

SPOTLIGHT ON TENNESSEE LAW SCHOOLS

Lincoln Memorial University Opens New Law School

Lincoln Memorial University (LMU), located in Harrogate, Tenn., announced last year that it had leased Knoxville's Old City Hall with the intention of launching a new law school in the state. It hired Sydney A. Beckman – who helped lead the formation of the Charleston School of Law – as dean of the school and Gordon Russell to help lay the foundation as associate dean and library director. Since then, the two have led the accreditation process, developed the curriculum and begun hiring faculty.

Last summer, the school's advisory board held its first meeting. The board's roster reads like a veritable "who's who" of the Knoxville legal community. Members include Congressman John J. Duncan Jr., Assistant District Attorney Ta Kisha Monette Fitzgerald, Circuit Judge John D. McAfee, District Attorney General Randy Nichols, Circuit Court Judge Wheeler A. Rosenbalm and attorneys Sam Anderson, Mark A. Brown, Hulet Chaney, Patti Jane Lay, J. Douglas Overbey, Daniel H. Rader, Mary Ann Stackhouse, Denise Stapleton, Debra Thompson and David Yoder. Robert Watson, a partner with Watson, Roach, Batson, Rowell & Lauderback PLC, chairs the board.

Just a few months ago, the university announced that the law school will be named for Tennessee Congressman John J. Duncan Jr. The formal name of the school will be the Lincoln Memorial University-John J. Duncan Jr. School of Law, but you can just call it the Duncan School of Law for short. At a press conference unveiling the name, LMU Chairman Autry O.V. "Pete" DeBusk said, "It is fitting that this program has been named for a great lawyer and civic leader who has helped so many. Our mission is to provide educational opportunities to the people of this region and Congressman Duncan has been serving this region for over 20 years." Duncan, who has served in Congress since 1988, is the ranking Republican member on the Highways and Transit Subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representative's Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. He also sits on the Natural Resources and Oversight & Government Reform committees. Prior to his election, he served as a state trial judge, having been appointed by then-Governor Lamar Alexander in 1981. He started his career in 1973 in private law practice in Knoxville with Zane Daniel. Duncan earned his law degree from the George Washington University National Law Center in 1973. In reflecting on the honor, Duncan said, "From the time I was a very small boy, I wanted to be a lawyer. I almost cannot believe that I was fortunate enough to not only to be allowed to practice law, but also to be given the privilege of serving seven and a half years as a judge and now for 20 years in the Congress. It is not false humility to say that I really do not deserve to have this law school named after me, but it is certainly the highest honor I have ever received."

A number of Duncan's colleagues were on hand to offer congratulatory remarks including former senator Howard Baker, former governor Don Sundquist and Congressman Zach Wamp. The official seal of the law school also was unveiled at the event.

The Duncan School of Law received approval from the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners in March, allowing its graduates to sit for the state bar exam. It is seeking ABA accreditation as well as accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on

Colleges (SACS-COC). Upon approval, LMU will admit approximately 75 part-time students and begin classes in August 2009. The full-time program will begin in the fall of 2010, bringing another 125 students the campus.

These are indeed exciting times for legal education in Tennessee! For more information about the Duncan School of Law visit www.lmunet.edu/law or call (865) 524-5288.

Compiled from news releases from the school. Edited by Stacey Shrader, director of the Tennessee Bar Association Young Lawyers Division. You can reach Stacey at sshrader@tnbar.org.