

alumni SPOTLIGHT



Jacqueline D. Grant '92 enjoys gaining new knowledge through her preparation for medical malpractice cases and other trial work.

TAKING A STAND

AN ASHEVILLE ATTORNEY IS RECOGNIZED WITH A STATEWIDE 'CITIZEN LAWYER' AWARD FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM

By KEITH BRENTON

A multiple award-winning attorney recently acknowledged for her civic contributions, **Jacqueline D. Grant '92** has been taking a stand for people who need an advocate both inside and beyond the courtroom since her professional career began. The partner and litigator at the Asheville law firm Roberts & Stevens realized early on she wanted to fill that role.

"I knew I wanted to be a lawyer after taking a government and civics class in high school," Grant said. "I enjoyed learning about the law and the application of law in society. During a mock trial exercise, I found that I enjoyed making legal arguments and being an advocate for people."

She brought that ambition with her as a WCU student and decided to major in political science. "I chose Western Carolina University because of its location and size," Grant said. "WCU was not too large where a student could get lost in the crowd. The class size in the political science department allowed me to get to know my professors and vice versa."

Her academic prowess and drive was a factor in her choice, as well. "I also chose WCU because I was admitted into the honors program and received a scholarship," Grant said. "WCU had an excellent honors program. I was fortunate to graduate from WCU and law school with no student debt."

Grant credits her choice of political science as her major at WCU with helping her build the skills she needed to pursue a career in law. "Two of the best political science professors I had at WCU were Gordon Mercer and Don Livingston. Their classes required a lot of analytical thinking, which is essential in the practice of law," she said.

Mercer, professor emeritus of political science, fondly recalls Grant as one of his top students. "I enjoyed having her in classes, as she was well prepared and did well on class assignments," he said. "She defended her views in class discussions very well. I can see how she became a highly respected attorney for those she represents, as she prepares so well for all she does in life."

Livingston, whose research interests focus on American politics, Congress

and the presidency, agreed with Mercer's assessment of their former pupil. "Jacqueline Grant ranks among the very best students I have had the pleasure of teaching during my long career in higher education," he said. "I am so thankful our paths crossed here in Cullowhee, and I am so proud of her. She has accomplished so much."

Graduating from WCU magna cum laude (with high honors) in 1992, she began her studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received her law degree from there in 1995. Grant's work at the Roberts & Stevens firm in Asheville has encompassed the fields of complex personal injury, employment law, general civil litigation, labor and employment, insurance defense and medical malpractice on behalf of hospitals and physicians.

"I enjoy the trial work aspect of my practice," she said. Preparing for trial

malpractice since 2011 and many more.

But with one exception, professional achievements are not Grant's favorite items on her resume. That exception is being named recipient of the North Carolina Bar Association's Citizen Lawyer Award in 2016 in recognition of her contributions in the community. "This was an unexpected and nice surprise," she said. "As a lawyer, I believe it is important to give back to the community and make improvements in society where we can."

So she has. Her list of community involvement is lengthy, and includes serving on the boards of directors of Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity, Asheville-Buncombe Institute of Parity Achievement, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Western North Carolina, Mountain Area Child and Family Center, Mountain Area Hospice Foundation, the University of North Carolina at Asheville Foundation and both the YMCA of Western North Carolina and YWCA of Asheville.

Grant also has served as a member of the City of Asheville Sustainable Economic Development Task Force, and she is a member of the WCU

Board of Visitors (along with fellow attorney Robinson). In 2015, she moderated a forum featuring the three women justices serving on the North Carolina Supreme Court.

Despite the length of her resume, for Grant, one single professional achievement stands out among the rest: She served in the progression of vice president, president-elect and president of the 28th Judicial District Bar Association, beginning in 2012 and concluding her term as president in 2015. "My tenure as president of the 28th Judicial District Bar was significant because I was the first African-American female to serve in this position," Grant said.

Her many contributions outside of the courtroom make Grant "...an extraordinary person and a model citizen, and we are all very grateful for her service to our community," said David Whilden, president of the Board of Directors for the Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity. ■

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provides her with ongoing opportunities to new knowledge in unexpected areas, she said. "The medical malpractice cases are unique because you have to learn the medicine in order to defend the cases. Therefore, each case provides an opportunity to learn something new," Grant said. A colleague in the North Carolina Bar Association, **Brandon A. Robinson '05 MA '10**, calls Grant "a devastating litigator."

The recognitions resulting from her focus on her practice read like a wish-list of Who's Who accolades for an attorney in Western North Carolina. They include "The Best Lawyers in America," 2013 Lawyer of the Year in Asheville for Medical Malpractice Law-Defendants Business North Carolina Magazine's "Legal Elite" for employment law in 2013 and 2016, Litigation Counsel of America Fellow from 2011 until 2014 North Carolina "Super Lawyer" in personal injury defense and medical



10 NEW APPOINTEES COMPRISE LATEST CLASS OF WCU BOARD OF VISITORS

Chancellor David O. Belcher (seated, far left) welcomes new Board of Visitors members (front row, from left) Keyonna Hornbuckle, Ann Treadaway '83, Sarah Nunez MPA '10 and John S. Martin '90; and (back row, from left) Bob Roberts, Terry M. Fortner '77, Barbara Hyde, Clay Poindexter '82, Fran Johnson, Jacqueline Grant '92 and Jeff Tomberlin '81.

The Western Carolina University Board of Visitors is now at full strength with approval last year by the Board of Trustees of the slate of 10 nominees comprising the third class of the university volunteer organization.

Launched in 2014, the Board of Visitors is designed to serve as an advisory body to the university's chancellor. Members of the Board of Visitors act as advocates and ambassadors for WCU; promote and advance the mission, vision and strategic plan of the university; make WCU a philanthropic priority; and provide the chancellor and the Board of Trustees with advice and counsel on issues that are critical to the institution's strategic interests.

The Board of Visitors consists of up to 30 members elected by the trustees, along with five ex officio members. Each class of visitors serves initial terms of three years. Members of the Board of Visitors class of 2016 are:

- **Terry M. Fortner '77**, vice president of corporate sales for international auto parts distributor LKQ Corp., a resident of Dahlonega, Georgia.
- **Jacqueline D. Grant '92**, a partner with the law firm of Roberts & Stevens in Asheville.
- Keyonna Hornbuckle, tribal liaison for the Tribal Gaming Enterprise Board of Advisers in Cherokee.
- Barbara Hyde, former legal secretary in the state of Louisiana, Atlanta children's wear company employee and manager of family real estate holdings, a resident of Sapphire.
- Fran Johnson, retired director of hospitality and senior business development executive for the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce in South Carolina, a resident of Mills River.
- **John S. Martin '90**, senior vice president and financial adviser at CAPTRUST in Raleigh.
- **Clay Poindexter '82**, founder, president and general manager of VERSA Technologies Inc., a telecommunications industry company in Winston-Salem.
- **Bob Roberts**, regional executive vice president for First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. in Asheville.
- **Jeff Tomberlin '81**, program manager at Lockheed Martin Space Systems at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.
- **Ann Treadaway '83**, director of sales and innovation at Essentra, an international supplier of plastic, fiber, foam and packaging products, and a resident of Clemmons.

In addition to the 10 members of the class of 2016, the trustees also appointed two new members to fill the unexpired terms of **Donna Winbon '80** and **Rebecca Schlosser '73**, who have joined the WCU Foundation board. Holding one-year appointments:

- **Sarah Nunez MPA '10**, assistant director for the Cultural Center's Hispanic and Latino initiatives at the University of Louisville.
- **Romie Patel '11**, financial adviser with Prudential Financial in Florida. ■

-By Bill Studenc MPA '10