

# The Leadership Forum Prepares Lawyers to Change the Future

*By Edward M. Patterson, Alabama State Bar Assistant Executive Director*



The Leadership Forum recently completed its 12<sup>th</sup> year. On May 26, ASB President Lee Copeland, assisted by President-Elect Cole Portis, presented certificates and gifts to the 30 graduates of Class 12. A number of alumni from classes 2 and 6 returned for the event. This year's class was selected from 80 applicants, the largest number to apply in the forum's history.



The graduation guest speaker was Hon. W. Keith Watkins, chief judge, United States District Court, Middle District of Alabama, Montgomery. Andrew S. Nix, former chair of the Leadership Forum Section, presented Othni J. Lathram of Tuscaloosa,



director of the Alabama Law Institute and interim director of the Legislative Reference Service and the Legislative Fiscal Office, with the 2016 Edward M. Patterson Servant Leadership Award. Previous honorees include Angela Slate Rawls, Richard J.R. Raleigh, Jr. and Rebecca G. DePalma. The award is presented annually to an outstanding alumnus of the forum.

Class 12 statistics show the average age for this group was 35 (oldest 40 and youngest 30); 60 percent

male and 40 percent female; 13 percent black and 87 percent white; and from 12 different cities, with 40 percent from Birmingham and 60 percent from the rest of the state. We had the highest number of smaller cities represented in the forum's history. Practice diversity included plaintiff practice, 27 percent; defense practice, 23 percent; corporate/transactional, 26 percent; and government/public service/legal education, 17 percent. Total composition of the forum always equals or exceeds the diversity statistics of the bar as a whole. In the past 12 years, the forum has received 800 applications, accepted 357 attorneys and



*Lathram*

graduated 348 attorneys. Forty-five percent of those who apply have been chosen. A total of 348 men and women have graduated since the Leadership Forum's inception.

In awarding the Leadership Forum the 2013 E. Symthe 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, Huntsville and Birmingham during five months, the program committee recognizes the profession is in a state of transition, 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 of 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 continues to deliver 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. Social events at a number of well-known restaurants and venues throughout the state, including the home of Rich and Shannon Raleigh in the historic downtown

district of Huntsville, added immensely to the overall experience.

The forum is designed to aid participants' development into innovative, critical thinkers equipped to respond to disruptive change.

Throughout the years, the forum has tried four different personal assessment tools. For the past three years the Birkman Method has been by far the most effective. This year's primary faculty included Professors Steve Walton and Michael Sacks of the Goizueta Business School at Emory University, now in their fourth 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 reaffirmed 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."*

This year, 14 hours of CLE credit was approved, including two hours of ethics/professionalism. The actual program content exceeded 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 consisted of participants discussing the role of servant leadership, and working on solving complex problems involving hypotheticals based on real-life scenarios. The end result is to teach them how to lead others through an increasingly uncertain and changing career landscape. The remaining 30 percent consisted of hearing the variety of stories 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 Reporting-Freedom Litigation Support Services were medallion sponsors, and in-kind donations were received from 11 corporations 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 more than 50 percent less than what similar 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 Regions Community Resource Room in Cooney Hall, the new business school at Samford University; a session at HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville; and an all-day session at The Judicial College in the Judicial Building in Montgomery, 129 Coosa Street Conference Center and the boardroom of the Alabama State Bar. We added "Ted Talks" to some

of the evening sessions where the class heard from Senator Cam Ward, chair of the Judiciary Committee, and Mayor Thomas Battle of Huntsville. A partial list of other faculty members included Major General Timothy Leahy, vice-commander of Air University, Maxwell AFB; Sam Davidson, author, professional speaker and social entrepreneur; General Charles Krulak, U.S. Marine Corps, retired; Patricia Wallwork, chief executive officer, Milo's Tea Company, Inc.; Judge Stephen Louis A. Dillard, Georgia Court of Appeals; Judge Joel F. Dubina, senior U.S. Circuit Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit; Sue Bell Cobb, former chief justice, Alabama Supreme Court; Cathy S. Wright, principal, Clarus Consulting Group; Lt. General (retired) Ron Burgess, former acting director, U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, and acting principal director, National Intelligence; and Richard F. Scruggs, former attorney, philanthropist and founder, SecondChance MS. New topics were added, including "Judging with Equals: The Inside Out of Multi-Judge Courts" and "Leadership in Multi-Party or Multi-District Complex Litigation."

Class 13 begins January 2017. Applications will be available in

July and class 2017 will be selected in the early fall. The future of the Leadership Forum is bright. The forum has consistently exceeded the expectations of 96 percent of its graduates. In the words of one participant, *"This is shaping up to be the best thing that has ever happened to me and that I have ever participated in professionally. I have long been someone with a tendency to 'live in his head' and it helps tremendously to get outside of oneself and learn about the styles, careers, fears, goals and characteristics of my classmates. Thank you for this amazing opportunity."*

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.

A future article will detail the accomplishments of the forum's graduates over the past 12 years. Firms are beginning to notice the "value added" benefit of their attorneys participation in the forum.

Special thanks go to Adam P. Plant, Battle & Winn LLP, and Henry S. Long, Butler Snow LLP, program committee co-chairs, and R. Thomas Warburton, Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP, selection committee chair. ▲

# Class 12

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