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Faculty Spotlight: Larry Thompson

News @ Georgia Law May 2012 Faculty Profile

Name: Larry D. Thompson

Title: John A. Sibley Professor in Corporate and Business Law

Hometown: Hannibal, Mo.

Law school/graduation year: University of Michigan / 1974

Other degree(s)/institution(s)/year(s): B.A. / Culver-Stockton College / 1967; M.A. / Michigan State University / 1969



1. What influenced your decision to go to law school?

▶ I was planning to attend social work school after my undergraduate studies. A history professor buttonholed me after class one day and asked me if I had ever thought about going to law school. I had not, but that question certainly had a profound impact on my life.

2. What did you do before joining the Georgia Law faculty in 2011?

▶ I've had a long and varied career. I've practiced in a law firm as a criminal defense lawyer. I've also been a prosecutor and worked as a general counsel of a large public company.

3. What made you decide to become a professor?

▶ I decided to teach at this point in my life and career because I think it is important to serve our profession. I've been very blessed in the practice of law, and I think it is time for me to give something back. Selfishly, I teach because every time I do so, I learn. And, maybe I will be in a position to change a person's life, the way my history professor who suggested I consider law school did mine.

4. What do you enjoy most about your job? What is the most rewarding aspect of being a professor?

▶ I obviously enjoy the interaction with my students. There's something special about teaching and learning – when mind meets mind. It does not happen all of the time but when it does, it is very gratifying. I enjoy reading cases and researching issues just for the intrinsic purpose of trying to understand what is good legal policy and how what we do at this law school can make society better. There is a certain amount of welcome freedom in being able to study a legal issue without worrying about the implications for a client or a particular position you are advocating on behalf of a client.

5. What type of influence do you hope to have on your students?

▶ I hope to be able to show my students, in some small way, the passion and reverence I have for this great profession. Lawyers are absolutely essential to our democratic society. Lawyers need to understand this. If we do our jobs properly, we can have a profound impact on the lives of our clients and on our communities.

6. What areas of law do you specialize in?

▶ I enjoy both business law and white collar criminal issues. Both areas have been a huge part of my legal career, and it is good to be able to apply my years of practice experience to the important legal issues scholars are now considering and debating.

7. Are you currently conducting any research? If so, what is its focus?

▶ I am currently in the process of completing some work on corporate purpose which may call into question some of the ideas espoused by the late Nobel Laureate and economist Milton Friedman who once famously stated that a corporation has "one and only one social responsibility" – "to increase its profits." My work looks at the legal and historical bases of this view and applies it to today's large, global corporations. I am also doing some work on the issues of overcriminalization, especially in the area of criminal statutes aimed at business conduct. During the past year, I have spoken on panels dealing with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and this is an area in which I have suggested changes in the way the Act is enforced by the government.

8. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? What are your hobbies?

▶ In my free time, I enjoy reading, especially historical biographies. I also enjoy collecting and driving antique Buicks and working with my wife on our collection of African-American art.

9. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment in life?

> My greatest accomplishment in life is raising two great sons. There is nothing else my wife and I have done that even comes close.

10. How do you stay up to date on legal issues and trends?

> There is absolutely no easy way to stay up to date on legal issues and trends. You must set aside sufficient time to read and think. But, for me, this is really a labor of love. I enjoy doing it.

11. What advice would you give to current law students?

> My advice to current law students is simply to stay the course and be patient. For me, the law is a great profession. Students should invest in the profession and their careers. They should take jobs or positions because they are interesting and challenging. They should also always try to develop their legal skills. In the end, almost always, good and serious young lawyers will ease into productive and rewarding legal careers.



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