

Ellington receives the university's highest teaching honor –

A MEIGS PROFESSORSHIP

An extraordinarily gifted teacher. The best teacher I've ever had at any level of school. Without equal in ability to stimulate learning. A rare teacher of unsurpassed excellence. The most caring, most dedicated and most accomplished of all my professors. All of these phrases have been used to describe one person – C. Ronald Ellington, a 2007 Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor.

Ellington arrived at Georgia Law 38 years ago. Throughout his extraordinary teaching tenure, which includes serving as law school dean from 1987 to 1993, these expressions, provided by both his professorial peers and countless students, have been used to depict this teacher, who has been the recipient of numerous teaching honors during his career.

When evaluating Ellington as a UGA Senior Teaching Fellow, Ronald D. Simpson, professor emeritus and former director of the Office of Instructional Development, said: “[O]ur group was invited to attend one of [Ellington’s] classes and observe how he stimulates student learning through the use of case method teaching. This is an experience none of his Senior Teaching Fellow colleagues in that classroom on that day will ever forget. The class session was riveting! Watching him ask a series of well-constructed questions – designed to ‘lead’ the student to a thorough understanding of the class objectives for that day – was a sight to behold. We were all in awe of his magnificent (and somewhat magical) power to make things come alive in the classroom.”

Also regarding Ellington’s unwavering excellence in the classroom, recent student Christopher C. Frost (J.D.’04) said: “Even after decades as a law professor, Professor Ellington continues to better himself as a lawyer and as a teacher. His pursuit of and dedication to quality instruction requires no less. Resisting the temptation to rest on his considered experience in the field, Professor Ellington remains curious about the ‘why’ and works to keep himself keenly abreast of the latest cutting-edge legal issues. ... Professor Ellington’s paces for his students pushed us well beyond rote memory and glib understanding and well into application, correlation and the symbiotic interaction of many disciplines with the legal field and beyond.”

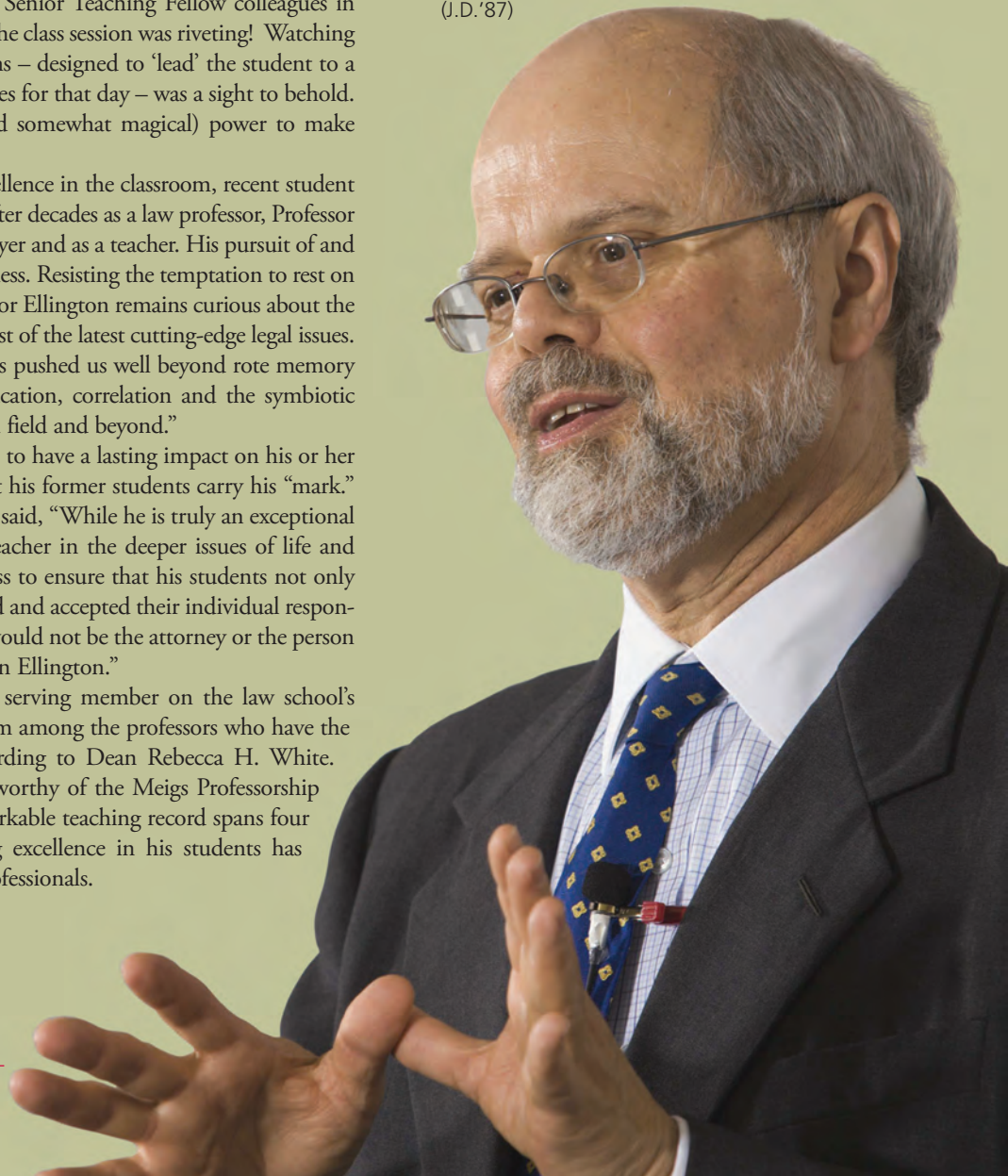
One goal of every accomplished teacher is to have a lasting impact on his or her students. For Ellington, it has been said that his former students carry his “mark.” Former student William A. Gillon (J.D.’83) said, “While he is truly an exceptional teacher of civil procedure, he is a greater teacher in the deeper issues of life and he worked diligently both in and out of class to ensure that his students not only understood the law, but that they understood and accepted their individual responsibility to the law and to the legal system. I would not be the attorney or the person I am if not for the influence of Professor Ron Ellington.”

While Ellington is currently the longest serving member on the law school’s faculty, his teaching load routinely places him among the professors who have the most student-contact teaching hours, according to Dean Rebecca H. White. White said she can think of no one more worthy of the Meigs Professorship than Ron Ellington, a professor whose remarkable teaching record spans four decades and whose dedication to instilling excellence in his students has shaped, and continues to shape, them as professionals.

Numerous students (both current and former), faculty and professional colleagues, and alumni wrote letters supporting Ellington for this coveted teaching honor. Excerpts from a few of these letters follow.

“Employing the Socratic method to near perfection, he leads students through difficult material, forcing them to question their own views as well as those expressed by judges and commentators. Never have I witnessed Professor Ellington ‘squash’ a student’s interpretation of a case, a statute or rule. Rather, stroking his beard, he directs the discussion toward a more thorough examination and better understanding of the issue.”

– Former student Wade H. “Trip” Tomlinson III (J.D.’87)





“My first contact with Professor Ellington was in 1969, when I was a student in his first class at the University of Georgia School of Law. This was a second year course on constitutional law, and it was obvious from the beginning that this was indeed a special new professor. He was always well prepared, and he engaged us all in the study of this complicated and dynamic subject. He quickly became a student favorite, due in large part to his gentlemanly manner and his sense of fair play.”

– Former student Lawrence F. Jones (J.D.’71), who is now executive director of ICLE

“As a first-year law student, I walked into many classrooms fearing the professor’s response if I answered a question incorrectly. In Professor Ellington’s class the only fear I experienced was that of letting him down if I provided the wrong answer. He asked questions that caused us to dig deep to come up with answers. He did not do so in an intimidating or threatening manner. He simply commanded respect without asking for it and none of us wanted to disappoint him so we dug as deep as we could. ... He simply instilled in us a desire to learn. ... Largely due to Professor Ellington’s unique ability to force students to reason through answers, I reached the point where I not only no longer feared being called on, I wanted to be called on.”

– Former student Jonathan L. Greer (J.D.’06)

“Professor Ellington takes his position very seriously, and this shows in the manner in which he runs his classroom. He is extremely prepared for every single class. In fact, in the three semesters I have studied under Professor Ellington, there has not been one instance when I have seen him falter, stumble, or perform at any level lower than his peak.”

– Former student Jeffrey H. Gibson (J.D.’07)

“Ron also has been a leader in providing continuing legal education to lawyers and judges. Besides participating in seminars sponsored by [ICLE] and others, he has presented instruction to judges and staff members of the Georgia Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. The two appellate courts sometimes have in-house seminars, and Ron’s presentation at one of these about two years ago was especially significant. It is no overstatement to say that his talk that day had a direct effect in clarifying the law. ... As a result of his talk, both courts took a fresh look at those issues in a case that came along a little later, and the rules were significantly modified in their application.”

– Presiding Judge of the Georgia Court of Appeals J.D. Smith (J.D.’71)

“[Ron’s] well received, Cases and Materials on Georgia Practice and Procedure, is now in its 6th edition and stands as an obvious indicator of his intellectual preparation for and dedication to quality instruction. Although the scholarship of teaching has only been recognized in higher education for a limited period of time, it is clear that faculty who write leading textbooks have committed substantial energy to instruction. This is especially applicable in Ron’s case where his work is, simply, the definitive text. Those law students who are fortunate enough to take Ron’s classes are clearly learning from the best in the field.”

– The late Saye Professor of American Government and Constitutional Law & Meigs Professor Susette M. Talarico

“Each day when I walk into the classroom, I work hard to be a teacher like Ron Ellington – a teacher who both illuminates his students and inspires his colleagues. I am more thankful than I can say that he is here at the University of Georgia School of Law. I cannot imagine that there is a better candidate anywhere who is more deserving to be called a Josiah Meigs Professor.”

– Former student and Hosch Professor Anne Proffitt Dupre (J.D.’88)

Photos by UGA Public Affairs’ Dot Paul.



About the Meigs Professorship

A Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professorship is UGA’s highest award recognizing superior instruction at the undergraduate and graduate levels. While as many as five professors campus wide can be presented with this honor each year, only three were chosen for 2007. The professorship is named for Josiah Meigs, who in 1801 succeeded Abraham Baldwin as president – and sole professor – of Georgia’s fledgling state university.

Other Georgia Law faculty who have been presented with the Josiah Meigs Award are Callaway Chair Emeritus Ronald L. Carlson, University Professor and Hosch Professor Dan T. Coenen, and Dean and Hosch Professor Rebecca H. White.

Josiah Meigs died in 1822. This portrait was painted by Lewis Greg in 1831. Photo courtesy of the Georgia Museum of Art.