The University of Texas - School of Law

By Donna McGill

One of the most beautiful college campuses found anywhere in the country is in Austin, Texas - home of the University of Texas School of Law. Founded in 1883, and around the time Austin was named the state capital, this massive campus that houses the law school began with just two professors and less than sixty students. We’re proud to profile this prestigious institution in this week’s Law Crossing Law School series.

The law school, despite its small enrollment and even smaller number of professors at its inception, quickly grew out of its existence in the university’s basement and into its own building in 1908. This was several years after the first dean, John Townes, was appointed in 1901. Before long, the Texas Law Review was founded and the campus officially renamed the Department of Law to the University of Texas School of Law. As with all things in Texas, it was bound to become one of the largest legal institutions in the country.

Surrounded by what’s nicknamed “Silicon Hills”, the law school is home to many “Austinites” as well as students from around the world. Many days, and when the weather patterns are just right, you can smell the salt air coming in off the Gulf of Mexico. It’s a spectacular background and coupled with true Texas hospitality, it’s the ultimate way to gain a law degree.

Taking pride in its ability to stay on the cutting edge of technology and ahead of the legal trends, the law school, understandably, has an incredibly high application rate. In fact, the first course on issues relating to oil and gas law was held in 1914 on the school’s campus. In 1988, the Capital Punishment Center was founded and five years later, the Center for Public Policy Dispute Resolution was founded - all on the glorious campus.

For the Fall/Spring session in 2010-2011, tuition and fees for Texas residents are just under $29,650 and for those non-residents, the tuition and fees are $45,720. Books and supplies for both residents and non-residents are around $1,130 and are fees associated with room and board ($10,250), travel ($1,200) and miscellaneous fees (around $3,000). The campus’s Financial Aid Board is ready to assist new and returning students. There is a rich student life experience both on campus and off, including The Society Program, the Student Bar Association a Study Abroad Program and many clinics and internships.

In late 2009, the Law School launched a Center for Global Energy, International Arbitration and Environmental Law in an effort to create a new generation of attorneys prepared for the legal terrain that lies ahead in these very specialized fields. In an ever-changing world, these three aspects are incredibly important for not only our generation, but those that follow as well.

The law school’s Mock Trial Team won the very first national championship held more than twenty-five years ago and the team has won more than twelve since then. The program oversees coaching and development of the school’s teams and has evolved into what’s referred to as a “multi disciplinary center for educating students in the theory and techniques of advocacy and dispute resolution”. It’s currently celebrating its most recent win.

Among the prestigious names to have gained their law degree from the University of Texas School of Law, including U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, former U.S. Ambassador Robert S. Strauss and Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Diane Wood, those who have attended this school take pride in not only the education they’ve taken away, but the time of their lives spent surrounded by all that’s good in the great state of Texas.