

STETSON UNIVERSITY

Institute for the Advancement of Legal Communication

2013-14 Annual Report

This year, Stetson University College of Law founded the Institute for the Advancement of Legal Communication. The Institute furthers Stetson's commitment to leadership in the area of legal communication education, research, and service.

Mission and Objectives

The Institute's mission is to improve the quality and achieve greater understanding of legal communication by

- studying the legal communication issues that face lawyers, judges, other professionals, and the public;
- supporting an active interdisciplinary community of legal communication and writing scholars, including those who study rhetoric; ethics; interpersonal, organizational, and intercultural communication; composition; speech; public discourse and media; procedure; and other topics that involve the communicative aspects of the law;
- developing innovative and effective methods and programs for teaching legal communication theory, skills, and values to students; and
- providing instruction for lawyers, judges, other professionals, and the public to improve their legal communication skills.

Institute Faculty

Professor Kirsten Davis. Professor Davis serves as Director for the Institute. She has a Doctor of Philosophy in Human Communication and focuses her research on rhetorical criticism of legal texts. She most recently developed a mobile application, *My Legal Writing Coach*[™], a mobile technology tool designed to help legal writers.

Professor Brooke Bowman. Professor Bowman is a nationally recognized expert on legal citation and advisor to our Moot Court Board, which is also nationally known for its excellence in written and oral legal communication. She is currently Editor-In-Chief of *Legal Writing: Journal of the Legal Writing Institute*.

Professor Catherine Cameron. Professor Cameron holds a master's degree in mass communications and is an expert on both media law and legal communication. She recently completed a co-authored book on the science of legal writing and, most recently, she spent her sabbatical designing educational materials for The Poynter Institute for Media Studies.

Professor Lance Long. Professor Long's expertise is in the field of legal communication and environmental advocacy. He is the co-author with Professor Cameron on the science of legal writing book. His empirical work on legal language is nationally recognized.

Professor Jason Palmer. Professor Palmer combines expertise in legal communication with an international law background. His work for international claims tribunals in Europe adds a distinctive intercultural communication focus for the Institute's study.

Institute Activities

Supporting the Teaching and Study of Legal Communication

Rhetoric and Law Colloquium: In March of 2014, the Institute co-sponsored the second Rhetoric and Law Colloquium hosted at the University of Alabama, Huntsville. The Colloquium welcomed leading law and language scholar Stanley Fish to lead a day-long discussion about the persuasive characteristics of the United States Supreme Court's opinions in *D.C. v. Heller*, an important Second Amendment case. **Director Kirsten Davis** participated with a group of scholars from both law and communication studies exploring the rhetorical, moral, and social importance of the language choices in the case.



Participants at the Rhetoric and Law Colloquium.



Professor Palmer moderating the Southeast Regional "practice ready" panel.

Southeast Regional Legal Writing Conference: In April 2014, the Institute hosted the Southeast Regional Legal Writing Conference attended by more than seventy legal writing professors from around the nation. The conference offered workshops on preparing students to be "practice-ready" and developing research and

writing skills for the 21st Century. Conference plenary speakers included Roy Peter



Clarke Rountree.

Clark, Vice President and Senior Scholar, Reporting, Writing, and Editing Faculty at the Poynter Institute, and Dr. Clarke Rountree, Chair and Professor of Communication Studies, University of Alabama, Huntsville. Clark spoke about the strategies for effective writing, and Rountree talked about the connection between rhetorical theory and the language of judicial opinions. The conference also featured a panel that included Stetson alums who discussed the preparation in legal communication that students need in today's legal practice. **Jason Palmer, Lance Long, and Kirsten Davis** Co-Chaired the event. **Brooke Bowman and Catherine Cameron** presented.

Bringing Legal Communication Education to Students and Lawyers

Distinguished Speaker: In January 2014, the Institute hosted its first distinguished speaker, Noah Messing, Director of Legal Writing at Yale Law School. While at Stetson, Messing addressed more than 150 first year law students on the basics of written persuasion. At a talk for moot court team members and alumni, Messing challenged the “sacred cows” of persuasive legal writing as advanced legal writers. Messing also met with members of Stetson’s legal writing faculty to discuss issues of legal writing education. Professor Davis organized Messing’s visit.



Stetson Faculty with Distinguished Speaker, Noah Messing (4th from left).

Legal Communication Speaker: In March 2014, the Institute hosted Craig Watters, Director of Communications for the Florida Supreme Court. Mr. Watters met with students to talk about his “alternative” career in the law that combines a focus on communication with the operation of the court system. He also met with faculty to discuss legal communication issues. Professor Palmer organized this event.

Student Workshops: In the Spring of 2014, the Institute hosted a series of **Legal Writing and Communication Skills Development Workshops** for students. The series included:

- Writing for the (Small) Screen: Writing for On-Screen Readers, **Kirsten Davis**.
- Choose Your Words Carefully: What We Know About the Language of Persuasion, **Lance Long**.
- Cross-Cultural Lawyering: Recognizing Diversity in Our Attorney-Client Communications, **Jason Palmer**.
- Overcoming Barriers to Beginning a Writing Project, **Catherine Cameron**.
- Polishing for Professionals Workshop: Putting the Finishing Touches on Your Writing, **Brooke Bowman**.

Webinar: In November 2013, the Institute hosted a Virtual Legal Writing Conference Webinar on designing trial and appellate brief problems for the law school legal writing classroom. **Kirsten Davis** organized this webinar and, along with Rutgers-Camden School of Law Professor Sarah Ricks, presented to legal writing faculty around the country on the topic.

Professional Training: In Fall 2013, Institute Faculty **Kirsten Davis** and **Brooke Bowman** presented at the **Conference for the Florida Trial Court Staff Attorneys Association** Conference in Sarasota. Dr. Davis presented on readability and comprehensibility strategies for legal writing, and Professor Bowman presented on Florida legal citation.

Studying and Leading in Legal Communication

Selected Publications by Institute Faculty:

- **Brooke Bowman**, *The ALWD Online Companion* (2014).
- **Kirsten Davis**, “*Reports of My Death Are Greatly Exaggerated*”: *Reading and Writing Objective Legal Memoranda in a Mobile Computing Age*, 92 Ore. L. Rev. 271 (2014).
- **Kirsten Davis**, *My Legal Writing Coach™: Memos*, Mobile Application.
- **Kirsten Davis**, *Inspecting, Not Just Expecting: Florida Supreme Court Adopts Code for Resolving Professionalism Complaints*, AALS Professional Responsibility Section Newsletter (Fall 2013).
- **Lance Long**, *When Justices Subconsciously Attack: The Theory of Argumentative Threat and the Supreme Court*, 91 Ore. Law. Rev. 933 (2013).

Selected Legal Communication Leadership Activities by Institute Faculty:

- **Brooke Bowman**, Editor in Chief, *Legal Writing: Journal of the Legal Writing Institute*.
- **Kirsten Davis**, Board of Directors for the Association of Legal Writing Directors.
- **Jason Palmer**, Committee, AALS One-Day Workshop for New Legal Writing Teachers.



Our Institute Fellows: Serving As Student Ambassadors for Legal Communication

Throughout the year, our Institute Fellows, **Roxi Gbetibouo** and **Katie Cleveland**, reached out to students, making them aware of Institute activities and events. They also assisted with running Institute events. The Institute was lucky to have them this year. Thank you!

