

An Ideal Opening

Ribbon Cut on the New School of Law Building over the Summer

By Dannie Harris-Cooper

Over the summer, the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Washburn University School of Law saw their dream of a new home become a reality. Robert J. Dole Hall was dedicated on July 21, 2023, after much anticipation and an extensive fundraising campaign, formally known as Ideal Place, that brought together more than 1,000 alumni and donors who contributed \$13.4 million for the project.

“Years ago, a handful of us dreamed of the day we might be here, surrounded by Washburn Law friends and family, dedicating a brand-new, state-of-the-art law building,” said JuliAnn Mazachek, president, Washburn University. “We know great things sometimes take a long time and are worth waiting for. We are grateful for the dedicated work and persistent vision it took by so many to bring this dream to life for the future generations of law students.”

Ideal Place was indicative of a contemporary approach to education. The facility is designed for the way legal education has evolved classrooms are configured to accommodate the needs of individual classes, and there are many spaces for students to meet to work collaboratively. In addition, two courtrooms allow students to refine their practice skills. These upgrades allow students to continue their education from anywhere they can access the internet, capitalizing on the Third Year Anywhere initiative that began in 2019. The program allows students to finish their third year of law school remotely, gaining experience in a location they plan to practice in after graduation. Classrooms are equipped with the technology needed to embrace this form of distance learning.

Named after one of Washburn’s most well-known graduates, **Sen. Robert Dole, BA ’52, JD ’52, H ’69, H ’85**, the new home’s upgraded technology will be an asset to those who, like Dole, may face challenges on their educational journey. With an injury to his right hand during World War II, Dole earned his law degree while teaching himself to write with his left hand. During that time, he would use a bulky device to record lectures and learn the material. Now, the ability to record lectures in the new facility will allow all students to revisit those lectures at any time.

The building also embraces the history of the Law School and the impact of Washburn attorneys. A four-part mural by artist Michael Toombs hangs prominently over the entryway staircase. The artwork, aptly titled “Non Nobis Solum,” highlights the role of Washburn lawyers in the landmark *Brown v. Board* case. Another nod to history is the light fixtures in the Michael C. Manning Trial Courtroom. The fixtures are replicas of the lights in the federal courtroom where the *Brown v. Board* case originated in Topeka.

“When Washburn University was founded as Lincoln College in 1865, it embraced a commitment toward education for all, regardless of gender or race,” said **Jeff Jackson, BBA ’89, JD ’92**, interim dean, School of Law. “From **Charles Scott, BA ’48, JD ’48, John Scott, BA ’42, JD ’47**, and **Charles Bledsoe, ’37**, three Washburn lawyers who filed the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, to lawmakers such as Sen. Bob Dole and **Rep. Jim Slattery, BA ’70, JD ’75**, who helped fight for and secure passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Congress, our alumni have been using the skills and knowledge gained at Washburn to ensure equal opportunity for all.”

Several special guests joined the Washburn community for the opening of the building, including Sen. Roger Marshall, Sen. Jerry Moran, and Gov. Laura Kelly. Notably absent was James Concannon, who died one month before the ribbon cutting. The 50-year impact of the former dean and professor will continue to be felt for generations of students and alumni, as evidenced by an anonymous donor who made the James Concannon Dean’s Suite in the new facility a reality. One of Concannon’s well-known phrases is positioned above the door as guests depart the suite, “Don’t think great thoughts. Read the statute.”

The gratitude toward the alumni and friends who brought the new building to life cannot be understated. Their gifts will allow future generations of Washburn attorneys to succeed with a premier legal education that will last a lifetime.

“Today at last, the Washburn University School of Law has the home that it needs, that it deserves, and that it has earned,” **Marshall Meek, MBA ’17**, president, Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation shared during the ribbon cutting event. “Thank you, all of you, for making today possible.”



ROBERT J.
DOLE HALL

WYSS-BURNS



TO THE STARS THROUGH
DIFFICULTIES