Stetson University College of Law is a diverse and selective private College of Law that prepares students to competently, professionally, ethically, and compassionately engage in the practice of law, serve in related professions, and pursue public service. The College fosters a nurturing and caring environment for teaching and learning law applicable to the local, national, and global communities. The College emphasizes individualized attention in its mentoring function.

In addition, the College stresses the obligation of public and community service, including service to the legal profession. In performing its mission, the College of Law uses innovative as well as traditional methods of teaching and scholarship, as augmented by modern technology. Stetson College of Law is committed to diversity on all levels and to a congenial, supportive environment for all its students.
Stetson University College of Law recently dedicated its new Student Center during the college’s annual Family and Friends Celebration in October.

The new Student Center, which opened this fall semester, consolidates Stetson’s career services, student organization offices and the office of Assistant Dean Lynn Howell.

The Center also adds another seminar room for the College of Law and houses exercise facilities that include a new lap pool, a weight room and a cardiovascular room. This two-story, 13,500-square-foot facility reflects the Spanish-Mediterranean Revival architecture of Stetson’s 21-acre campus.

“The new Student Center is a major milestone in our law school’s growth, development and realization of our master plan to enhance facilities, programs and services,” said Dean Gary Vause.

Adjacent to the career services office are four interview rooms and a 24-hour student resource center, where students have access to computers, laser printers, a copier and fax machine to aid in their job search.

The Student Center is expected to be a hub of activity, offering recreational space for students to take a break from the everyday stress of their classes.

“We do not have the accoutrements of an undergraduate campus or town, so students and staff work together to create a rich non-academic environment,” said Dean Howell.

NEW STUDENT CENTER — Left, a view of the Student Center breezeway and pool. Below, Dean Gary Vause cuts the ribbon for the new Center, officially dedicating the facility.
At a glance, painting a child’s face at a safe-Halloween party, helping senior citizens fill out homestead exemption forms, or assisting victims of domestic violence may not seem like important requirements for a law school education.

But at Stetson University College of Law, students discover that community service can teach lessons that last a lifetime. Stetson was one of the first law schools in the country, and remains one of only 14, to require students to perform pro bono service to graduate. The legal community has embraced Stetson’s commitment to public service, and The National Jurist has previously ranked the College of Law as one of the top five schools in the nation for emphasis on public interest.

“Pro bono service allows our students an opportunity not only to try out their legal skills, but also to help those who need it the most,” said Assistant Dean Lynn Howell, who coordinates the pro bono program. “Being a lawyer is a privilege, not a right, and this reminds students of their obligation to give back to the community.”

To graduate, Stetson law students are required to perform 20 hours of pro bono work, 10 hours of which must be legal in nature. Many students far exceed this requirement, sometimes donating hundreds of community service hours over their law school career.

“In many cases, it is the first time that students will meet a real client,” Howell said, adding that it is often an eye-opening experience for students to calculate whether clients qualify for free legal assistance. “It is a chance for them to see the client perspective early on in their legal career.”

When students plan ahead, they can match their public service hours with their career goals. For example, students interested in practicing maritime law can volunteer with the Tampa Port Authority. Other students may elect to work with local bar associations, legal services and nonprofit organizations.

“One reason why I entered the law was because I wanted to help others, either by navigating them through the legal system or through volunteering,” said Andrew Bolin ’02, who helped build the Christian Bible Institute in Honduras as part of his pro bono work. “Community service helps us realize how fortunate we are to be lawyers, and that it is important for us to give back.”

The time that students donate to helping others sometimes yields unexpected rewards, added Howell. Pro bono service offers students a chance to work and network with practicing attorneys, occasionally leading to job offers.

Because of the flexibility in choices for student pro bono work, Howell hopes that students will maintain their commitment to public service long after graduation. “It is an important key for students to do something that is meaningful for them, so that they will want to continue to serve the community.”

Student Greg Harris offers a neighborhood child a Halloween toy at the ABA Student Chapter’s Safe Trick-or-Treat event Oct. 27.
A unique team of student leaders

The Stetson Ambassadors serve as an elite leadership team that represents Stetson at community functions, mentors new students, helps with campus tours and works on special projects for the Dean’s Office.

Andrew Bolin ’02 and Sarah Stith ’02 founded the organization in 2001 under the leadership of Dean Gary Vause and Assistant Dean Lynn Howell.

Ambassadors are selected through a competitive review process. Students are required to complete a written application and submit two references from the faculty or senior administration before being considered for interviews. Students are chosen based on their diversity of experience, background and displayed leadership ability.

The Ambassadors play a critical role in orientation by preparing entering students for the rigors of law school. As orientation leaders, they are trained as peer mentors to help new students work through sensitive situations, such as family crises or academic problems.

Ambassador chiefs call students before they arrive on campus, and two ambassadors are paired with each new student to serve as a mentor for the first year of law school. As mentors, ambassadors volunteer to help students who may be afraid to talk to administrators.

Ambassadors demonstrate their strong work ethic by coordinating dozens of community service, special event and fundraising projects each year. The average member volunteers 80 hours each semester; those within the Ambassador leadership typically donate 200 service hours each term.

In addition to supporting on-campus events and initiatives, Ambassadors have worked with schools, nonprofit organizations and Bar associations throughout Tampa Bay.

This diverse group reflects all walks of student life, ranging from Law Review editors and advocacy team members to second-career students and Student Bar Association leaders. The Ambassadors represent virtually every organization, honors fraternity, competition team and elected position on Stetson’s campus.