

# STETSON UNIVERSITY

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Institute for the Advancement of Legal Communication

## 2014-15 Annual Report

Stetson University College of Law's Institute for the Advancement of Legal Communication will celebrate its second anniversary in August 2015. 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 persuasion, ethics and professionalism, and rhetorical criticism of legal texts.

**Professor Brooke Bowman.** Professor Bowman is a nationally recognized expert on legal citation and is Associate Director for Stetson's Institute for Excellence in Advocacy as well as Advisor to Stetson's Moot Court Board.

**Professor Catherine Cameron.** Professor Cameron holds a master's degree in mass communications and is an expert on both media law and legal communication.

**Professor Lance Long.** Professor Long's expertise is in the field of legal communication and environmental advocacy.

**Professor Jason Palmer.** Professor Palmer combines expertise in legal communication with an international law background.

## 2014-15 Institute Activities

### Supporting the Teaching and Study of Legal Communication

**Long and Cameron Publish Book on the Science of Legal Writing:** Professors Lance Long and Catherine Cameron's book, *The Art Behind the Science of Legal Writing*, was published by Carolina Academic Press in Spring 2015. The book provides access to social science and statistical research that suggests that much of the advice given to legal writing students is backed by solid science. It was written to provide evidence for the use of many common legal writing conventions. The book was recognized with Stetson's Dolly and Homer Hand Award for notable achievements in scholarship in the area of the authors' expertise.

**Davis Leads New Legal Writing Teachers' Training:** Kirsten Davis was selected by the Association of American Law Schools to the Planning Committee for the New Legal Writing Teachers at the Workshop for New Law Teachers in June 2015. Dr. Davis worked with colleagues across the country to design a faculty training program that covered issues of designing courses, giving feedback, using effective teaching techniques, writing scholarship, and adapting to the new issues facing legal writing faculty.



Lance Long and Catherine Cameron celebrate their new book, *The Art Behind the Science of Legal Writing*.

### Students Create YouTube Video on Professionalism in Legal Communication, Win Contest:



Stetson students who created winning YouTube Video.

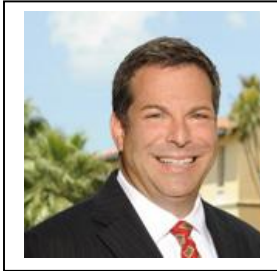
One of the goals of the Institute is to get students more interested in the issues of legal communication. The Florida Bar Standing Committee on Professionalism and the Florida Bar's Harry Latimer Center on Professionalism recently instituted a Law Student Professionalism YouTube Contest to draw attention to the issues of professionalism in practice. Four Stetson students wrote, produced, and acted in a wonderful two-and-a-half-minute video that focuses on professionalism in legal communication, and they won the contest. The video, "Practice In Motion," is based on standards described in the Florida Bar's recently approved "Professionalism Expectations," which take the

concepts professionalism beyond aspirational suggestions to "enforceable" principles. The video can be viewed here:

<http://www.floridabar.org/tfb/TFBProfess.nsf/93534DE21ECC6A7285257002004837A3/EF2169320E534B9785257E0A0065AE84!OpenDocument>.

**Faculty Help Draft New Florida “Professionalism Expectations”:** And, speaking of Florida’s New Professionalism Expectations, Director **Kirsten Davis** served on the Working Group of the Florida Bar’s Standing Committee on Professionalism that drafted the expectations. Among other things, the Expectations remind lawyers of professional legal communication behaviors, including principles for effectively using social media.

**Palmer Explores Student Efficacy in a New Article:** **Jason Palmer’s** new article, “*The Millennials*



*Are Coming!*”: *Improving Self-Efficacy in Law Students Through Universal Design in Learning*, addresses the lack of self-efficacy among millennial law students and what can be done to overcome it. His article suggests that self-regulated learning combined with universal design in learning can improve self-efficacy in the law school classroom. High-self efficacy for law students, he notes, results in increased ability to put forth effort and persistence to successfully accomplish a goal and is a positive predictor of educational success. Professor Palmer’s article can be found here:

<http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstrev/vol63/iss3/8/>

## **Bringing Legal Communication Education to Students, Lawyers, and Legal Professionals**

**Institute Starts Legal Writing Academy for Continuing Communication Education:** The Institute hosted its first continuing legal education program in January 2015. The new Legal Writing Academy was a day-long lawyer education program designed to bring lawyers up to speed on new and effective methods for written persuasion. The Academy addressed storytelling, the science of persuasion, and editing for persuasive impact. Key to the Academy is its workshop-style approach to lawyer education: attendees worked in small groups, facilitated by Institute faculty, to write and edit legal documents according to the principles learned in Academy sessions.

**Professors Davis, Palmer, Long, Cameron, and Bowman** created and led the Academy.



**Faculty Present Effective Communication Techniques to Elder Abuse Investigators:** The Institute joined with the Center for Excellence in Elder Law to present a training program on Narrative Report Writing to Florida Department of Children and Families Elder Abuse Investigators as part of a pilot project to bring communication and legal training to legal professionals critical to the protection of the vulnerable populations. **Kirsten Davis** led this initiative.

**Faculty Train Writers for Effective Communication in the Corporate Context:** **Kirsten Davis** led a half-day Effective Business Writing training session for professionals working for CitiGroup in its new derivative swap department in Tampa, Florida. The training focused not only techniques for clear writing but also on techniques for impression management in written communication.

**Institute Inaugurates New Legal Communication Voluntary Enrichment Program for Stetson Students:** This year, the Institute started a new, voluntary, extracurricular enrichment program for Stetson Students designed to prepare them to meet the demand for excellent legal communicators in practice. Students completing the year-long program learned what communication skills are expected in the legal practice environment; what communication issues are common to legal practice; and how to be an effective communicator in different situations and for different audiences. Specific topics covered included listening and non-

verbal communication, cross-cultural communication, agenda drafting, e-mail writing, contract drafting, complaint drafting, good letter writing, influential communication skills, writing process approaches, and professional litigation communication. Students completed assignments related to the topics, compiled a customized electronic portfolio of documents to share with potential employers, completed a self-study program on legal grammar and citation, and completed an assessment of communication skills in a legal practice setting. Director **Kirsten Davis** designed the Program, and Institute Faculty **Jason Palmer, Lance Long, and Catherine Cameron** taught a number of sessions. The Institute team was helped by Stetson Professor Kelly Feeley and Visiting Professor Lisa Reel-Schmidt.

Students enrolled in the program have given it positive feedback. One student noted, “the overall program has done so much for my confidence in legal communications,” and another said, “I found this workshop particularly valuable because, while there are many courses in law school that teach you *what* these documents are, few require you to actually produce them. These skills proved essential while working as a law clerk this past year.”

### Studying and Leading in Legal Communication

#### Selected Publications by Institute Faculty:

- **Kirsten Davis**, *The First –Year Legal Writing Course: Praxis Is Pivotal*, 28 Second Draft 5 (Spring 2015). Available at <http://lwionline.org/uploads/FileUpload/Spring15SecondDraftPrinter.pdf>
- **Kirsten Davis**, *Law and Rhetoric Bibliography: Selected Readings and Resources*, SSRN Paper 2015-4 (with Kris Tiscione & Julie Oseid).
- **Kirsten Davis**, *My Legal Writing Coach™: Memos*, Mobile Application. Revised edition (2014) adding section on citation. Email Kirsten Davis at [kkdavis@law.stetson.edu](mailto:kkdavis@law.stetson.edu) for courtesy download code.
- **Catherine Cameron and Lance Long**: *The Science Behind the Art of Legal Writing* (Carolina Academic Press 2015).
- **Jason Palmer**, “*The Millennials Are Coming!*”: *Improving Self-Efficacy in Law Students Through Universal Design in Learning*, 63 Clev. St. L. Rev. 675 (2015).



#### Selected Legal Communication Leadership Activities by Institute Faculty:

- **Brooke Bowman**, Editor in Chief, *Legal Writing: Journal of the Legal Writing Institute*.
- **Kirsten Davis**, Member, Florida Bar Association Standing Committee on Professionalism; Editorial Board, *University of Alabama Press Rhetoric, Law, and the Humanities Book Series*.
- **Jason Palmer**, Co-Chair, *Legal Writing Institute Biennial Conference Committee*; Member, *AALS Task Force for Professional Development*.



## Our Institute Fellows: Serving As Student Ambassadors for Legal Communication

The Institute says goodbye and good luck to its graduating fellows, **Roxi Gbetibouo** and **Katie Cleveland**. Thank you for all of your great work!

