

Breyer holds Q&A for students



Georgia Law students enjoyed their second opportunity this academic year to talk with a sitting justice of our nation's highest court.



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer shakes the hand of third-year student Tedra Hobson after the Q&A session. Photos by UGA Public Affairs' Deanna Pieniaszek.

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It is not everyday a law student has the opportunity to pose a question, face to face, to a sitting justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. However, students at Georgia Law enjoyed their second such opportunity this academic year in January when Justice Stephen G. Breyer attended a question and answer session at the law school. (Justice Clarence Thomas visited the law school for three days in October.)

During a 60-minute forum attended by approximately 125 law students and faculty, Breyer addressed topics such as describing his daily role on our nation's highest court and his appointment to the court.

He also answered more pointed questions such as what impact foreign legal systems should have on the U.S. system, why the Supreme Court is hearing fewer cases and if non-lawyers should be allowed to become members of the judiciary.

In describing the Supreme Court's case

selection process, Breyer said the justices look for cases where there is a need for a uniform, national interpretation of the law. "We do not see ourselves as a correction court," he said.

First-year law student Elizabeth C. Taxel found the justice to be "incredibly humble and down to earth." She was thankful he talked about the "pressures facing law students" to follow a certain career path and appreciated him emphasizing the need to give back to the community.

Additionally, Breyer said some of the best advice he had ever been given came from his father. "[His father said] don't be like a bulldozer and just go straight ahead on your own path. You have to listen to other people that have a point of view ... [and] try to do your own job the best that you can. He said now maybe, if you do your job well, someone will notice and you'll get a better job. On the other hand, they may not. And then, at least, you are left with the satisfaction of hav-

ing done the job as best you could."

Christine A. Saunders, another first-year law student, said the experience was "very refreshing" and appreciated the opportunity to ask a question. "It's nice that the questions were not censored."

Regarding certain court opinions attracting a lot of public reaction, Breyer said it is key for him [and the other justices] to remember that opinions actually need to be written for three audiences – "the other judges who have to apply it, the lawyers who have to be able to argue it and follow it and, in many cases, the public too because they are interested."

Saunders also said the experience was a great honor and that, if she or one of her schoolmates ends up arguing a case before the nation's highest court one day, she hopes that having met two of the current sitting justices will "take some of the edge off."