May 2012 E-newsletter Alumni Spotlight: Brian Dennison (J.D.'98)

Office of Communications and Public Relations
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News @ Georgia Law May 2012 Alumni Profile

Name: D. Brian Dennison
Title: Lecturer and Coordinator of Clinical Legal Education
Employer Name: Uganda Christian University Faculty of Law and SAMS USA (Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders)
Location: Mukono, Uganda
Number of years there: Four
Georgia Law graduation year: 1998
Other degree(s)/institution(s)/year(s): B.A. in English / UGA / 1995; M.B.A. / UGA / 1998

1. Why did you choose to attend Georgia Law?
> Great school, great price, great place. Going to the University of Georgia School of Law made a lot of sense to me then, and I am glad I chose it.

2. Who was your favorite Georgia Law professor? Why?
> I really liked Michael Wells because he graded based on the raw content in the answer instead of the quality of the writing. That was a big plus for me. I also greatly enjoyed the way Milner Ball, Dan Coenen and Rebecca White engaged the class. Julian McDonnell was really good at making the turgid world of the UCC clear, and Larry Blount somehow found a way to make Corporate Tax fun.

3. What is your most memorable experience from your time at Georgia Law?
> Professor Donald Wilkes’s Criminal Law Exam, Fall Semester 1995. Hard to forget that one. I should have read the book on the Dreyfus Affair. I did not, and it was ugly. Lesson learned.

4. Where was your favorite place to study during law school?
> When things really got serious I bused out to the Science Library. Nobody knew me out there and it was really quiet. Plus you could get ice cream from the UGA Dairy down the way.

5. What was your favorite thing about living in Athens?
> Silver Britches notwithstanding ... the China Express Lunch Special: Kung Pao Chicken, Cashew Chicken, Spring Roll and Rice for $3.97.

6. What advice would you give to current School of Law students?
> Be open to change and to risk. Conventional work might be shrinking, but people are more open to innovative models of service delivery that provide good services for a fair price. Get out there. Get skilled. Get confident.

7. Please give a brief description of your responsibilities at the Uganda Christian University.
> I am a Christian missionary, so my primary responsibility is missional. My first goal is to instill a commitment in our students to conduct themselves in a manner consonant with their faith. We do this through course content in classes such as Jurisprudence, Clinical Legal Education, Legal Ethics, Law and Christian Political Thought and Introduction to the Bible for Lawyers. My second goal is to impact the wider community through service. We do this through service projects performed through our Clinical Legal Education program. My third goal is to be open to the many opportunities that arise when one is placed in a vibrant university in Uganda. This ranges anywhere from organizing a workshop on legal issues concerning persons with disabilities in Uganda to facilitating the transport and delivery of books from the United States.

8. What do you enjoy most about your job? What is the most rewarding aspect?
> The best part of my job is working with students. Our students are bright, energetic and appreciative. It is a real pleasure to teach and mentor them. I especially enjoy working with students in our moot program. I expect that many of our students will make important contributions to their society. It is going to be a pleasure to keep tabs on them.

9. What made you decide to become a professor?
>
I knew that I was called to serve in Uganda. Teaching law at a place like Uganda Christian University seemed like the best place for someone with my skill set and background to impact Ugandans in a meaningful way. Also, I always enjoyed teaching and coaching.

10. Why Uganda?

> As Elwood told Jake “We are on a Mission from God.” Seriously ... That is why we came to Uganda. Perhaps the better analytical question is “Why Uganda, still?” Well, the truth is that Uganda is a great place. We love the people, the climate, our community at the university and the natural beauty. I also believe that Uganda is a very important place. It faces huge challenges. It is a privilege to be able to be part of a community working to overcome these challenge. Plus, we are still on a mission from God.

11. What do you do to handle the stress of your work? How do you relax after a stressful day?

> To be honest, I don’t get stressed at work. I really love my job. In fact, with four kids, including a pretty spirited 2 year old and wily 4 year old, sometimes I go to work to relax.

12. What advice would you give to someone wanting to work in your field?

> There are a lot of amazing opportunities out there in the developing world, but many of them come without salaries or with very small ones. My job is one of the former. We are able to be in Uganda because churches, family and friends support us with donations. Money aside, if you are interested in working in the developing world the best thing is probably to plug in somewhere for six months to a year and see where it leads. If you are energetic, open-minded, culturally flexible and entrepreneurial, opportunities will present themselves.

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

> I am a hack screenplay writer. One of many I am afraid. But I have been too busy over the last few years with work and family to put much together. I am very thankful for the busyness though.

14. If you could share an afternoon with anyone, with whom would you choose to spend it?

> Old friends.

15. What would you consider your greatest accomplishment in life?

> Winning the 1988 Larry Munson Sound-Alike Contest. At age 15, I was the youngest ever winner. To my knowledge, it is the only time Monica Kaufman ever noticed me.

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

> In Uganda I get most of my current content through my ears. I enjoy listening to the Federal Society’s SCOTUS pod-cast, the Mars Hill Audio Journal, the New Yorker and This American Life.

17. What book/resource do you find yourself referencing the most?

> Outside of the Bible, it would have to be Ireneaus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought edited by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan.

18. When you look out your office window, what do you see?

> The Uganda Christian University Children’s Library.