

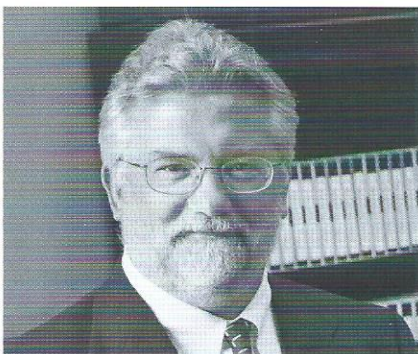


LIVING IN THE LAW

THE TEACHING OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM EMPHASIZED AT WALTER F. GEORGE SCHOOL OF LAW

BY ROBAN JOHNSON

When Mercer Law Professor Patrick E. Longan first entered the legal profession, he carried with him the ideals of many first-year law students. Honesty and ethical behavior were paramount, he felt, to carrying out the professional responsibilities he had accepted.



Professor Patrick E. Longan

It wasn't long before he realized that some attorneys did not share his moral and ethical values. As a young lawyer practicing in Dallas, Texas, in the 1980s, he was keenly aware of the pressures he and many of his colleagues faced. "I saw a lot of things and had some experiences that I had not anticipated," said Longan.

Longan remained in private practice for seven years before taking a position at Stetson University College of Law in Florida. He had long held a desire to teach, but did not realize at that time that he would soon be combining his love of teaching with his passion for ethics and professionalism.

"While I was at Stetson, I had an opportunity to work with Reece Smith on professionalism education," said Longan. "Reece has been a national leader in the professionalism movement for many years." In 2000, Longan accepted an appointment at Mercer's Walter F. George School of Law where he holds the William Augustus Bootle Chair in Ethics and Professionalism.

"I thought in many ways Mercer was the dream job," said Longan of his appointment. "It was an opportunity to work solely on these issues of professionalism and ethics that I think are so important. More importantly, I am able to do this at a school that has a history of commitment in

this area of the profession."

Upon his arrival, Longan found that both Mercer and the state of Georgia were well ahead of Florida and the rest of the country on its commitment to educate lawyers and students in the area of professionalism. "Georgia is a real leader in this field, and has been since the 1980s," said Longan. "Jack Sammons, who is Mercer's Griffin B. Bell Professor of Law, has been nationally recognized as a scholar and teacher in legal ethics."

Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism

The settlement of a case involving E.I. duPont de Nemours & Co. made way for the establishment of the Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism at the Walter F. George School of Law. In December 1999, Judge Hugh Lawson of the Middle District of Georgia signed a Consent Order and Final Judgment that settled allegations of litigation misconduct involving duPont and its counsel. That order provided that duPont would provide funding to endow professorial chairs at Georgia's four ABA-accredited law schools, which "shall be devoted to fostering and teaching professionalism and ethics in the practice of law."

The Walter F. George School of Law faculty and

administrators decided to implement the order by creating the William Augustus Bootle Chair in Ethics and Professionalism in the Practice of Law and by directing the holder of the Bootle Chair to direct the Mercer Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism.

As director of the Center, Professor Longan is providing a variety of in-house and outreach educational activities aimed at improving the professionalism of students, lawyers, and judges.

"Through the Center, we get students thinking about issues of professionalism in their very first week," said Longan. "We begin by examining what professionalism means in general and how it applies to lawyers, doctors and other professionals."

Once they have examined the idea of professionalism, Longan lets them know what ethical tests they might face once they enter the legal profession. "Some of what they learn really upsets them," he said. "Before they graduate, they will understand the challenges lawyers face and how they can achieve professionalism if they live up to their responsibilities through individual choice and commitment."

Longan, who received the National Award for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching

Professionalism from the American Bar Association and the Conference of Chief Justices, designed the course and began teaching it in 2004. Mercer is the only law school in the nation to offer a first-year course on professionalism in the legal profession, and graduates this spring will be the first class of students to complete the course.

In addition to classroom lectures and

"Through the Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism we get students thinking about issues of professionalism in their very first week. We help them examine the tough questions about the field and life they are about to enter. These are things that are not typically examined in the first year at most law schools."

— Patrick Longan

William Augustus Bootle Chair in Ethics and Professionalism

discussion, these students also had opportunities to meet with esteemed lawyers and judges who shared with them their thoughts and insights about ethics and professionalism. "We call these oral histories and ask the lawyers and judges who participate to share their stories about their own lives in the law and what challenges they faced and overcame."

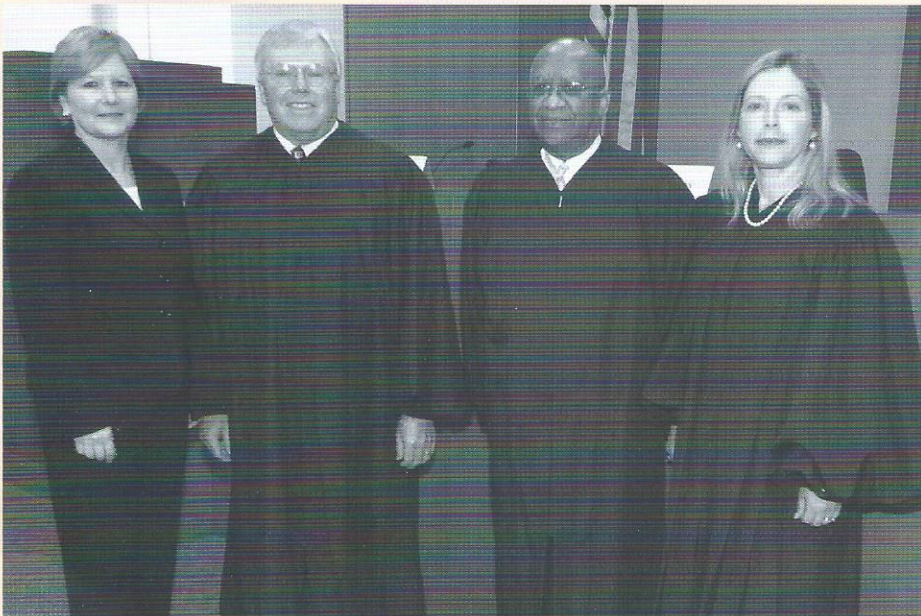
Longan also brings a series of outside speakers to campus to speak on "Living in the Law." "What I want our students to see is that lawyers face a lot of challenges, but ultimately, their ability to achieve happiness and satisfaction in the profession is linked with these questions of professionalism."

Students are not the only ones to benefit from the duPont settlement and the creation of

Mercer's Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism. "Part of the order required that duPont pay an additional \$1 million that was divided among the four law schools in Georgia. The sole purpose of the money was to endow a series of symposia devoted to ethics and professionalism," explains Longan. Mercer held the first symposium in 2001, with its location rotating annually among the four law schools.

"At least one way lawyers can find great intrinsic meaning and

satisfaction is to make a commitment and live up to these virtues of professionalism," added Longan. "Even with the disciplinary system in place, enforcement mechanisms can fall short. In the end, it is an individual choice that lawyers are called upon to make. The right choice benefits both them and the public they serve." ■



GEORGIA COURT OF APPEALS HEARS ARGUMENTS AT LAW SCHOOL

Three judges of the Georgia Court of Appeals heard three arguments at the Law School on Oct. 19, 2005. The Court occasionally hears arguments at Mercer one day a year. Judges visiting the Mercer Law School this fall, shown with Dean Daisy Floyd, left to right, are: Presiding Judge Edward H. Johnson, Chief Judge John H. Ruffin Jr. and Judge Anne Elizabeth Barnes.