Chambers: 'This place has been my home'

Class is Over — Law School colleagues applauded David L. Chambers as he leaves his final class. Chambers, the Wade H. McCree Jr. Collegiate Professor of Law, is retiring from teaching. He joined the faculty in 1969.

Friends and colleagues took turns at the podium to celebrate Chambers’ career during the gala dinner held for him at the Lawyers Club in April. Dean Jeffrey S. Lehman, ’81, thanked Chambers for his many years of work on the continuing survey of Law School graduates and for “serving in so many ways” at the Law School and elsewhere “to help promote a healthier and more just legal profession.”

The McCree professorship was the first to be named for an African American at any major law school, and it was appropriate that Chambers receive it, noted McCree’s widow Dores. Wade H. McCree Jr. joined the faculty after serving as U.S. solicitor general and judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals of the Sixth Circuit. He co-taught Lawyers and Clients with Chambers for six years. Dores McCree told Chambers that Wade McCree felt he and Chambers “shared a very strong feeling for public service and felt that you and he had worked very closely together in this endeavor.”

Other speakers included:

- Joseph Vining, the Harry Burns Hutchins Collegiate Professor of Law, who joined the faculty with Chambers and often consulted with him as they began their teaching careers together.

Citing Chambers’ groundbreaking book Making Fathers Pay, Vining noted “David has intellectual courage and also was a pioneer in bringing empirical work to bear on legal questions.”

- Terrance Sandalow, Edson R. Sunderland Professor Emeritus of Law and Dean Emeritus of the Law School: “People have always come first” for Chambers and “his deepest concerns are with how people experience legal institutions. He’s especially concerned with groups whose needs often have been overlooked.”

- Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs Suellyn Scarceneciha, ’81, recalling being a student of Chambers and thanked him “for being a teacher’s teacher. We have carried your lessons into the world for the benefit of ourselves and the thousands of people we collectively serve.”

- Richard O. Lempert, ’68, the Eric Stein Distinguished University Professor of Law and Sociology, characterized Chambers as “a model of a teacher and ethical person” and thanked him for helping to spread understanding of the actions and rights of gay and lesbian people. Lempert, who has collaborated with Chambers on a study of minority Law School graduates, added that Chambers “was always a popular teacher, but David’s teaching is much more than pleasing to his students. He was transformative to many of them.”

For himself, Chambers recalled his service under a succession of five deans and the friendships with students and colleagues he has developed here. “This place has been my home,” he said. “I cannot imagine a better place to have a career.”

Praise for Professor David L. Chambers’ generosity and commitment to using scholarship to better people’s conditions were the order of the evening as colleagues and friends celebrated Chambers’ more than 30 years of teaching at the University of Michigan Law School.

Chambers, the Wade H. McCree Jr. Collegiate Professor of Law, is retiring from teaching and was honored at a Law School banquet during the spring.

A member of the Law School faculty since 1969, Chambers is widely known for his book on child support enforcement, Making Fathers Pay, as well as his cutting-edge work on how lawyers experience their profession, AIDS, child custody, same-sex marriage, and other issues in family law.

He also serves as co-chair of the Task Force on Diversity in Law Schools for the Association of American Law Schools and is a past president of the Society of American Law Teachers. At the Law School, he developed the South African Externship Program that places about a dozen law students with human rights organizations in South Africa each year. (See feature on page 37.)
Professor David L. Chambers addresses well-wishers at his retirement banquet: "This place has been my home. I cannot imagine a better place to have a career."

No one enjoyed the evening more than David L. Chambers himself.

Dean Jeffrey S. Lehman, '81, brings on laughter with his comments during the retirement dinner for Professor David L. Chambers. Chambers is seated in the left foreground.

Dores McCree congratulates David L. Chambers, the Wade H. McCree Jr. Collegiate Professor of Law. The McCree professorship, named for Dores McCree's late husband, a Law School faculty member and former U.S. Solicitor General, was the first endowed professorship at a major U.S. law school to be named for an African American.

David L. Chambers raises a gift — a framed photo of the Law Quadrangle — for all to see.

Suelynn Scarneccia, '81, associate dean for clinical affairs and a former student of Chambers, congratulates him and thanks him for being "a teacher's teacher."

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