an organizational chart for Georgia State University. In a sense, the College of Law . . . has what is substantially a mandate of constitutional dimensions to perform a unique mission in legal education, in a unique location within the State, and at a university which has already shaped itself to perform this unique mission . . .*

The College recognizes and values its special vocation in legal education within a modern, urban world demanding flexibility in educational opportunity. It does so, not benevolently offering it as a sort of tokenism, but by embracing it affirmatively with commitment, dedication, and—yes—zeal and passion. These have secured its early achievement; they guarantee its future.

*From the introductory remarks of Dean Johnson in *A Feasibility Study of the Establishment of a New Law School* at Georgia State University, submitted to the Section on Legal Education of the American Bar Association, September 1, 1982, at page 4.