



# THE LEADERSHIP FORUM Continues to Prepare Lawyers to Change the Future Today

*By Edward M. Patterson*

The Leadership Forum recently completed its 13<sup>th</sup> year. On May 11, at the Capital City Club in downtown Montgomery, ASB President J. Cole Portis, assisted by President-elect Augusta Dowd, presented certificates and gifts to the 29 graduates of Class 13. More than 80 guests mingled during the cocktail reception preceding dinner hosted by Bradley Arant Boult & Cummings LLP. The LF Alumni Section honored this year's graduates with a party in The Cellar at the Capital City Club prior to the evening events.

Class 13 was selected from 62 applicants. The graduation guest

speaker was J. Douglas McElvy, recently-appointed state bar acting general counsel. John W. Clark, chair of the LF Alumni Section, presented Edward A. "Ted" Hosp with the 2017 Edward M. Patterson Servant Leadership Award. Previous honorees include Angela Slate Rawls, Richard J.R. Raleigh, Jr., Rebecca G. DePalma and Othni J. Lathram. The award is presented annually to an outstanding alumnus of the Leadership Forum.



*Hosp*





The average age of Class 13 is 38 years, and eight years practicing law. For the first time, the number of women exceeded men in the class with 62 percent female and 38 percent male. A total of 83 percent were caucasian, but this year the minority percentage increased to 17 percent. Class 13 represents eight Alabama cities, with 52 percent being from Birmingham. Practice diversity continues to be balanced among plaintiff and defense practices with a lesser, but solid representation of corporate/transactional in-house counsel and government/public service/legal education attorneys. Total makeup of the forum always equals or exceeds the diversity statistics of the bar as a whole. In 13 years, the forum has received 862 applications and accepted 387 attorneys. Forty-five percent of those who apply have been chosen. A total of 377 men and

women have graduated since the Leadership Forum's inception.

In awarding the Leadership Forum the 2013 E. Smythe Gambrell Professionalism Award, the nation's highest award for professionalism programs, the American Bar Association commended the forum for its innovative, thoughtful and exceptional content, for its powerful and positive impact on emerging leaders and for the extraordinary example it has established that others might emulate.

With increased expectations from applicants who commit a substantial time block to participate in the seven days of mandatory sessions in Montgomery, Birmingham and Tuscaloosa during five months, the program committee recognizes the profession is in a period of disruptive change, and now seeks to prepare attorneys to change the future of the profession that is currently unseen, rather than falling into the

trap of trying to simply maximize a spot in the pecking order of the future which is currently seen. These skills require intentionality, deliberation and focused attention. With the help of expert faculty, we seek to establish a class norm of engagement, discussion, respectful debate and even disagreement.

The program delivers what it promises: the legal profession has a special role in society to fulfill an opportunity to cultivate leadership skills moving from theory to practice, participation in self-discovery and forcing participants to be contemplative and learn from the inside out.

Activities and social events at a number of well-known restaurants and venues throughout the state, including a cocktail party at the historic F.F. Yeates House in Highland Park, the home of Andrew S. Nix (Alumni Class 6) of Birmingham, a tour of the Hyundai Motor







Manufacturing Alabama automotive plant and a tour of Alabama's newest United States Federal Building and Courthouse in Tuscaloosa, led by the Hon. L. Scott Coogler, added immensely to the overall experience. A number of firms opened their pocketbooks as well as their offices to host and support events of the forum.

The forum is designed to aid participants' development into innovative, critical thinkers equipped to respond to disruptive change. While recognizing there are several well-known personal assessment tools, the forum has used the Birkman Assessment Tool for the past four years because it is by far the most effective one for attorneys at this stage of their career. Participants are given the tools they need to help them understand their uniqueness and reach their potential.

This year's primary faculty included Professors Steve Walton

and Michael Sacks of the Goizueta Business School at Emory University, now in their fifth year of teaching. Both observed each new class performs stronger than the previous class because of the group dynamic engaging with them very quickly and robustly. Collectively they continue to reaffirm their belief that, *"Each class we have worked with has been an incredible group of professionals. As the program continues to evolve, the current class seems to be getting more and more out of the program. This year's class, like previous classes, was so dedicated to the work they were doing in the forum. They brought considerable energy and excitement to the sessions. We know how busy everyone is, and we were blown away by their ability to put aside other demands and focus concretely on the important leadership material. This is a group of thoughtful and engaged professionals, eager to*

*learn more and apply the material back to their firms. We couldn't wish for a stronger group of participants."*

For the second year, 14 hours of MCLE credit was approved, including two hours of ethics/professionalism. The actual program content exceeded more than 55 hours. In response to alumni demand for skills on "how to lead," the core curriculum consists of 60 percent teaching self-awareness, awareness of others, influence without authority, organizational culture, decision-making, leading organizational change, delivering client value and meeting client expectations. Ten percent of the curriculum consists of class discussions on the role of servant leadership, and working on solving complex problems involving hypotheticals based on real-life scenarios. The end result is to teach participants how to lead others through an increasingly uncertain





and changing career landscape. The remaining 30 percent consists of hearing the infinite variety of stories as told by servant-minded judges, policy-makers, legal practitioners, business leaders, scholars and teachers at the community, state and national level who used a variety of teaching methods, as well as hearing from alumni of the forum.

To support the increasing sophistication and intentionality of the forum, we had the largest number of individual, firm and corporate sponsors in the forum's history. Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP and Freedom Court Reporting-Freedom Litigation Support were medallion sponsors. Financial and in-kind donations were received from 36 firms, corporations, law schools, bar sections or individuals. The support of the Alabama State Bar has been invaluable. With this combined support, the tuition for a program

of this strength is over half the cost of what similar training programs charge.

Highlights of the seven days during January–May included intense training at Air University's Officer Training School at Maxwell AFB on a challenging reaction course designed to test participants' skills under pressure, a session at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel, a session in the conference room offices of Balch & Bingham LLP in Birmingham, a session at Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama LLC in Montgomery, an all-day session in the conference room of Rosen Harwood PA in Tuscaloosa, a session in the Hayes Conference Room at the University of Alabama School of Law in Tuscaloosa and a session in the boardroom of the Alabama State Bar.

A partial list of other faculty members included Major General Timothy Leahy, vice-commander

of Air University, Maxwell AFB; Lt. General (ret.) Ron Burgess, former acting director of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency and acting principal director of National Intelligence; Stephen Black, director, Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility, University of Alabama, and executive director of Impact Alabama; Diandra Debrosse, Zarzaur, Mujumdar & Debrosse LLC (forum alumni Class 9); R. Ashby Pate, of counsel, Lightfoot Franklin White LLC; J.H. Kim, president, Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama; Hon. Inge P. Johnson (ret.), senior district judge, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama; Daiquiri J. Steele, director of diversity and inclusion and assistant professor of law in residence, University of Alabama School of Law; Mark E. Brandon, dean, University of Alabama School of Law; LaVeeda Battle, The Battle Law Firm; Clay







Hornsby, Jr., deputy director, Alabama Law Institute; and Hon. W. Keith Watkins, chief judge, U.S. District Court, Middle District of Alabama. New topics were added, including “Shaping the Future by Personal Change,” “Essential Qualities of the Professional Lawyer” and “Implicit Bias in the Context of Leading Organizational Change.”

Leadership Forum Class 14 begins January 2018. Applications will be available in July and Class 2018 will be selected in the early fall. The future of the Leadership Forum is bright. Consistently, the forum has exceeded the expectations of 97 percent of its graduates. In the words of one graduate who speaks for many, *“The most common and overwhelming problem facing us as attorneys is the de-humanizing of our profession. It is my strong belief that if we do not turn back the tide facing us in this regard, we as professionals are*

*doomed to a fate that minimizes the value we can bring to society. The forum continues to reinvent itself and evolve as the practice of law and the world around us changes. The forum’s primary focus is to provide participants with the skills to effectuate changes.”*

Our passion is to continue to locate and develop talented, mid-level attorneys into better leaders with a generous heart to serve their profession, their clients and their communities in a changing world.

Increasingly, firms and businesses are now aware of the “value added” benefit of encouraging their attorneys to apply and participate. Attorneys benefit from contacts and networking opportunities. This year’s group was extremely committed to the demands of the forum. The bar’s future is bright when it reflects upon the quality of graduates the forum produces each year. Finding a way

for these remarkable attorneys to give back to the profession is one of the bar’s priorities.

Special thanks go to J. Parker Miller, Beasley Allen Crow Methvin Portis & Miles PC, and Starr T. Drum, Maynard Cooper & Gale PC, program committee co-chairs, and R. Thomas Warburton, Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP, selection committee chair. ▲





# 2017 LEADERSHIP FORUM

# Class XIII

**Cassandra W. Adams**

Cumberland School of Law, Birmingham

**C. Jason Avery**

Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings LLP, Birmingham

**Rachel V. Barlotta**

Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz PC, Birmingham

**Charlie G. Baxley**

Hoar Holdings LLC, Birmingham

**Valerie J. Brown**

Valerie Brown Law LLC, Huntsville

**Pooja Chawla**

Pooja Chawla PC, Bessemer

**Maggie J. Cornelius**

Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings LLP, Birmingham

**Krystal L. Drummond**

Drummond Company, Vestavia

**William M. Espy**

Melton, Espy & Williams PC, Montgomery

**John J. Geer, III**

U.S. Attorney's Office—MDAL, Montgomery

**Susan N. Han**

Nettles Han Law LLC, Red Mountain Law Group, Birmingham

**Alison D. Hawthorne**

Beasley Allen Crow Methvin Portis & Miles PC, Montgomery

**Mary Katherine Head**

12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, DA's Office, Enterprise

**Jonathan C. Hill**

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**Jason S. Isbell**

Alabama Bankers Association Inc., Montgomery

**Amy C. Marshall**

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Sirote & Permutt, Birmingham

**Joshua K. Payne**

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**Ashley N. Penhale**

Copeland Franco Screws & Gill PA, Montgomery

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Daniel F. Pruet, Attorney at Law, Tuscaloosa

**Brandy L. Robertson**

Heninger Garrison Davis LLC, Birmingham

**Adam L. Sanders**

Samford & Denson LLP, Opelika

**W. Allen Sheehan**

Capell & Howard PC, Montgomery

**Kristin W. Sullivan**

Massey, Stotser & Nichols PC, Birmingham

**Jason B. Tompkins**

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