

Jim Borders

THE PROBLEM-SOLVING ENTERPRISER

School of Law alumnus James R. “Jim” Borders (J.D.’88) had an entrepreneurial mindset from a young age. Today, he is the president and CEO of Novare Group, a real estate development and investment company based in Atlanta.

“In the back of my mind, I knew I always wanted to start my own business,” Borders said. “I grew up in Carrollton, Georgia, which is a very entrepreneurial place. Growing up there impacted my career objectives.”

Borders, who earned his bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Georgia Tech, “was always interested in business and law,” he said. “I enjoyed solving math and science problems at Georgia Tech, but business and law are essentially problem-solving disciplines too ... just on different fields of play.”

Since he wanted to remain in Georgia, Borders applied to both UGA’s School of Law and its Terry College of Business. “I liked the fact that students from all over the state attended UGA,” he said. “I thought I could establish a great network of friends and of course earn outstanding law and business degrees from UGA, all of which turned out to be true.”

Notably, Borders was one of the first people at UGA to earn a Juris Doctor and a Master of Business Administration.

“I made up my own dual degree program,” he said. “I had never taken an accounting class – and certainly not a torts class – before attending UGA. This education really changed who I was and had a great influence on me. I walked out of Georgia Tech as a problem solver, and I applied the art of problem-solving to my courses at UGA. I walked out of UGA ready for law, business and ultimately real estate.”

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Borders is fond of his chosen career field for many reasons.

“The great thing about being in the real estate business is that there are hard and fast rules and a tangible product,” he said. “The fundamental equation of capitalism is that ‘Y’ [value] always needs to be greater than ‘X’ [cost]. It’s critical that this formula works out. ... And at the end of the day, we get to see a high-rise building outside of our office window. That’s a very satisfying feeling.”

Since its founding, Novare Group has been recognized with two Urban Land Institute Project of the Year Awards and three Projects of Excellence. “We are good at being the first guys out of the box with a new product in a new real estate cycle,” Borders said. “We have done that three times – once after the ’92 recession, once after the ’99-’01 recession and once after the ’08 recession.”

However, being in the real estate business has its challenges.

“It’s a very cyclical business,” Borders explained. “Things are really good at some times and not so good at other times. I’ve certainly been through all parts of the cycle several times, but you just have to play through it and remember that you are not that smart and also not that dumb. I enjoy coming to work every day.”

Borders is a proud Georgia Law alumnus who continues to give back to the school through his establishment of the James R. Borders Scholarship.

“One of my classmates, the late Georgia Law Hosch Professor Anne Proffitt Dupre (J.D.’88), was a good friend of mine and graduated first in our class,” Borders said. “She encouraged me to create a scholarship with the only requirement being that the recipient is an undergraduate from Georgia Tech. That fit perfectly, and I am grateful to have been fortunate enough to do that and support our great law school.”

—Emily Johnson

Sam Matchett

ALWAYS STRIVING FOR SUCCESS

When law school alumnus Samuel M. “Sam” Matchett (J.D.’84) was in the seventh grade, his teacher told him, “You would make a good lawyer,” after he participated in a class debate.

“My teacher planted the seed early in my life, and I thought to myself, ‘Yes, I do want to be a lawyer,’” the Valdosta native said.

Matchett attended Morehouse College in Atlanta and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in history and English. Then he applied to Georgia Law. “I didn’t think I would be able to get a better legal education for the price,” he said.

“I saw Georgia Law graduates everywhere in Atlanta. They were so omnipresent,” Matchett said. “I was very impressed with our state’s flagship school, so UGA was at the top of my list, and I was delighted when I was accepted.”

While at Georgia Law, Matchett fostered relationships with students and professors who are still his “dear friends to this day.” He was an officer for the school’s Black Law Student Association and valued his relationships with the late Dean Emeritus J. Ralph Beard and the late Associate Professor Larry E. Blount.

Reflecting on his time as a law student, Matchett said his legal dream was relatively undefined. “I wanted to become the best lawyer I could be. I wanted to be respected by my peers, engaged in the legal community and make a good living.”

After graduating from Georgia Law, Matchett returned to Atlanta and now has more than 30 years of experience in the legal field. Notably, he has been a partner for the past 17 years with King & Spalding.

“Employment law is perhaps one of the most interesting types of law you can practice,” he said. “It has everything to do with the human dynamic. Anything that can happen between an employer and an employee can come through my office. It’s very fascinating.”

Matchett is very proud of being a partner at a major international firm.



“I work in a firm with incredible attorneys,” he said. “Folks here are not only bright and driven, but they’re also fundamentally good people. It is a point of pride to be a partner among such a group of talented lawyers.”

Throughout the course of his career, Matchett has strived to positively influence students and junior attorneys in any way he could.

“A compilation of folks who have said positive and encouraging things to me have helped propel my career,” Matchett said. “I hope to say something encouraging to students and junior lawyers or provide some insight and perspective they wouldn’t otherwise have that will make their career paths easier.”

In addition to his work responsibilities, Matchett remains highly involved in the legal community.

Matchett also serves as the chair of King & Spalding’s Diversity Committee; and in 2010, he received the State Bar of Georgia’s Commitment to Equality Award.

Previously, he served as a member of the Board of Trustees for the UGA Foundation and claims it to have been an outstanding experience.

“I am very grateful for having a Georgia Law degree. It has been invaluable to my career. I haven’t taken for granted that a great school continues to be a great school” because it has graduates who care and give back, he added.

—Emily Johnson

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Lynn Chastain

TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH

School of Law alumna B. Lynn Chastain (J.D.'84) once aspired to practice in a large firm, but a single encounter changed her career's trajectory.

After graduating from Georgia State University with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, Chastain worked as a parole officer in Atlanta for several years before deciding to make a career change.

The Tucker, Georgia, native enrolled at UGA and earned her Master of Education in Counseling in 1979. However, having gained invaluable personal insight during this time, she said she no longer thought she would make a great counselor in the long term and decided to pursue her lifelong dream to go to law school.

With her Juris Doctor in hand, Chastain joined a small firm in Atlanta and transferred as a lateral to Troutman Sanders in Atlanta, practicing in the area of lending and commercial real estate. While practicing at Troutman Sanders, she worked on a new project that significantly altered her professional plans.

"In the early 1990s, my mentor asked me if I knew of Chick-fil-A," she said. "I told him I knew a little bit about them, and he asked me to lead the project to help them build some freestanding restaurants. That opportunity really changed a lot for me and my future."

Chastain worked on assembling legal documents for the first freestanding Chick-fil-A in Atlanta; and in 1991, she joined the company's real estate and legal department as an adjunct to help acquire properties for future restaurants.

Today, she serves as senior vice president and general counsel for Chick-fil-A, a position she has held since 2014. Notably, she is the only female on the company's executive committee.

"This opportunity was a combination of excitement and terror," she said. "I thought I knew a lot about our business, but it was at a time of transition in leadership, and there was an awful lot to learn. It has been a wonderful journey with my peers on the executive committee of Chick-fil-A. We are in what we affectionately call 'Chapter 2 of Chick-fil-A' with Dan Cathy as chairman and CEO, Tim Tassopoulos as president and COO, and an appointed board of directors including directors outside the Cathy family. We are a new executive team now, and it has been quite an adventure in learning."



Chastain added that it has been a blessing and a privilege to serve as general counsel and she enjoys giving back to other organizations through her involvement in the community and abroad.

She has served on the executive committee for many years at Junior Achievement of Georgia, a nonprofit organization that inspires and prepares young people to succeed in a global economy. She has also served as chair of the board of directors

for The Kenya Project, an organization that strives to provide health, education, spiritual development and housing opportunities for children in Kenya.

"So many opportunities have been afforded to me through Chick-fil-A," Chastain said. "I believe education is critical for kids here and around the world so they can become who they were designed to be. I wanted my education so badly, and I worked really hard for it. Having the opportunity to give back in this arena and to make a difference – in addition to all of the opportunities that Georgia Law and a great legal career have afforded me over many years – has been immeasurably more than I could have ever hoped or imagined."

Chastain said she is grateful for her education, her career at Chick-fil-A, her time at Troutman Sanders and the lifelong friendships she has made.

"I hope and pray I can be a positive influence on the people I come in contact with," she said. "That's a part of the Chick-fil-A corporate mission statement. I hope I have inspired children in Kenya, students in Junior Achievement and young women and friends along the journey to be courageous and follow their passions. I have some very simple advice for alums and students: do your best, be a lifelong learner and look for the places where your experience meets opportunity. Then, take a leap of faith."

—Emily Johnson

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