

# STETSON UNIVERSITY

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## Institute for the Advancement of Legal Communication

### 2015-16 Annual Report

Stetson University College of Law's Institute for the Advancement of Legal Communication celebrates its third anniversary in August 2016. 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.

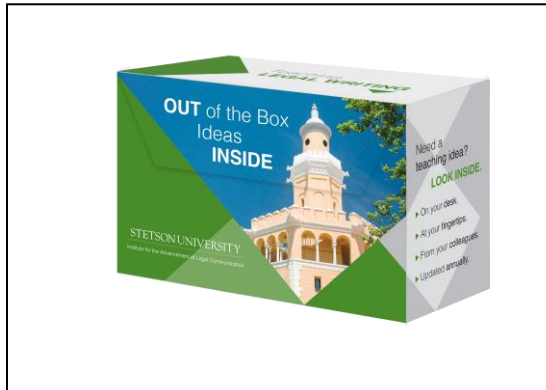
**Professor Lance Long.** Professor Long's expertise is in the field of legal communication and environmental advocacy.

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

## 2015-16 Institute Activities

### Supporting the Teaching and Study of Legal Communication

#### Institute Begins New Teaching Ideas Initiative: *Teaching Legal Writing: Out of the Box*



*Ideas Inside* is a project to collect, organize, and share the legal writing community's favorite classroom exercises and other teaching ideas. The project combines a physical box where legal writing faculty can explore legal writing teaching ideas by topic with an online password-protected area that includes teaching materials that can be downloaded and customized. The project will be updated annually with new teaching materials. To join in the project and get teaching ideas, email

[SendMeTheBox@law.stetson.edu](mailto:SendMeTheBox@law.stetson.edu).

#### **Davis Spends a Semester in London, England:**

**Kirsten Davis** spent the Fall of 2015 in London, England, as Academic Director of Stetson's Fall in London Study Abroad Program. While there, she taught both Professional Responsibility and a Comparative Freedom of Expression Seminar, during which students examined and wrote about different country's approaches to regulating different types of communication. In addition to teaching, Davis had the opportunity to visit with law training faculty at The City Law School and BPP University. "Writing for litigation in relation to oral advocacy is balanced differently in English courts," said Davis. "Of particular interest to me was the 'skeleton argument,' a genre of written argument that we don't recognize in the U.S. This experience opened my mind to the possibilities of other ways to advance legal argument that we may not yet teach in American law schools."



**Cameron Studies How Law Students Read:** **Catherine Cameron** spent the academic year compiling research designed to give her insight into the differences between the way 1Ls read cases and 3Ls read cases. The initial findings show, not surprisingly, that 3Ls read cases much faster than 1Ls. Cameron hopes to gain some insight into what accounts for this time difference.

**Davis Speaks on Rhetorical Criticism as an Essential Skill for Law Students:** At the 2016 Rhetoric Society of America Biennial Conference, Kirsten Davis delivered a talk on the need for law students to learn the skills of rhetorical criticism. Key to her presentation was the idea that lawyers not only act as client representatives but, according to lawyers' ethical principles, also as public citizens with a special responsibility for justice. Davis told the audience that "rhetorical criticism skills in law school can play a central part in giving

lawyers the intellectual skills to perform their roles as fiduciaries of the rule of law and of participatory democracy and to understand themselves as moral actors in the public sphere.” Her complete remarks can be found here:

[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2792437](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2792437).

**Cameron Speaks at Global Legal Skills Conference:** **Catherine Cameron** attended the Global Legal Skills Conference in Verona, Italy where she presented a meta-analysis of research conducted on the best methods for teaching legal research and writing to international students with Associate Law Library Director, Ashley Chase.

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

**Legal Writing Academy Training Continues:** The Institute joined with the Center for Excellence in Elder Law to continue a grant-funded training program on Narrative Report Writing to Florida Department of Children and Families Elder Abuse Investigators. **Kirsten Davis** led this initiative. The program will be repeated in August 2016 for supervisors in the department.



LEGAL WRITING  
ACADEMY

### **Institute Continues Its Legal Communication Voluntary Enrichment Program for Stetson**

**Students:** To fulfill its mission to offer programs for students on legal communication, the Institute continued its voluntary, extracurricular enrichment program designed to prepare students 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 Visiting Professor Michael Oeser.

## Studying and Leading in Legal Communication

### Selected Publications by Institute Faculty:

- **Catherine Cameron and Lance Long:** *The Science Behind the Art of Legal Writing* (Carolina Academic Press 2015).
- **Kirsten K. Davis,** *Acquiring the Citation Language: Should We Burn It All?* Legal Skills Prof Blog (April 11, 2016), [http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/legal\\_skills/2016/04/guest-blogger-acquiring-the-citation-language-should-we-burn-it-all-by-professor-kirsten-k-davis.html](http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/legal_skills/2016/04/guest-blogger-acquiring-the-citation-language-should-we-burn-it-all-by-professor-kirsten-k-davis.html).
- **Kirsten Davis,** *My Legal Writing™: Four Techniques* (2016). Mobile Application for clearer legal writing. Free download for iPad and iPhone.
- **Kirsten Davis,** *My Legal Writing™: Memos* (2016), eBook edition. Available on Amazon and iPad.
- **Kirsten Davis,** *Two Minutes for Professional Status in Legal Writing,* Legal Writing Prof Blog (July 22, 2016), <http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/legalwriting/2016/07/lwi-conference-guest-post-two-minutes-for-professional-status-in-legal-writing.html>.

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

- **Brooke Bowman** served as Editor in Chief, Legal Writing: Journal of the Legal Writing Institute, and as 2015-16 Chair of the ABA National Appellate Advocacy Competition Committee.
- **Kirsten Davis** was reappointed to the Florida Bar Association's Standing Committee on Professionalism. She was also selected to serve as Co-Chair for the Legal Writing Institute's Global Legal Writing Skills Committee.
- **Jason Palmer,** was elected to the Executive Board of the Legal Writing Institute. He also served as Co-Chair for Legal Writing Institute Biennial Conference Committee. The conference took place in Portland, Oregon, and had over 400 attendees. He was also invited to present on a panel on *Student Scholarly Writing* at the Southeast Regional Legal Writing Conference in Miami, Florida, and presented on *Improving Self-Efficacy in Law Students Through Universal Design in Learning* at the 2015 ALWD Biennial Conference in Memphis, Tennessee.
- Institute Faculty Members **Catherine Cameron, Kirsten Davis, and Lance Long** presented *Scholarship: Who Are We Now? Legal Writing Scholarship in Today's Academy,* at the Biennial Legal Writing Institute Conference in Portland, Oregon. To read Davis' primer on qualitative and quantitative research in the context of legal writing scholarship, including research applying rhetorical theory and methods, visit <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2821951>.
- Professor and Institute Faculty Member **Lance Long** presented *Writing to Save the World* at the 2016 Public Interest Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Oregon. The workshop, grounded in Long's research on effective legal communication, covered key persuasive writing techniques for environmental advocates.