



INNOVATIONS

Preparing students for the changing dynamics of law practice, spotlight on the Leadership Program

LAWYERS ARE LEADERS.

Lawyers are **seen** as leaders, because of their knowledge, their credentials and their positions in firms, agencies, companies and communities.

Lawyers **act** as leaders because of all these things, too.

Lawyer **become** leaders because of their experience, integrity and ability to influence and work with others to get things done.

While traditional legal education assumes that lawyers will become leaders organically, the faculty at Elon Law is intentional and explicit about the process of developing lawyers into leaders. They don't put off or ignore the conversation about leadership, the role of lawyers as leaders and what it takes to hone and develop essential skills.

"Most attorneys learn how to lead over time through the school of hard knocks or professional development

opportunities," says Faith Rivers James, Professor of Law and Director of Leadership Programs at Elon Law. "In today's fast-paced, competitive and changing environment, lawyers don't have the luxury of time to learn these skills. At Elon, our goal is to prepare our students so they have both the knowledge of the law and the capability to lead so they – and their employers, clients and communities – can benefit from these skills earlier on in their careers."

This dual approach is not simply an add-on class or a marketing tagline. The goal of educating students in both legal doctrine and legal practice is the foundation of the school, but since its inception in 2006 the law school's curriculum and pedagogy have been designed to graduate future lawyers who have an exceptional capacity to lead.

The law school's founders understood that the next

generation of lawyers would be working – and leading – in a changing landscape. Intellectual skills are essential, but insufficient.

Elon Law designed its leadership curriculum with the future in mind – and it’s “impressive, because it is thoughtful, well-coordinated and integrated,” says Paula Monopoli, Professor of Law at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and editor of *Law and Leadership: Integrating Leadership Studies into the Law School Curriculum*.

“Combining legal education and leadership education is so new, and Elon is the leader,” she adds.

INFLUENCE, PERSUADE, ADVOCATE

Monopoli argues that leadership education is increasingly needed within law school curricula. “If law schools are going to convince society that we add value, we need to embrace leadership studies,” she insists.

Influence and persuasion is at the heart of the lawyer’s job – making an obvious connection to leadership, according to Monopoli.

“In law school we analyze cases and teach people how to make really good theoretical and doctrinal arguments,” Monopoli explains. “The point of the rigorous analysis is to advocate for a position, persuade people to embrace our ideas and act on them. And that’s exactly what leaders do.”

The ability to influence is a skill that Elon Law students examine and practice. They move from the idea that a leader is the person in charge or with formal authority to the idea that leaders have influence in many ways.

“I was in the military for 20 years before going to law school. My leadership style was really defined,” says Mark York L’12 now an attorney with Carruthers and Roth. “At Elon, I learned how to deal with people in the civilian world differently. Leadership is not about position. It’s knowing how to use influence – or when to step back and not influence.”

Craig Turner L’10 agrees. He, too, had a military career before law school and found one definition of leadership – the ability to influence people and organizations to meet their goals – to be especially valuable.

“When you get to your first job, you don’t have positional authority. To convince a partner, or a client, that a course of action is advisable, all I have is influence. I can fall back on the skills I learned and practiced at Elon,” says Turner, an attorney with Smith Moore Leatherwood.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

While the particular elements of the leadership program have changed through the years, and continue to be refined, the structure has always been based on an



Law students met with dairy farmers in Guilford County, N.C. to discuss farmland preservation law.

SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS TAKE A TEAM APPROACH WITH NONPROFIT CLIENTS

Guilford County, North Carolina – like many places in the U.S. – has wrestled with the economic, legal and environmental implications of growth and development. The Piedmont Conservation Council (PCC), a non-profit, volunteer organization, needed to understand property and planning law to create a Farmland Plan. They turned to second-year Elon Law students for advice.

As part of the law school’s Public Law and Leadership course, small teams of students collaborate on a legislative, administrative or regulatory project for a nonprofit client. Teams quickly get up to speed on the client and the challenge, research law and precedent, and make recommendations. Adding a touch of competition to the process, several teams work as “firms” and present their work to the client – who then chooses a preferred strategy and counsel. Each team is also observed by an executive coach and receives feedback on group dynamics and leadership issues.

In 2010, two teams researched farmland protection policies and ordinances throughout the United States, providing the PCC a broad view of planning as well as specific options to balance

land preservation policy and individual property rights.

The Council used information from Elon Law students in their presentations to citizens and officials and, as a result, “the Guilford County Farmland Plan was unique to others being developed in North Carolina,” says Julie Elmore, Executive Director of the PCC at the time, and currently a Natural Resource Program Analyst with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

“I was impressed with the students’ willingness to help and enjoyed seeing how much pride they took in their work,” Elmore added. “I felt they knew that their research was going to serve Guilford County and it motivated them to go a step beyond what they might have if the work was simply for a grade.”

“Lawyering is problem solving,” says Elon’s Faith Rivers James. “The job is about providing wise counsel to clients, often working with teams and multiple constituencies. By working with the PCC and other non-profits, Elon Law students get hands-on experience with real clients solving real problems – while learning how to work effectively as a team.”

ELON LAW'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM ...

"... is definitely something that attracted me to Elon, especially the Leadership Fellows program. That, in combination with legal training, is a big deal." – Ian Philips L'15

"... is a huge benefit. Graduates will have a leg up on their peers." – Mark York L'12

"... hones intangible, important skills that don't show up on the typical legal resume." – Stephen Shaw L'10

"... prepared me for working as an attorney by providing me with numerous opportunities to work in group settings to achieve a common purpose." – Chantelle Lytle L'13

"... is teaching young professionals how to navigate uncertain legal markets, be capable of motivating others and good at building effective teams to solve problems." – David Lambert L'14

"... makes an Elon graduate a valuable asset to an employer right when you walk in the door. If you can demonstrate in the interview what you've learned, it can make the difference between getting a job or not." – Craig Turner L'10

"... teaches students how to adapt to changing situations, while also allowing students to gain practical experience in working with clients." – Janean Bryant L'15

"... is a huge part of the equation for me. Every law school will teach law, but not every one will help me be a lawyer-leader." – Brenna Raghianti L'14

"... gives you a long-term career advantage." – David Morrow '07, L'10

integrated approach. The leadership program is woven into the overall program of legal education at Elon, exploring three levels of leadership: leading self, leading others and leading communities. This framework was developed in collaboration with the Center for Creative Leadership, a top-ranked, global provider of executive education with a legal specialty practice.

For students, their leadership education begins with a required course, *Lawyering, Leadership and Professionalism*, during the winter term of their first-year. Working with faculty as well as practicing attorneys, they put leadership into the context of succeeding in a law firm and in the profession. Discussions and experiential activities focus on interpersonal skills, personal values and the role of the lawyer-leader in communities.

In addition, all students participate in the "Leadership Essentials for Lawyers" program led by the Center for Creative Leadership. They create Individual Development Plans (IDPs) to connect what they learned to goals for success in law school and the legal profession. They also receive one-on-one coaching from a pool of executive coaches and practicing attorneys.

First-year students meet and build relationships with experienced lawyers from a broad range of practice settings through Elon's innovative Preceptor Program. Each year, more than 50 preceptors observe first-year students in law classes and provide feedback, mentor students and expose them to real work experiences. Many of these relationships extend into the second- and third-year and beyond graduation.

In year two, Elon Law students build on their first-year leadership experiences, again with a combination of class work, coaching and interaction with practicing attorneys. They work directly with clients in the required *Public Law and Leadership* course [see p.11 sidebar]. Students learn to work together in teams to tackle legal problems for nonprofit organizations. In-class discussions explore team dynamics and the attributes of effective team leadership. Executive coaches assist students in assessing their individual leadership styles and establishing goals for interpersonal development in the team context.

Third-year law students have the opportunity to participate in the law school's *Capstone Leadership* course, applying legal knowledge and leadership skills toward initiatives of their choice that benefit the profession, the community or society more broadly. Capstone participants draw on the legal knowledge, advocacy skills and leadership competencies they develop in the first two years of law school.

Other initiatives – the Leadership Fellows program, the Conference on Law and Leadership and the Joseph M. Bryan Distinguished Leadership Lecture Series – extend the discussion about the role of lawyers as leaders more deeply into the fabric of the law school, its students and the broader legal community.

HEEDING THE CALL FOR PROFESSIONALISM

Elon Law's investment in leadership education may sound lofty, but the skills and experiences students gain are practical. The school's leaders, administrators and faculty are driven by the need for students to have a wide array of professional skills in order to land a first job, succeed in a variety of roles and provide value to employers, clients and communities.

Although leadership education in law schools is an emerging practice, it is one that is paying off, according to students and alumni.

"Elon has recognized that in order for graduates to be successful in today's legal market, students need much more than what a traditional legal education can offer," says David Lambert L'14. "This was the reason I decided to come to Elon Law. I knew the importance of leadership development from undergraduate school and how these skills were essential to surviving in a volatile marketplace."

"When we graduate, we need to be career ready," says Brenna Raghianti L'14. "The theoretical knowledge is important and we are getting that – but if you can't put it to use, what good are you? It doesn't feel good enough to know the law. At Elon, I'm gaining real, practical experience, especially through the Leadership Fellows program, so I am confident I can put what I learn into action."

Stephen Shaw L'10 routinely draws on lessons learned through Elon's leadership program in his role as an associate attorney at Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice in Greensboro, N.C.

"Lawyers do a lot of non-legal things to solve client's problems," he says. "We're problem solving, counseling and giving guidance. Managing clients is a composite skill. We have to know how to be efficient and cost effective, and how to have a strong, positive relationship with the client. We have to use our communication and influence skills, and work as a team. Elon Law is a great program and the leadership component is an added value."

David Morrow '07, L'10 is a regulatory attorney with BuckleySandler LLP in Washington, D.C., who relies on the "soft-skills" he learned at Elon Law as much as the academics.

"I never had a class in the specific type of law I do now, but I use the skills of working in groups, understanding the work dynamics, dealing with different personalities, networking and building relationships in both bar leadership roles and in the firm," Morrow says.

"The leadership component is one of the most important things at Elon," adds Morrow, recently named an ABA Business Law Fellow and the 2013 recipient of the National Bar Association's Junius W. Williams Young Lawyer of the Year Award. "In practice, I've learned that you can be the smartest lawyer out there, the hardest working or the one billing the most hours and it's not enough. It's often the relationships, the networking, the soft skills that matter most." ■



FAITH RIVERS JAMES

Professor of Law
Director of Leadership Programs

Background: Prior to joining the Elon Law faculty, Rivers James taught at Vermont Law School, the University of South Carolina School of Law and in the master's in public administration program at the University of South Carolina. She began her career as a legislative attorney in the Washington, D.C. office of Akin Gump Strauss, Hauer & Feld, LLP. She entered public service to serve as Counsel and Senior Policy

Advisor to the Majority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, and later served as Executive Director of the South Carolina Bar Foundation. Rivers James received a bachelor's degree in government and sociology from Dartmouth College and a Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School.

Roles at Elon: Directs the school's leadership programs; teaches Property, Legislation, Nonprofit Organizations, and Lawyering, Leadership, and Professionalism; developed the Public Law and Leadership course.

Message to law students: "Every day is a leadership exercise. Whether you are leading a client, leading a jury or leading in your firm or agency or company, you are influencing, counseling and solving problems. What approach will you take?"

Message to legal professionals and employers: "Elon lawyers come in well versed in the law and they know how to work effectively on their own, in teams and with clients. They are clear-eyed about where they fit, intentional about their choices and their career, aware of strengths and able to mitigate weaknesses. Elon lawyers are ready and poised to meet expectations in their jobs and in their communities."



JOHN ALEXANDER

Distinguished Leadership Coach-in-Residence

Background: Previously, Alexander was President and CEO of the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). During his tenure, CCL was consistently ranked among the world's top providers of non-degree executive education. Before joining the CCL staff, he pursued a career in newspaper journalism, during which he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Editorial Writing. Alexander graduated from Princeton University

with Highest Honors and earned an M.A. in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics from Magdalen College, Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar.

Roles at Elon: Oversees a team of coaches who work one-on-one with Elon Law students to develop Individual Development Plans; coaches second-year students and teams; directs the Leadership Fellows program.

On the value of developing lawyer-leaders: "To be a successful lawyer today, not only do you have to know the law but also have interpersonal skills – the ability to influence, communicate, build relationships, work and lead within a team setting – all of which require self-awareness. These skills are important in the practice of law and the development of a legal career."

Elon Law is an exciting place to be because: "I've had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of building this program from scratch, to innovate and learn as we go. It's very exciting to watch the school flourish. I also really enjoy working with the students, especially the Leadership Fellows."

Other members of the Elon Law faculty who have taught leadership courses or contributed significantly to the development of the Leadership Program at Elon Law include Don Dancer, Leary Davis, Catherine Dunham, Jim Exum, John Flynn, Steve Friedland, Andy Haile, George Johnson, Margaret Kantlehner, David Levine, Bonnie McAlister, Tom Noble, Robert Parrish, Patricia Perkins and Roland Smith.