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Law school sees steady stream of success

September 01, 2008 ¦ Mitzi Bible

At Liberty University School of Law, there's one point that's not worth arguing against: the fact that the young school has far exceeded expectations, quickly becoming an institution that can compete with leading law schools around the country.

"What we're doing here, it's innovative. And some schools are seeking to copy components of what we're doing — which is incredible because we're only five years old," said Dean Mathew D. Staver, who joined the law school in 2006.

With a high bar passage rate for the first graduating class and a 100 percent increase in enrollment since the school's inception, Staver said he's pleased but not surprised by the success.

"We lift the bar up very high for our students," he said. "We have a very rigorous and demanding program because we want to be excellent in everything we do. Like Dr. [Jerry] Falwell said, 'If it's Christian, it ought to be better.'"

It's that distinction that makes the law school an attractive option for students serious about a career of service to others and to the Lord.

"We're very conscious of making sure that our classes are mission-driven … that's what underlies us," Staver said. "We've turned down people who have LSATs in the ozone layers because we don't feel they are mission-driven."

The goal, he said, "is to be able to train Christians … to have them in the highest places of government … in the United States Supreme Court, on the federal bench, on the state bench, in all areas of government in Washington D.C., on the state and local level. We want them to be educators, policy makers, businessmen and women and entrepreneurs, using law to be able to advance the kingdom of Christ."

With tracks in civil, criminal and constitutional litigation, as well as business planning, estate planning, real estate development and government administration, the school is equipping a generation of Christian leaders with skills that are on par with graduates of the nation's top law schools.

"The secularists anticipate that the (Liberty University) law school is going to be second rate," Staver said, "and when they come here, and they see our facilities, and when they see the fact that our bar passage rate was above virtually most every other law school in the country, and when they also see our competitive teams are winning, they have to take note. They may not agree with our Christian viewpoint, but they know that we are an institution, a force to be reckoned with, and they just simply can't blow us off."

For more information on LU School of Law, go to www.law.liberty.edu.

BY THE NUMBERS …

According to Mat Staver, Dean of Liberty University School of Law

110: Number of new students expected for Fall 2008. — the largest-ever entering class.

18: *Number of faculty.*
"Most of our faculty have broad practice experience, whether it's in judiciary or government or private practice. That's one of our themes, to be able to have faculty that not only have the ability to teach, but have real-life experience."

1: Rank of negotiations team at regional competition.
"Georgetown University, a 100-plus million-dollar law school, was No. 2. … We were one of only two schools in the entire nation that sent two teams to a national competition for negotiations this year."

80: Percentage of students from out of state.

89.1: Bar passage percentage rate.
"Most law schools when they start off young, are having bar passage rates in the 40s … a big milestone for a law school is to reach 70 percent bar passage rate. For us to come out of the block and jump over all of those is just phenomenal; it really speaks to the quality of the

education that the students are receiving."

32: Student prayer mentors.
"Let it never be said that a student would go through here without being able to have significant spiritual discipling and mentoring and the opportunity to really grow spiritually."