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## Special Letter to the Alumni

Fred C. Davison  
*University of Georgia*

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THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

ATHENS

30602

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

To the Alumni of the  
University of Georgia School of Law

I am sure that you have read or heard the news media announcements of the resignation of Dr. Neill H. Alford, Jr., as Dean of the University's School of Law. I am equally sure that you, as individuals with strong ties to this institution, are concerned with this change in leadership and what it portends for the Law School's present stability and future progress. Because of these concerns, I want to communicate personally with you regarding this matter. Also, I want to express to the Law School's alumni my confidence in the law faculty and the course that they have charted for the future.

I received Dean Alford's letter of resignation on the afternoon of January 14, 1976. In his letter he indicated that he had decided to return to the University of Virginia in an endowed professorship and that he would relinquish administrative and instructional duties at the Law School on June 30, 1976. In his letter Dean Alford expressed the following views regarding the Georgia Law School:

"I write reluctantly because my decision precludes me from participating in the very exciting academic growth which I believe lies ahead for the University of Georgia Law School. Its students are intelligent and industrious; its faculty and administrative staff devoted and able; and its alumni, although small in number, are great in enthusiasm and in dedication to the development of the school."

Dean Alford then cited his reasons for leaving:

"Your interest in the development of the Law School and the similar interest demonstrated by the Provost and your Vice-Presidents has been a source of encouragement

to all of us who seek improvement in the performance of this institution. I have become convinced, however, that my views concerning effective methods to recruit and retain a law faculty have little chance of acceptance in your administration."

He added that since he had been unable to alter existing recruitment policies, he envisioned his role as one "limited principally to housekeeping and instructional functions." For this reason, he said, "I think this undesirable and believe I should return to my role as a full-time professor."

Upon receiving Dean Alford's letter I immediately contacted him and asked him to remain on the law school faculty in his present position as Joseph Henry Lumpkin Professor of Law. He indicated that he was committed to accept the teaching position at the University of Virginia where he had served for twenty-six years.

On January 15, the day after receiving the resignation letter, I met with the full law faculty and then arranged a series of meetings with smaller faculty groups for Friday, January 16. During these discussions faculty members urged expedition in the dean selection process and stressed their commitment to the goal of quality legal education.

The law faculty then met as a body on Monday, January 19, 1976 and voted to recommend the following: (1) There should be only one dean search committee named by the President, the voting majority of which should consist of full time law faculty members; and (2) The search for the new dean would be completed with a full-time dean named and prepared to take office not later than September 1, 1976.

The faculty also passed the following resolution:

"It is resolved that the faculty unanimously reaffirms its confidence in the future of the Law School and its own ability to work with the administration, students and alumni of The University of Georgia to continue the momentum of the Law School and its service to the people of the state."

With these faculty recommendations in hand, I have today appointed the following law dean search committee:

Mr. Dean Rusk, School of Law  
Mr. Vaughn C. Ball, School of Law  
Mr. Richard V. Wellman, School of Law  
Dr. Verner F. Chaffin, School of Law  
Mr. C. Ronald Ellington, School of Law  
Mr. J. William Futrell, School of Law  
Mr. David E. Everson, School of Law  
Mr. Kenneth M. Henson, Chairman,  
Law School Board of Visitors  
Mr. Robert H. Smalley, Jr., President,  
Law School Association  
Mr. Ted Freeman, President  
Student Bar Association

I have asked the Committee to proceed immediately to solicit nominations and to review the candidates as expeditiously as possible.

One day after the general faculty meeting, and six days after his announced resignation, Dean Alford relinquished his administrative position entirely and turned his full-time attention to teaching. On that same day, the administrative direction of the Law School was placed in the capable hands of Associate Dean Walter Ray Phillips, who after serving for a time as a senior

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member of the Georgia faculty had been appointed Associate Dean by the University System Board of Regents in July, 1975. Prior to coming to Georgia, Dean Phillips served on the law faculties of the University of North Dakota, Florida State, Texas Tech and Baylor. Mr. William Roy Detwiler and Mrs. Gwen Yawn Wood will continue to assist Dean Phillips in the admissions and placement areas respectively.

The university's law school is very important to this university and this state. It was one of the areas set aside for special enrichment when I became President in 1967. I can assure you, as I have already assured the law faculty, that every necessary support will be provided the School of Law so that the words of former Governor Carl Sanders, placed on the facade of the new law school wing when it was dedicated on November 18, 1967, will become reality:

"The people of Georgia want and deserve nothing short of the best. The University of Georgia School of Law is therefore to be one of such excellence that no citizen of Georgia need ever leave the state because a superior legal education is available elsewhere."

Sincerely,

  
Fred C. Davison

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