

photo by Ann Wade



Cumberland School of Law students participate in a mediation simulation.

Cumberland Community Mediation Center Serves as a Voice of Reason

The growing demand for mediation as a successful tool in dispute resolution prompted the establishment of the Cumberland Community Mediation Center [CCMC] in November 2005. Before that, community members sometimes had to wait more than six months for their cases to be heard in court.

“The faculty saw a need to meet and assist the legal community and the community as a whole,” shared **Cassandra Adams**, director of the CCMC.

The center offers confidential, cost-free mediation. Attorneys, law students and trained community members make these services possible. As of August 2008, the CCMC had 36 volunteer mediators.

The CCMC mediates disputes between family members, neighbors, friends or roommates. In addition, the center can mediate landlord/tenant disagreements and consumer/merchant disputes involving services, goods or repairs. Since its inception, the CCMC has accepted more than 100 cases.

Adams and **Dean John Carroll** jointly teach a mediator practice course. Students are trained in all aspects of mediation, and are required to take part in a full simulation and write an agreement within the class. Course enrollment doubled this year due to student demand.

Students also gain mediation practice outside the classroom by participating in the Samford University Residence Life Mediation Program. Roommate disputes are referred to the CCMC and are mediated by law students.

The Jefferson County Family Court has been referring cases to the CCMC since a pilot program was launched in September 2006. Cases submitted for mediation include post-minority support, visitation issues and child support modification.

Contact the CCMC at (205) 726-4342 or ccmc@samford.edu. ▲▼▲

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Cassandra Adams, director of the CCMC

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