

NEW LEGAL CLINIC

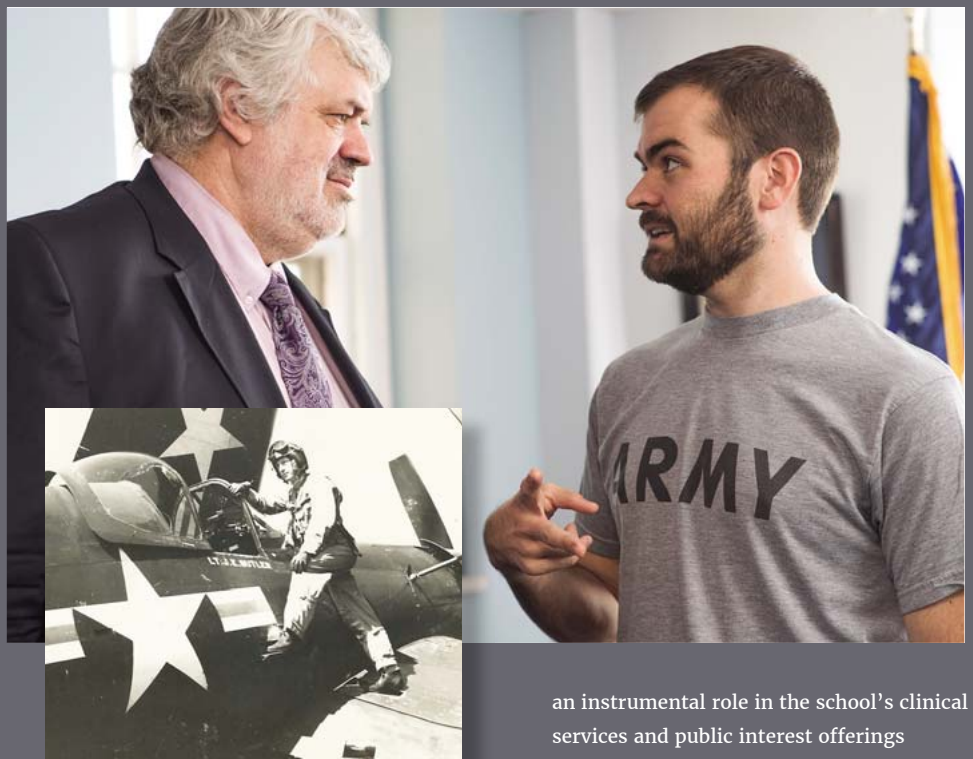
Assisting Georgia veterans

The School of Law has opened its much anticipated Veterans Legal Clinic to provide former service men and women in Georgia with legal assistance they might not otherwise have access to or be able to afford, with particular regard to denied or deferred claims before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Under the direction of Professor Alexander W. “Alex” Scherr, a 30-plus year public service lawyer and educator, the clinic will be staffed by law students who will work directly with veterans and their dependents to ensure access to benefits and services, especially for those with mental or physical disabilities resulting from their time in the military.

Scherr said the Veterans Legal Clinic’s success will be viewed under two lenses – the provision of high-quality representation for veterans and legal work that challenges and inspires law students who will work with former service men and women and their families. “In the near term, this means a full caseload for students starting this fall,” he said. “In the long term, the clinic will be successful when, through individual representation and community outreach, it improves how veterans receive assistance from the nation they have served.”

One of the first tasks for the clinic will be to reach out to former military members in its service area, including many rural counties in which transportation and information about legal services can be limited.



Top: Earlier this summer, Veterans Legal Clinic Director Alex Scherr (left) spoke with rising second-year student Chase Keith, who is among the first law students to work in the clinic, which assists former military members seeking to access benefits and services to which they are entitled due to their service to our country. Keith is a U.S. Army veteran. Photo by Dennis McDaniel.

Inset: Law school 1977 alumnus Jim Butler provided the lead gift for the establishment of the Veterans Legal Clinic in memory of his father, Lt. Cmdr. James E. Butler Sr. who was a fighter pilot in the U.S. Navy (pictured).

“I want people to know that veterans and their families can call the clinic with legal questions of any kind,” Scherr said. “While we will not be able to take on every case, we will work hard to connect all those who call to other services that could help them with their concerns.”

Dean Peter B. “Bo” Rutledge said he is immensely pleased to have the law school’s most senior-ranking clinical faculty member leading the clinic. “Alex is the ideal person to set up the structure and fine-tune the mission of the clinic as it begins to improve the lives of those Georgia citizens who have served their country,” he said.

Scherr, who previously served as the law school’s associate dean for clinical programs and experiential learning, joined the UGA law faculty in 1996 as its first director of civil clinics. Since that time, he has played

an instrumental role in the school’s clinical services and public interest offerings including the establishment of nine of its current experiential learning programs.

The Veterans Legal Clinic is funded by a lead gift from renowned trial attorney and 1977 law school alumnus James E. “Jim” Butler Jr. in memory of his father, Lt. Cmdr. James E. Butler Sr. who was also the grandfather of James E. “Jeb” Butler III (J.D.’08). Funding for the clinic also includes financial support for veterans now studying at the law school.

“The law school is immensely grateful to Jim and others who have made this important initiative possible,” Rutledge said.

Five clinics find new space in downtown Athens

Earlier this year, several of the law school’s clinical law practices moved into much needed and improved facilities. Five of the school’s 17 experiential learning offerings now occupy two floors of the Bank of America building located at the corner of Clayton and Lumpkin streets in downtown Athens. Enjoying the new space are: the newly launched Veterans Legal Clinic, the Business Law Clinic, the Family Justice Clinic, the Community Health Law Partnership Clinic and the Wilbanks Child Endangerment and Sexual Exploitation Clinic.

Special thanks go to the UGA Office of the President and Office of Finance and Administration for helping the law school secure this clinical space for our faculty and students as well as their clients.