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School of Law names rotunda after first Black graduate

The University of Georgia School of Law has named its iconic rotunda after its first Black graduate, Chester C. Davenport. A portrait of Davenport is being commissioned and will eventually hang in the space located at the main entrance to the law school.



Davenport

Davenport, who passed away in August 2020, was a monumental figure in the School of Law's history. He was the law school's first Black student and remained its only Black student during his law school career. He earned his law degree in 1966, finishing in the top 5% of his class and serving as a founding member of the editorial board of the *Georgia Law Review*.

"It is with great pleasure that I share the news of the naming of the law school's rotunda after one of our law school's seminal figures," School of Law Dean Peter B. "Bo" Rutledge said. "I am grateful for the support of UGA President Jere W. Morehead for this effort and the University Cabinet for its approval of the law school's request. As I have said before, Chester was a trailblazer who achieved much in his lifetime,

including the diversification of our law school and the legal profession. It is hoped that this permanent and prominent naming displayed at the main entrance to our school will inspire those who study here to carry on Davenport's legacy of service to state and society."

During the past year, Davenport was memorialized with the [establishment of the Chester C. Davenport Memorial Endowment](#) at the law school and was posthumously awarded the UGA Alumni Association's oldest and highest honor, the [Alumni Merit Award](#).

After law school, the Athens, Georgia, native and Morehouse College graduate became an attorney in the tax division of the U.S. Department of Justice and

subsequently served as a legislative assistant for California Sen. Alan Cranston. Following a position on President Jimmy Carter's transition team and an appointment as assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Transportation, Davenport co-founded a law practice based in Washington, D.C. He later started a private equity firm.

Davenport's service to UGA included positions on the law school's Board of Visitors and the UGA Arch Foundation. He delivered the law school's 97th Sibley Lecture and participated in the school's 50th anniversary commemoration of the landmark *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case. In 2006, he made a transformational gift to the law school to support student scholarships. The UGA chapter of the Black Law Students Association bears his name and, in 2016, he received the law school alumni association's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Scroll Award.

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225 Herty Drive, Athens, GA 30602
(706) 542-5172 - lawcomm@uga.edu
www.law.uga.edu

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