



Advocacy Program Prepares Judges of Tomorrow

TODAY'S LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE THE LAWYERS and judges of tomorrow, and Stetson's advocacy program continues to prepare them for lives of leadership in practice and on the bench.

Founded in 1900 as Florida's first law school, Stetson has a century-old history of preparing law students for the judiciary. By the time the first library at Stetson's Gulfport campus was dedicated in 1958, three of its graduates were serving on the Florida Supreme Court. Today, Stetson graduates comprise one-third of the county and circuit court judges in Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough, Hernando and Citrus counties.

"I never dreamed that I would ever be a judge," said **Elizabeth Kovachevich**, Chief Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

One of three women in her 1961 Stetson class, she was influenced by two teachers who had been judges at the Nuremberg trials after World War II, **James Brand** and **Harold L. "Tom" Sebring**, who also was a former chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court and dean of Stetson University College of Law from 1955 until his death in 1968.

"I look back now on my conversations with those judges, and realize they provided a wonderful molding opportunity for me," said Judge Kovachevich.

"Dean Sebring had the right idea bringing the practical aspects of advocacy to students. They need to know what's going to be expected of them as advocates. They go to law school and all they really

know about law is what they've seen on television. This program discloses the truth about the practice of law. It becomes an eye opener."

"Stetson's advocacy program gives students an opportunity to intern with judges, which opens the door for post-graduate opportunities," Judge Kovachevich said.

Members of Stetson's Trial Competition Team, with Professor Roberta Kemp Flowers playing the role of judge, use the Carey & Florin Courtroom, the largest of Stetson's four on-campus courtrooms, to practice for a national trial team competition.



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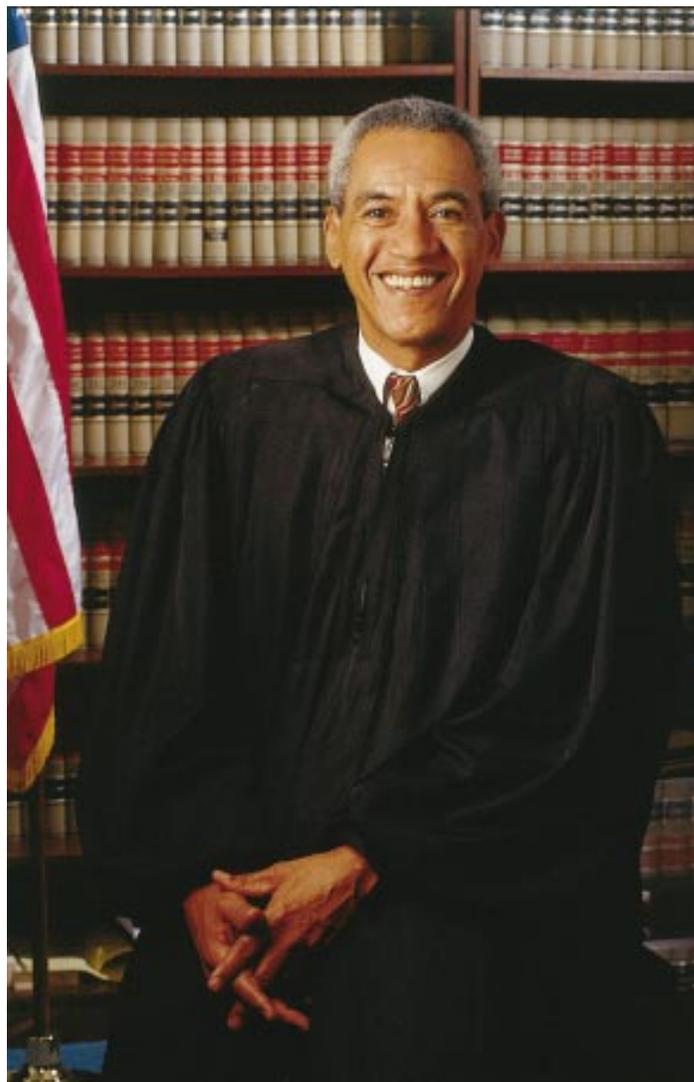
More than 500 students have interned with federal judges, including 1985 Stetson graduate **Florence Foster**, who worked for Judge Kovachevich and gained recent attention as a Circuit judge in the Darryl Strawberry case.

Judge Foster said her experience on Stetson's mock trial team and her internships with the Pinellas County State Attorney's Office and later, the public defender's office, helped train her as a judge. "My entire experience at Stetson helped prepare me for this," she said. "I could feel my brain being sharpened. When I was done, I felt like I was ready to take on the world."

As a law student at Stetson, U.S. District Court Judge **James Whittemore '77** learned about criminal law while interning with the state attorney and the public defender in Pinellas County. He tried his first jury trial as a law student, an invaluable experience, he said. "It gives you the perspective of being in litigation."

The Stetson civil trial practice program, taught by a sitting judge, gave him another perspective, this time on what judges expect from lawyers in their pleadings. And the lawyers and judges who taught classes and judged moot court competitions imparted their varying perspectives to students, he said, adding that his moot court experience paid dividends when he argued a case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Most of us know the law, understand the law and can apply the law," he said. But the combination of practical experience in an academic setting and real world experience during law school "affords perspective," he said. "That's the total package."



"Much of the success that I have enjoyed during my legal and judicial career, I owe to the training I received at Stetson University College of Law. Its comprehensive curriculum and small class size allowed me to develop my skills on an individual basis."

HON. THOMAS E. STRINGER, SR. '74
*Judge, Florida 2nd District Court of Appeal, Lakeland
 Chairman, Stetson's Board of Overseers*

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First-year students learn to answer questions posed by members of the Research and Writing faculty.

Stetson students perfect their skills in arguing objections before the court. Professor Stephen M. Everhart plays the role of judge.



Stetson's on-going program of inviting lawyers to teach classes in their areas of practice was especially helpful, said **John R. Blue**, who took over as Chief Judge of the 2nd District Court of Appeal in Lakeland in July. "I think I got very good legal training at Stetson," said the 1963 graduate. "It's a process in which you can always be learning."

1972 graduate **David Demers** credits his Stetson advocacy training with helping to prepare him for the judiciary. As a student, he worked with the public defender's office and participated in moot court competitions. He has served on the 6th Judicial Circuit Civil Court since 1981, and took over as Chief Judge last summer from 1971 Stetson graduate **Susan Schaeffer**.

"Nothing in law school prepared me for running an election," said Judge Demers, who lost an election but was later appointed to the circuit court bench. "That's beyond the scope of anything law school can offer." What Stetson does offer is a program heavy in litigation and alternative dispute resolution, as well as the state judicial internship program he helps coordinate in addition to teaching trial advocacy.

Judge Demers advises students with judicial aspirations to "see what lawyers are doing in litigation. Litigation is what we do." And he cites the number one qualification of a good judge as "open-mindedness," a trait that develops with the kind of education the advocacy program provides.

Professor Flowers Directs New Advocacy Center

ROBERTA KEMP FLOWERS IS THE new director of Stetson's Center for Excellence in Advocacy, succeeding the recently-retired **William Eleazer**, who developed the trial advocacy program and was the inaugural director. Stetson University College of Law has consistently been ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as having one of the top five trial advocacy programs in the nation – holding the number one position for three years.

"They used to say law school teaches you to think like a lawyer, and that you'd learn the rest when you get out," said Professor Flowers, who teaches evidence, criminal procedure and professional responsibility, and is faculty advisor for Stetson's Trial Competition Team. "You've got to train students not only to think like lawyers, but also to act like lawyers. We're really proud that we also teach them how to do that."

Professor Flowers draws on her experience as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Miami, a Deputy District Attorney in Colorado and a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida in Tampa to build on the proven components of the advocacy program.

Classes teach hands-on skills like interviewing and counseling clients, negotiating, and pre-trial, trial and appellate practice. Clinics give students a chance to represent clients before graduation as prosecutors, public defenders, local government lawyers, or in elder or poverty law. They also can

work for federal and state court judges. Practicums place students with practicing lawyers in agencies like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the FBI and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Students also can compete on client counseling, negotiation, mediation, moot court and trial teams. The trial competition team is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, and has won the Chester Bedell Memorial Trial Competition for 14 of 18 years, and the Student Intrastate Mock Trial Competition for 11 of 15 years.

Team members get a taste of the pressures of life as a trial lawyer when they practice 40 hours a week just before a competition while managing a full class load. "It's a good preparation for real life," Professor Flowers said, adding that practice rounds and trials are held in front of area judges.

Students may pursue a Certificate of Concentration in Advocacy, which is good preparation for those thinking about pursuing judgeships, she said. The program also offers on-going training to students after they become practicing lawyers. The Office for Continuing Legal Education provides advocacy training, such as the programs on labor law trial skills and appellate advocacy scheduled last summer. And the Institute for Litigation Ethics offers



ROBERTA KEMP FLOWERS
Director, Center for Excellence in Advocacy

instruction on how to deal with ethical dilemmas.

A new class offered during Fall 2000 combines trial advocacy training with the academic evidence course. "You're doing the book learning at the same time you're learning the skills," she said. Also in the works is an annual symposium in the *Stetson Law Review* on advocacy issues, which will include an annual advocacy update to be published for Florida lawyers.

And as Stetson moves into its second century, the advocacy program is teaching students to master technological advances that allow video coverage of conferences, depositions, trial testimony and court hearings, Professor Flowers said. "Our judiciary has just taken off with the use of technology in the courtroom, so we are very dedicated to preparing students for the future."

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