

South Texas College of Law: Houston's Gateway to Opportunity in Law

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On September 24, 1923, the South Texas School of Law opened for classes in the YMCA building at the corner of Fannin and McKinney streets. According to the new school's board of governors, this "was an occasion worthy of the attention of the educators of the state and members of the Bar Association particularly."¹ In his first speech as dean, Federal District Judge Joseph C. Hutcheson, Jr., said, "We will promise nothing now as to what we will fulfill, for we believe that we can do much more than we can now promise."² Judge Hutcheson's words proved prophetic. From that initial class of 34 aspiring lawyers, the school grew into what is today the South Texas College of Law, a distinguished and progressive institution whose alumni constitute a significant proportion of the practicing attorneys and judges in Harris County. Aptly known as "Houston's gateway to opportunity," South Texas has maintained its commitment to the community it serves for over 70 years and has consistently expanded its vision to truly do more than what it could initially promise.

The new law school was organized by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in response to the need for adult education in Houston. The YMCA had served as a social service agency since its arrival in Houston in 1886. The services offered by the YMCA have evolved over time to accommodate the challenges of different eras, but the organization's basic goals of serving community needs have remained constant. One early emphasis of the

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¹Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Houston YMCA, October 12, 1923. All minutes, reports, letters, and catalogs pertaining to the YMCA cited in this article are held in the South Texas College of Law Archives and Manuscripts Collection unless otherwise stated.

²*The South Texas School of Law, 1924-1925* (catalog), 7.

YMCA nationally was on education, particularly vocational education.³ In the early twentieth century, Houston offered few opportunities for adult education at a time when the city was transforming into a modern urban area. The YMCA saw that:

The need of a better education on the part of employed men and boys in Houston is very great. The public night schools, as good as they are, only serve a limited number of those who need help along educational lines. They do not provide courses above the grade school work and very little in the way of vocational training.⁴

The Houston YMCA's Educational Committee contracted H. D. "Guy" Burnett, a Houston attorney and a graduate of the YMCA Law School of Cincinnati, Ohio, to offer evening law courses beginning in 1915. Walter C. Paige, general secretary to the board of directors, informed the board that he was confident that the right man had been selected, that "the letters received concerning the character and ability of Mr. Burnett were all that could be desired." The prospects of establishing a permanent law school in Houston seemed promising, Paige said, since a "number of men are intending to enroll in the school."⁵ World War I prevented the establishment of a full-fledged law school at this time, however, as it hindered all of the Houston YMCA's programs. The YMCA shifted much of its focus to war work for the duration, and its service to soldiers and sailors garnered strong support for the organization.⁶

The city's growth during the 1920s was accompanied by increasing social and educational needs, which were not necessarily being met by either the private or public sector. On March 24, 1922, the city's public night schools and the Knights of Columbus schools closed, leaving a gap in the provision of adult vocational training.⁷ The YMCA promptly drafted a plan to expand its

³C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 420-421; Harry O'Kane, "History of the Houston Young Men's Christian Association" (unpublished, 1948). The YMCA's education programs in the United States appealed to the "climbing instinct" of youth, in a land of liberty where initiative and individualism had a chance." Sherwood Eddy, *A Century with Youth of the YMCA from 1844 to 1944* (New York: Association Press, 1944), 49.

⁴Secretary of the Educational Committee to the Members of the Educational Committee, June 16, 1916. The YMCA found it "immensely appealing" work to provide "an opportunity for education in day and night classes for young men who were too poor or too busy to attend college; and in their earlier years many of the present industrial, business, and professional leaders of the nation took advantage of the Association's educational program." Eddy, *A Century with Youth*, 49.

⁵Walter C. Paige, General Secretary, to the Board of Directors, January 8, 1915.

⁶O'Kane, "History of the Houston Young Men's Christian Association," 21-24.

⁷Educational Committee, Report to the Board of Directors of the YMCA, April 14, 1922.

education program, including the establishment of a standard school of commerce that featured accounting classes. The Houston School of Technology, opened by the YMCA later that year, offered a broad range of business and technical training.⁸ Nationally, the YMCA prided itself on offering solid classes in such areas as law, accountancy, salesmanship, and other business-related fields. As "the greatest Christian training institution in the world," the YMCA schools had taught more than 150,000 men and boys in its branches in the leading association centers in the United States by 1923.⁹ The Houston YMCA's course offerings established it as one of these major centers.

In what became arguably its most important educational endeavor of the 1920s, the Houston YMCA created a "standard four year" School of Law. By 1923, 20 YMCA associations were operating law schools with a total enrollment of 3,716 students. The law schools which were originally founded as YMCA law schools include the present-day: Northeastern University School of Law, Western New England College of Law, New York Law School, the Detroit College of Law, and Southern Methodist University School of Law. Other YMCA-founded law schools, such as those in Dayton and Youngstown, both in Ohio, have closed. All of the YMCA law schools were intended to provide a practical, affordable, and accessible legal education.¹⁰

Legal education was a pressing need in Houston. During the 1920s, the oil industry enjoyed explosive growth in and around Houston, creating a need for lawyers to handle the growing business arising out of the discovery, production, transportation, refining, and marketing of oil. Most of the large, vertically integrated oil companies had extensive exploration and production in Texas, with refineries along the Gulf Coast, and often administrative offices

⁸W. C. Paige, Report of General Secretary, October 13, 1922. The Houston School of Technology changed its name to the South Texas School of Commerce in the early 1930s, and closed in 1955. During the 1920s, the Houston School of Technology offered training in several diverse areas such as accounting, drafting, real estate, salesmanship, advertising, merchandise traffic management, and cotton classing. Before World War I, the emphasis of evening classes at the Houston YMCA had been similar, but far fewer classes were offered and none were organized into formal academic courses of study. An undated prewar brochure listing the YMCA classes explained, "The Y.M.C.A. Night School is designed to help men help themselves.... The studies offered are the ones which better fit men for their daily work, and thus provide for material advancement." Brochures in SC 1096, Houston YMCA Pamphlet Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

⁹Report—Educational Department, submitted by Frank C. Fields, Chairman, Educational Committee, 1923.

¹⁰Nancy Jo Newton and W. Frank Newton, "Legal Education in Texas," in Committee on History and Tradition of the State Bar of Texas, *Centennial History of the Texas Bar, 1882-1982* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1981), 168; Robert Stevens, *Law School: Legal Education in America from the 1850s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 80-81, 195, 198, 199.

in Houston or Dallas even if they were under the guidance of a central office in another state. Lawyers well trained in Texas law were needed to examine titles, draw up conveyances, check franchises, and organize new corporations. The lawyers were particularly involved in the leasing of lands for oil exploration and production, which required a meticulous examination of titles. In this important aspect of their operations, the major oil companies had to rely on attorneys well versed in the land laws of each particular jurisdiction they operated in.

At the same time, legal education was becoming increasingly classroom based, with the "apprenticeship method" in a rapid decline.¹¹ The only accredited law schools in the state were at the University of Texas in Austin and at Baylor University in Waco. An evening law school in Houston would increase the number of potential lawyers by making legal education accessible to persons without the social and economic advantages to attend traditional law schools. The new school would fill a crucial niche by serving the needs of working students, who could not afford to leave their jobs and relocate to another city. As with the School of Technology, the law school would be designed for working men who wanted to improve their situation.¹²

A private law school already existed in the city. The Houston Law School began in 1912 and offered year-round classroom instruction enabling its students to complete the program in only two years. The Houston Law School never had an institutional affiliation and lacked permanent quarters. Its curriculum also did not adhere to the model of legal education which most academics accepted at the time.

The YMCA Board of Directors was confident that the need for a law school existed and that it had the resources to meet the need. On March 31, 1923, the Board of Governors of the School of Technology and the Educational Committee jointly recommended that the YMCA Board of Directors establish a law school. The board of directors, in following this recommendation, instructed the educational director and the Educational Committee to immediately organize a standard evening law school, which would open in the fall of 1923. South Texas School of Law was thus established on April 13,

¹¹From 1870 to 1900, Harvard University developed a successful law curriculum, which quickly became a model for other law schools, including the University of Texas. Harvard also developed the "casebook" method of teaching, which became the dominant form of law school pedagogy instead of the lecture method. Robert Stevens, "Two Cheers for 1870: The American Law School," *Perspectives in American History* 5 (1971): 405-548.

¹²W. C. Paige to the Board of Directors, January 8, 1915; Educational Report, submitted to the Board of Directors by Frank C. Fields, Chairman, Educational Committee, May 11, 1923; "Proposal to Launch a Law School in Connection with the Houston School of Technology" (typescript, ca. 1923); William J. Williamson, interview by author, March 10, 1994.

1923, and became a part of the United YMCA Schools under the control of the Houston YMCA.¹³

The new school offered students a chance to attain an LL.B. degree by attending classes three nights per week over a four-year period. Tuition in 1924 was \$85.00 per semester. Its offices and classrooms were housed in three rooms on the third floor of the YMCA building at the corner of Fannin and McKinney streets. The downtown location was crucial because the college needed convenient proximity to its prospective students' workplaces; certainly, it was easily accessible to students who worked as law clerks for downtown lawyers.¹⁴ The YMCA actively advertised the law school with a 16-page catalog and a six-page folder. Favorable news articles as well as an advertising campaign in the Houston newspapers publicized the program. South Texas School of Law opened for classes on September 24, 1923, with an enrollment of 34 students.

The college's original mission was both limited and pragmatic. The new law school was specifically oriented to train lawyers who would serve the legal needs of Houston and Harris County. The college was intended to: 1) accommodate the needs of working students, 2) provide a high-quality legal education, and 3) offer education at affordable costs. In the school's initial advertising, the chairman of the Educational Committee focused on "those young and ambitious men who desire a high grade legal training, but are unable to give up their employment and spend three years in a University."¹⁵ Judge Joseph C. Hutcheson, then a United States district judge who served as the first dean of the new law school (1923-31), later remembered that the founders "were worried about young people who could not afford to go to law school, but who could become good attorneys."¹⁶ Plans for the school stemmed not only from practical community needs, but also from a faith in the working man's capacity for self-improvement, an interest in democratizing legal education, and a belief originating from Andrew Jackson's time that the right of all citizens of all economic classes to become lawyers was fundamental to democratic government. In 1929, law student W. Gordon Vaughn articulately described this spirit:

There has always been something so wholesome, so democratic about

¹³Report—Educational Department, 1923; Educational Report, submitted by Ora O. Bennett, Educational Director, August 31, 1923.

¹⁴*The South Texas School of Law, 1924-1925* (catalog); Harry L. Reed, interview by author, January 12, 1994.

¹⁵Report—Educational Department, 1923.

¹⁶"Local Law College Founders Honored," *Houston Chronicle*, June 15, 1953. During the 1920s and 1930s, few people could afford to attend a four-year college. See "Kilgore's Favorite Son," *South Texas College of Law Quarterly* (Winter 1991): 4.

YMCA schools, which makes a fellow realize that equality of opportunity is more than a phrase; that the determination to succeed is no weak challenge to the encumbrances of busy, everyday life.¹⁷

The law school was organized by a committee composed of Burke Baker, then vice-president of the Houston YMCA, Walter Brown, Gavin Ulmer, and Walter Paige, and chaired by Frank C. Fields, who met at the University Club to draft a list of lawyers and judges to serve as an advisory group. The Advisory Council which emerged from this effort included: Thomas J. Lawhon, senior counsel of the Texas Company (now Texaco, Inc.); Gavin Ulmer, a sole practitioner; R. Clarence Fulbright, of Fulbright and Crocker; Sam Streetman, of Andrews & Streetman; John E. Green, Jr., general counsel of Gulf Oil Company; Robert Cole, of Cole & O'Connor; Thomas M. Kennerly, of Kennerly, Lee, & Hill; Ned B. Morris, president of the Lawyers Club; James W. Lockett, then president of the Houston Bar Association; Edgar E. (E. E.) Townes, Sr., general counsel of Humble Oil Company; Walter Brown, associated with Carruthers & Brown; Judge Lewis R. Bryan, associated with the firm of Bryan, Dyess, & Colgin, who served as permanent chairman of the Advisory Council; and Clarence L. Carter, of Baker & Botts.¹⁸ All of these men believed that a supply of well-educated lawyers was vital to the city's future growth, and actively supported the new school. Frank C. Fields reported to the board that "in booking members of the Advisory Council the committee did not receive a single refusal. We were met with the most cordial spirit of cooperation and great enthusiasm for the new school." The Advisory Council met for the first time on May 8 and unanimously selected Judge Hutcheson as the dean of the new school.¹⁹

Support from the bar and bench was strong. In addition to the impressive roster of the Advisory Council, 13 distinguished Harris County lawyers served on the board of governors. Generous cooperation from the local bar was essential to the survival and growth of the college, as it provided the college with teachers and graduates with employment opportunities. The school began with seven part-time instructors, who represented some of the "most successful lawyers and ablest judges of the Houston Bar."²⁰ These faculty members were: Gavin Ulmer, Barksdale Stevens, Thomas H. Cody, Richard Flemming, William A. Vinson, James A. Elkins, and Sam Streetman.

¹⁷Report of the Houston School of Technology and the South Texas School of Law, January 18, 1929.

¹⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Houston YMCA, May 11, 1923.

¹⁹Educational Report, May 11, 1923.

²⁰*The South Texas School of Law, 1924-1925* (catalog), 10.

The success of the new school's goal of providing high-quality legal education depended largely on the quality of the practicing lawyers who comprised its faculty. The use of prominent local lawyers as part-time instructors (later termed "adjunct professors") followed the models of other non-university-based law schools, including the YMCA programs in Minneapolis, Cincinnati, and Detroit.

Night law schools, no matter how good the instruction they provided, were often criticized as a group for having low admission requirements, low educational standards, and low professional ideals. Many university academicians believed that students who devoted their energies and time primarily to activities other than studying law could not sufficiently master that technical subject. In this view, part-time instructors were also not desirable because they supposedly would not have enough time to devote to their academic duties and would be unfamiliar with the best pedagogical methods. Traditionalists believed that teaching law and practicing law were incompatible and that excellence in teaching necessarily prohibited both transactional work and trial practice.²¹

The adjunct teaching system at South Texas, however, had unique strengths. Judge Hutcheson affirmed that "the school was established as the equal in teaching of any in the country. We have not had as many books as some schools—not as much gingerbread—but our school has in fact had higher ranking teachers because the lawyers in Houston got in behind it."²² E. E. Townes, who served as dean from 1934 to 1960, said that these instructors were "outstanding local practicing lawyers, recognized experts in the subjects that they teach," who taught because they were "interested in young people."²³ As Hutcheson pointed out, South Texas had some instructors "that no law school could employ [full-time] because the schools could not pay enough. But they came out here at nights, not just for the money, but to help our young people."²⁴ Townes argued that the practitioner-teacher had a special competence:

Instruction by a practicing lawyer gives the student a familiarity with the practical legal problems and difficulties, and instructive experience explained in the classroom by a real lawyer. This admirably supplements

²¹Harlan Stone, "The Future of Legal Education," *Journal of the American Bar Association* 10 (April 1924): 233; Albert M. Kales, "Should the Law Teacher Practice Law," *Harvard Law Review* 25 (January 1912): 253.

²²"Local Law College Founders Honored," *Houston Chronicle*, June 15, 1953.

²³E. E. Townes, "Bridging the Gap: Instruction by Practicing Lawyers Gives Students Familiarity," *Texas Bar Journal* 15 (August 1952): 326-327.

²⁴"Local Law College Founders Honored," *Houston Chronicle*, June 15, 1953.

the ordinary moot court and practice courses. The graduate, therefore, is better prepared to step into an office and understand and perform legal work of value.²⁵

Because these instructors were practitioners, their primary concerns were practical in nature, which was reflected in how they taught.

The high degree of integration between practice and theory at South Texas was well suited to the needs of the students. Like most night law schools, its student body was generally job-oriented and impatient with the Socratic technique of teaching, which obscured the skills training they so strongly desired. The emphasis on skills training was supported by members of the profession who considered such training as deficient in the "elite" law schools.²⁶ Furthermore, while "elite" schools usually taught a nationally oriented law, schools such as South Texas were able to tailor their course offerings more specifically to the immediate realities of practice in the local community.

Legal instruction at South Texas was thus positioned to take a middle ground between the abstractions of classical university-based schools and the purely practical apprenticeship system. The curriculum at South Texas School of Law was modeled after both those of the traditional law schools and the YMCA's other successful law schools:

It will be the purpose of the Board of Governors of this institution to establish a curriculum along the lines of that of the University of Texas, and other institutions of that rank, and by careful selection and instruction of its students, to maintain for this institution a standard which in the course of time will entitle it to rank as a school of the first class.²⁷

The original curriculum consisted of courses in contracts, torts, administration of estates, agency, common law actions, equity, sales, and criminal law. The curriculum expanded as the school developed. Admiralty, for example,

²⁵Townes, "Bridging the Gap," 326-327.

²⁶Legal instruction at South Texas from the beginning took a middle ground between the extremes of apprenticeship to a practicing lawyer and the "classical Harvard approach," which emphasized the theoretical and held that academic legal instruction was a skill unto itself, wholly separate from the skills of the practicing legal professional. The status of night law schools is comprehensively examined in Charles Kelso, "The AALS Study of Part-time Legal Education," *Proceedings, Association of American Law Schools* (Washington, D.C., 1972), part 1, sec. 2, 285-302. Kelso concluded that part-time law schools had a valid place in legal education, and urged the AALS to broaden its assistance to schools with such programs.

²⁷*The South Texas School of Law, 1924-1925* (catalog), 6.

was added in the fall of 1926 and land titles and abstracts in the spring of 1929.²⁸

By 1926, South Texas prided itself on offering a quality legal education program, with "a faculty of 12 outstanding lawyers and judges. The course provided 1152 hours of instruction, using the case system."²⁹ By contrast, South Texas's board of governors and the YMCA Educational Committee criticized the lower quality of education offered by their rival, the Houston Law School, arguing that "The public will gradually come to understand that 312 hours of textbook instruction is not, as implied, the equivalent of a three years' course."³⁰ YMCA Educational Director Albert L. Turner reported that the South Texas pass rate on the bar exams "suggests that our law school curriculum is not laid out on the basis of just barely preparing men to pass a bar examination, but is designed to give a thorough grounding in the principles and practice of law."³¹

The founders of South Texas School of Law hoped to attract students who would be able to take full advantage of the quality education South Texas offered:

It will be our purpose...to seek out for matriculates only sincere men—only earnest students of law, who putting their trust in laborious study and self-discipline have set out for its promised land; who have enlisted not for a battle only, but for a war, and upon whose persevering interest we may securely count....it will be our hope and purpose to turn them out not practitioners merely, not craftsmen in torts, or contracts, criminal law, or admiralty, but lawyers capable of reasoning broadly and abstract-

²⁸Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for April (May 21, 1926). The Land Titles and Abstracts class was considered a "most attractive subject" and had "100% attendance." Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas College of Law for March (April 26, 1929).

²⁹Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for September (October 22, 1926).

³⁰*Ibid.* The Houston Law School and South Texas College of Law actively competed for students. The Houston Law School used the cramming, textbook method of instruction designed to prepare students to pass the bar examination, while South Texas emphasized that its use of the casebook method gave students the solid training they would later need in their legal practice. *Houston Chronicle*, September 11, 1927. The Houston Law School, which had no institutional affiliation, did not receive the diploma privilege and had ongoing problems with accrediting authorities. The Houston Law School eventually closed in 1945, a victim of the steadily higher educational requirements imposed by the Texas Supreme Court and of the lack of students during World War II. Michael R. Davis, "A History of the Houston Law School," *Houston Lawyer* (Summer 1978): 26-41.

³¹Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for September (October 22, 1926).

ly, and of testing by the same touchstone conformity to right and justice every question, no matter in what particular branch of the law it may arise.³²

The early admission requirements at South Texas were fairly simple. In 1924, prospective students were required to: 1) have good moral character, 2) be at least 18 years of age, and 3) have a high school diploma. Special cases for admission were determined by the dean.³³

Despite the frequent references to its prospective students as "young men," South Texas admitted women from the beginning. Several women indicated an interest in enrolling in response to the school's initial advertising, and five members of the first class were women.³⁴ During the 1920s, the YMCA's Educational Department was often the organization's most innovative branch. The YMCA first considered admitting women to department classes in 1920. Some YMCA board members opposed the proposal, recommending that the women take similar courses at the YWCA. However, the Educational Committee decided upon a limited admissions policy, such that "women be admitted into certain classes where instruction is given that is not provided by any other institution or agency in the city."³⁵ Allowing women into courses remained the limit of YMCA work with women during this period.³⁶ Women, until that time, had largely been barred from a law school education and indeed from much of civic life. Some women were enrolled at the University of Texas Law School beginning in 1914, but the opening of the South Texas School of Law offered a crucial opportunity for working women in Houston. In 1928, Ann Marie Hollenberg became the first woman to graduate from South Texas. She had formerly worked as a stenographer with Gulf Pipeline Company in Houston, and subsequently moved to Los Angeles where she worked with a law firm.³⁷

In the fall of 1924, South Texas began its second year of operation with 58 students. By the late 1920s, the enrollment had increased to more than 300.³⁸

³²*The South Texas School of Law, 1924-1925* (catalog), 7.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Educational Report, August 31, 1923.

³⁵Minutes of the Educational Department, September 9, 1921.

³⁶Minutes of the Educational Department, September 17, 1920; *ibid.*, September 9, 1921; Frank C. Fields, Report of the General Secretary, August 27, 1920; Educational Report, August 31, 1923.

³⁷"Twenty Years Ago," *Houston Chronicle*, May 31, 1948. Many early female law school graduates did not eventually practice law, but instead used their education in philanthropic endeavors, in their personal legal affairs, or by becoming law librarians.

³⁸Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for February (March 18, 1927).

Referrals from the bar, favorable recommendations from Houston's lawyers, and the YMCA's reputation for sponsoring quality education, all assisted in recruiting new students.³⁹ On June 1, 1927, South Texas held its first commencement. Eleven candidates received the LL.B. degree. Judge Lewis R. Bryan presided at the ceremony; Gavin Ulmer, as chairman of the Educational Committee, presented the greetings of the YMCA; and Judge Joseph C. Hutcheson, as dean of the school, presented the diplomas and granted the degrees.⁴⁰ To facilitate long-term professional contacts among alumni, the Alumni Association was first organized on August 8, 1927. The association immediately began helping the law school, by performing such duties as conducting the program for the school's opening night on September 16, 1927.⁴¹

The quality and efforts of its students, people who combined their real-life experiences with textbook learning, contributed to the school's success. Turner believed that the school's development was assisted

very materially by the type of students attracted to the school and the grade of work they have done. The fact that five of the students passed the bar exam and were admitted to the bar during their third year has established a record for the school which will inspire confidence in the character of work done in the school.⁴²

By the late 1920s, South Texas School of Law was on solid footing. It was achieving the founders' goals of "Steady, permanent growth, increased recognition of the place of the school in the social order of our city, and increasing effectiveness of our training."⁴³ Turner felt that the "hardest period of development is past," and that the school's continued development depended on "good management and a reasonable expansion of our law library."⁴⁴ His assessment was largely correct. The quality of the faculty and

³⁹Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for January (February 18, 1927); Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for August (September 21, 1928); Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for December (January 15, 1926).

⁴⁰Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for May (June 17, 1927).

⁴¹Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for July (August 19, 1927).

⁴²Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for March and April (April 15, 1927).

⁴³Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for May (June 22, 1928).

⁴⁴Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for February (March 18, 1927).

the success of the alumni were the most crucial factors in helping South Texas become well established in Houston. With this solid core, South Texas was prepared to turn its attention to expanding its facilities and programs and to meeting the challenge of changing standards for legal education.

It has been said that "the heart of every law college is its library."⁴⁵ The first South Texas students largely relied on the nearby Harris County Law Library. With 20,000 volumes in 1924, this library was regarded as one of the finest law libraries in the Southwest. Except for the Supreme Court Library in Austin, it was probably unequalled in Texas. Nevertheless, South Texas began to develop its own library, starting when Judge E. E. Townes contributed several of his law books. In 1924, the school's library had approximately 600 volumes.⁴⁶ Townes, Sam Streetman, and Gavin Ulmer formed a committee to encourage donations to the library.⁴⁷ The students began to raise funds as well, and by November 1927, they had raised \$400 of the \$725 needed to purchase a complete set of the *South Western Reporter*. Much of the balance was secured through the efforts of the board of governors. Along with the *South Western Reporter*, the library was also able to acquire the *South Western Digest* and *Vernons Annotated Texas Statutes*.⁴⁸ By the end of 1928, South Texas had what was considered a "good working library" for the period, meaning that a student or practitioner could research most state law issues just by utilizing the South Texas library. Because a law library is always essential to legal work, improving its own library was a crucial step for the fledgling school. Turner reported that "our real problem now is to properly house the library. Just another evidence of the urgent need for our new building."⁴⁹ Unfortunately, the Great Depression would intervene before the YMCA could solve the problem of inadequate classrooms and lack of library space with a new building.

One of the most significant achievements for the young South Texas was receiving the much-desired Texas Supreme Court accreditation in 1928. Ned B. Morris, Sam Streetman, and E. E. Townes were instrumental in securing the order. The college's founders realized from the beginning that the

⁴⁵"South Texas Law Foundation," *South Texas Law Journal* 6 (Fall 1961): 26.

⁴⁶"South Texas College: Houston's Only Junior College and Only Law College for 24 Years Up to 1947," typescript addressed to Mr. Bertelsen, *Houston Post*, October 1, 1964.

⁴⁷Minutes of the South Texas School of Law Board of Governors, September 9, 1924.

⁴⁸Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for October (November 25, 1927); Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for January (February 17, 1928); Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for February (March 16, 1928).

⁴⁹Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for February (March 16, 1928).

school's growth depended on its formal recognition by the Texas Supreme Court. The graduates of court-accredited law schools at this time enjoyed the "diploma privilege," which meant that they did not need to take the bar examination in order to practice law. The Supreme Court granted accreditation to South Texas on November 21, 1928.⁵⁰ Thereafter, South Texas graduates could obtain a law license merely by showing proof of age, residence, and good moral character. The court, in accrediting the school, emphasized the true nature of the honor:

With the above recognition, the South Texas School of Law enters a new era.

It assumes new responsibilities, it is true, but no change of standards is required. The recognition is based upon its record of past performance. The Board of Governors, Faculty, and Officers saw to it at the very first, that the entrance requirements, curriculum, method of instruction, and student work required, were of such high standard as to deserve just the recognition that has naturally come to the school.

The exemption from the bar examination is of little moment. The recognition of this grade of instruction offered, is all important.⁵¹

Accreditation placed South Texas on a par with the University of Texas, a comparison that stimulated applications as well as pride, "plac[ing] us before the world as a first class school."⁵² The quality of the legal education provided by South Texas was also evidenced by the fact that it consistently either met or exceeded the requirements set forth by the Carnegie Foundation on Legal Education, and exceeded state statutory requirements.

Judge Hutcheson appropriately placed the honor in context:

Law is like any other profession, its devotees keep pressing on, and those guarding its portals are growing more rigid in demanding qualifications of those who would enter. Little by little a feeling has grown that Texas's standards for entrance into law has not been high enough. However, these standards are growing stronger and, in time, I believe it will be as difficult to enter the law in Texas as in any other state in the union.⁵³

⁵⁰O'Kane, "History of the Houston Young Men's Christian Association," 23-24; Minutes of the Board of Governors, August 23, 1928.

⁵¹Reprinted in *Yearbook of the YMCA South Texas School of Law, 1929-1930*, 14.

⁵²"Proposal to Launch a Law School in Connection with the Houston School of Technology" (typescript, ca. 1923); Educational Report, May 11, 1923; Educational Report, December 12, 1928; Albert L. Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for March (April 26, 1929); Turner, Monthly Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for February (March 15, 1929); Monthly Report for the Houston School of Technology and South Texas School of Law for November (December 20, 1929).

⁵³*Houston Chronicle*, January 30, 1929; *Houston Post-Dispatch*, January 30, 1929.

South Texas School of Law's growing reputation and continuing success would stand it in good stead, as the school was able to turn adversity into opportunity during the difficult depression era. While the Great Depression was somewhat shorter and less severe in Houston than in many places across the country, it nonetheless caused considerable hardships to Houstonians. The staff and officers of the Houston YMCA strained during this period to balance the organization's budget. The law and commerce schools were the only departments of the YMCA that enjoyed steadily increased support through the depression. They were not only self-sustaining, but even served as a source of income for the YMCA.

South Texas held its own during these difficult times and new student enrollments even showed a noticeable increase. In the fall of 1930, an enrollment of 164 students brought serious problems of room space for the school at the old YMCA building. During the depths of the depression, in the fall of 1933, about 200 students were enrolled at South Texas, 121 of them freshmen. In the fall of 1934, the freshman class stood at 175. During the early New Deal era (1933-36), approximately 146 students graduated from the law school.⁵⁴ Tuition at South Texas in 1936 was a relatively reasonable \$90. The students at South Texas during the 1930s tended to be, for the most part, middle-aged men. As a night school providing an affordable education for working students who wished to train for a new career, South Texas proved to meet the needs of its community in hard times as well as it had during the preceding boom years.

The increase in enrollment occurred despite increasing admissions requirements. When the school opened, it followed the norm for the time in requiring a high school education or "special" permission from the dean in lieu of meeting that requirement. However, during the 1930s there was a general trend toward increasingly rigorous admissions standards among law schools, encouraged by the American Bar Association (ABA) and state accrediting authorities.⁵⁵ The Texas Supreme Court in 1932 made a high

⁵⁴O'Kane, "History of the Houston Young Men's Christian Association," 25; Regular Minutes, Board of Directors, October 19, 1934; Regular Minutes, Board of Directors, December 21, 1934; Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Houston YMCA, June 15, 1934; Newton and Newton, "Legal Education in Texas," 170.

⁵⁵The stated rationale for the organized bar's attempts to set higher standards was to create a more competent profession. Some scholars, however, believe that the movement for higher admissions standards for law schools and for the bar was partially an attempt to prevent the poor, and particularly the immigrant poor, from entering the legal profession. Stevens, "Two Cheers for 1870: The American Law School," 405; Jerold Auerbach, *Unequal Justice: Lawyers and Social Change in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). The ABA began publishing its list of approved schools in 1926. In the early years, only one-third of all law students attended ABA-approved schools. J. Connie Covington, "Present Day Law Schools," *Tennessee Law Review* 7 (February 1929): 69.

school education or its equivalent mandatory, and all applicants were required to file a "written declaration of present intention to begin the study of law" at least two years before planning to take the bar examination. In 1936, the Texas Supreme Court drastically changed the requirements for pre-law education. By the fall of 1937, prospective applicants to the bar were required to meet the following conditions:

1) Those applicants declaring their intention to begin the study of law on or before July 1, 1937, must have graduated from a recognized high school or have the equivalent of a high school education.

2) Those applicants declaring their intention to begin the study of law between July 1, 1937, and July 1, 1938, must have thirty semester hours of work in a recognized college or educational attainments equivalent thereto.

3) Those applicants declaring their intention to begin the study of law after July 1, 1938, must have sixty semester hours of work in a recognized college or educational attainments equivalent thereto.⁵⁶

Standards were tightened for law school graduates, as well. In May 1935, the Texas Legislature repealed the statute granting the diploma privilege, to take effect on July 1, 1937. After that date, all applicants to the bar were required to pass the bar examination.

Both students and administrators at South Texas worried about the effects of the new standards. Registration for the fall 1937 term declined slightly, as the board had expected, since many students and prospective students had entered the work force as soon as they had graduated from high school. As for the loss of the diploma privilege, the administration pointed out to the students that

The standards of the school have not been lowered: they have been raised steadily through the years. Therefore, its graduates should have no fear of the State Bar Examination.⁵⁷

The new standards did not impair South Texas's long-term growth.

The curriculum offered at South Texas continued to respond to the needs of the students and the community during the depression years. Its courses reflected changes in the nation's legal structure brought about by the New

⁵⁶Minutes, Board of Directors' Meeting, October 16, 1936; Minutes, Board of Directors' Meeting, August 27, 1937; Minutes, Board of Directors' Meeting, December 17, 1937; Texas Supreme Court, Rules Promulgated by the Supreme Court of Texas for the Admission of Applicants to the Bar of Texas (July 1, 1936), Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁵⁷*Catalog and Yearbook—YMCA South Texas School of Law 1936-1937*, 13. Both the American Bar Association's Committee on Legal Education and the American Association of Law Schools had opposed the diploma privilege since 1901. *Reports of the American Bar Association* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1901), 407, 580, 582; *Reports of the American Bar Association* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1905), 560, 580.

Deal, which included the initiation of new regulations on the private sector. New federal statutes greatly increased the national government's powers in areas such as securities trading, oil and gas production and transmission, the organization of public utility holding companies, and labor-management relations. At the same time, petroleum production was increasingly regulated by the State of Texas in order to reduce oil overproduction. The state legislature granted the Texas Railroad Commission the power to set production levels, the primary mechanism in stabilizing petroleum prices.

Because of the importance of oil law to the legal community of the city and the state, and because of his recognized expertise in the area, Dean Townes established the "Oil & Gas Lecture Series" in 1935. This continuing education course was established as a community service for the benefit of both lawyers and laymen employed in the oil and gas industry. It was highly regarded and well attended. The series continued until 1963, with some of the most prominent lawyers in the field serving as special lecturers.⁵⁸

South Texas's practitioner-oriented approach was evident in all its programs. The law school had begun its expansion into continuing education with a postgraduate course in trial work offered in 1931-32. The course lasted for eight months and cost \$60.⁵⁹ Student activities at the school during the early 1930s included the student debating team. Its intent was to help students develop the public speaking abilities they would need to become effective trial lawyers. As the catalog pointed out, "the ability to speak forcibly and correctly on one's feet may—and often does—mean the difference between success and failure in life."⁶⁰

Increased enrollments and services during the 1930s placed a heavy demand on the old YMCA building on Fannin and McKinney streets. The building had never been intended to provide classroom space, and was already inadequate in the 1920s. The rooms employed as classrooms were small, cooled only with ceiling fans, and had old school-style chairs with an arm for writing. Classes often had to "double up," with different classes being conducted at each end of the same room.⁶¹ Because the building housed many

⁵⁸Resolution on the death of E. E. Townes, Board of Regents, South Texas Colleges, Gavin Ulmer, Chairman, January 10, 1961; Muellerweiss, "Fiftieth Anniversary Salute to South Texas College of Law," *South Texas Law Journal* 15 (Fall 1974): 1-13.

⁵⁹*South Texas School of Law: Catalog and Yearbook, 1932-1933*, 25.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹William J. Williamson, interview by author, March 10, 1994; Dorothy B. Rieger, Class of 1935, interview by author, August 31, 1994.

other programs of the YMCA, classes were disturbed by noise from elsewhere in the building.⁶² Nor was the YMCA financially able to maintain the building adequately during the depression. One student recalled that:

Our combined sophomore-junior class [1938] met on the mezzanine floor of the YMCA and a colony of rats, some the size of small cats, often wandered through. One night, during Constitutional Law, a student threw his notebook at one slow-moving rodent that was causing some screams from the female members. Everything came out of the notebook as it hit, but the rat never changed his speed nor direction. The professor commented, "He isn't as large as his brother, who was here last year. Incidentally, his brother has a nice law practice going now."⁶³

The YMCA conducted a successful fund drive for a new central building from 1938 to 1939. A committee chaired by Gavin Ulmer and composed of E. E. Townes; Walter W. Fondren, Vice-President of Humble Oil Company; Hiram O. Clarke, an executive of Houston Lighting and Power; and businessmen George E. Simpson and C. F. Carter, searched for appropriate locations. By 1939, sufficient pledges had been secured and an architect was selected. The committee also selected property on Louisiana Street, owned by the Houston Independent School District (HISD) and commenced negotiations with the owners. In June 1940, the YMCA Board of Directors contracted with a construction company. The YMCA's new 10-story facility at 1600 Louisiana Street opened on September 8, 1941.⁶⁴

By World War II, the city's foundation for future growth was firmly based on oil and gas and related industries. The war years, however, drastically curtailed operations at South Texas. Shortly after the United States entered World War II, enrollments at all American law schools were reduced to a few women and older or physically disqualified men.⁶⁵ South Texas's enrollment suffered heavily; the school had only 33 graduates from 1942 to 1946. The size of entering classes at South Texas during the war averaged about 33 students. Dean William J. Williamson recalled that one semester a class in insurance law

⁶²Albert L. Turner, Report of the Houston School of Technology and South Texas College of Law, January 9, 1925.

⁶³Travis T. Womack, letter to Dean William Wilks, read at Founders Day Dinner, South Texas College of Law, November 1, 1994.

⁶⁴O'Kane, "History of the Houston Young Men's Christian Association," 27-28; *Houston Post*, June 6, 1939.

⁶⁵The number of students enrolled in the 100 law schools approved by the ABA fell from 28,174 in 1938, to 18,449 in 1941, to 5,686 in March 1943. Dean Albert Harno, Chairman of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions of the American Bar Association, in *Annual Report of the American Bar Association* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1943), 407-408. Harno was dean of the University of Illinois School of Law.

had only five students.⁶⁶ The smaller classes facilitated experimentation, however, allowing the faculty to make comprehensive improvements in the curriculum, teaching methods, and teaching materials.⁶⁷

Near the war's end, YMCAs throughout the nation began to prepare for a sharp increase in their educational programs due to demobilization. The passage of the G.I. Bill, which provided veterans with a college education at government expense, created an unprecedented demand for higher education. Veterans relied on the Houston YMCA for both housing and educational opportunities. Even as late as 1953 and 1954, at the close of the Korean War and nearly a decade after the end of World War II, a third of the student body in the law school were veterans.⁶⁸ In addition to its regular course of study, South Texas also offered a "refresher course" from 1945 to 1949, approved by the Veterans Administration, for veterans whose legal education had been interrupted by World War II.

In the fall of 1945, South Texas School of Law had an enrollment of 99 students, which made it larger than the University of Texas Law School for the first time.⁶⁹ By the fall semester 1948, enrollment had climbed to 280. Associate Dean Gavin Ulmer ironically remarked, "There is always room for a few more."⁷⁰ In the early 1950s, enrollments reached approximately 350 students. By 1952, South Texas was the second largest law school in the state. The influx of students reflected both the return of veterans and Houston's postwar economic prosperity, which was based on the substantial expansion of the oil, natural gas, and petrochemical industries.

Organizational changes and expansion of the Houston YMCA's educational programs came with the postwar boom. In 1945, the South Texas School

⁶⁶Williamson interview.

⁶⁷Muellerweiss, "Fiftieth Anniversary," 7.

⁶⁸Figures are not available for the immediate postwar years, but records for 1953 and 1954 show more than half the veterans attending the law school as World War II veterans. In 1955 and 1956, the number of World War II veterans declines sharply, while the number of Korean War veterans increases. This trend suggests that the percentage of students who were veterans of World War II was probably quite high just after the war. Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began February 2, 1953 (March 4, 1953); Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 25, 1954 (February 26, 1954); Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the summer term which began June 7, 1954 (July 8, 1954); Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 24, 1955 (March 9, 1955); Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the summer session which began June 6, 1955 (June 28, 1955).

⁶⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors, October 19, 1945.

⁷⁰Gavin Ulmer, quoted in Addie L. Heaton, "A Personal History of South Texas College of Law," (unpublished manuscript, 1985), 87.

of Law changed its name to the South Texas College of Law. The law school's accreditation as a "senior college" in that year was important in preparing the YMCA's Educational Department to handle an influx of veterans who would enroll as students, and the new name better reflected the institution's mission.⁷¹ The South Texas School of Commerce (formerly the Houston School of Technology) also received accreditation as a senior college.

The YMCA decided to open a junior college as well in 1948. The new South Texas Junior College served a dual purpose: 1) to provide the required 60 hours of undergraduate work for those who wanted to attend the law school or the commerce school, and 2) to serve those who generally wanted the advantages of a college education. Dean Ulmer expressed the hope that the junior college would stimulate enrollment in the law school. The addition of the junior college "enables us to take men and women right out of high school, provide them a top-notch pre-legal background for two years, then graduate them into law school—it's a complete higher education under one roof."⁷²

Finally, to reflect the diversity of its services and increased demand for them, the YMCA adopted a "metropolitan plan" of organization in 1949 and reorganized its board structure. Under this framework, the three South Texas Colleges had "branch" status. Branch status, intended to facilitate the expansion of the YMCA's educational programs, was also the first step toward autonomy for the colleges. Ironically, the creation of the South Texas College branch would prove to be the beginning of the YMCA's eventual withdrawal from providing academic education.

With the large enrollments of the postwar years, inadequate facilities for the colleges became a chronic problem.⁷³ Both the law school and the commerce school were housed in the downtown YMCA building, in limited physical space, with minimum classroom, laboratory, and library facilities. The addition of the new junior college exacerbated the problem. By the late

⁷¹Minutes of Board of Trustees, May 14, 1945; O'Kane, "History of the Houston Young Men's Christian Association," 32.

⁷²Heaton, "A Personal History," 87; Harry Hutchens, Class of 1956 and current member of the board of trustees, interview by author, February 3, 1994. The G.I. Bill particularly stimulated the growth of two-year colleges. While there were 58 community colleges in 1944, there were 328 of these institutions in 1947. William Celis III, "50 Years Later, the Value of the G.I. Bill is Questioned," *New York Times*, June 22, 1994, B7.

⁷³William H. Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the fall semester which began September 1952 (October 1, 1952); Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 24, 1955 (March 9, 1955); "South Texas College Branch" (May 5, 1958); W. H. Randolph to Gavin Ulmer, August 9, 1957; Recommendation of the General Secretary to the Joint Building Committee of the Central and South Texas College Branches of the YMCA Regarding Shared Space in the Central Building, December 18, 1956.

1950s, most law school classes were held in the basement, sometimes called the "dungeon."⁷⁴ The basement classrooms were afflicted with loud noises in the ceiling pipes, and one had a slow water leak requiring the professor to place a wastebasket on his desk underneath the drip. A law class in Trusts was held in the junior college library on Thursday evenings, in clear violation of the accreditation standards. The law school's administrative offices were housed in a small cubicle painted a "lurid pink."⁷⁵ Such examples of substandard conditions were legion. The director of the South Texas Colleges, William H. Randolph, reported

that the college was not able to offer courses that will permit us to render a community service and which would provide additional funds at a small cost because of the limited classroom space. The entire college is facing a desperate situation relative to housing...there is not sufficient space to transact the business of the college, much less take care of the large number of students coming in to talk over their problems...it is evident that we will not be able to meet the demands for required courses during the coming semesters if additional space is not provided.⁷⁶

Repeated efforts to improve the space problem for the law school by reallocating space within the building provided only temporary relief as the college continued to grow.⁷⁷ Attempts to find alternative quarters outside the building proved fruitless.⁷⁸

Despite the problems, the students were grateful for the opportunity to receive a legal education, "knowing all along that the unpretentious classrooms with exposed plumbing pipes and often dingy walls and other non-academic environment probably were the best that could be afforded, and

⁷⁴Professor Harry Reed, quoted in Heaton, "A Personal History," 68.

⁷⁵Heaton, "A Personal History," 1, 21.

⁷⁶William H. Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the fall semester which began September 12, 1955 (October 7, 1955).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*; William H. Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the YMCA for the fall semester which began September 17, 1956.

⁷⁸Negotiations with the Houston Independent School District to purchase the Taylor School, at Louisiana and Leeland, adjacent to the downtown YMCA, began in the spring of 1952 and extended into the next decade. The law school tried to hold lectures in the Taylor School auditorium, but this proved impossible because of the room's design. In addition to the Taylor School, the site committee of the board of regents looked into several sites to relocate the colleges, including the Kinkaid School, the old University of Texas Dental College, the M&M Building (now the University of Houston Downtown), and the McFadden Building. Edward J. Mosher to Holger Jeppesen, March 31, 1952; Wendel D. Lay to Mrs. Frank Dyer, June 13, 1957; Leslie L. Walker to Lee Ducoff, February 3, 1959; Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, April 2, 1956; W. I. Dykes, Director's Report, appended to Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, November 17, 1961; Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, February 19, 1963; Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, August 14, 1964.

knowing also that possibly in many cases this was the only college working men and women could attend in Houston."⁷⁹ During the 1950s, South Texas remained strictly a night school. The students of the 1950s were nearly all part-time students, completing the course of study in four years instead of the two or three years required at full-time, day schools. Most students were married, with at least one or two children, and worked during the day to support themselves and their families. They were generally in their early 30s, experienced in the work force, and often veterans. For some, it had been several years since they had finished college, while others had rather limited educational opportunities prior to law school. They were looking for career advancement and wanted a solid, practical legal education.

South Texas remained true to its mission of serving community needs. Retaining its focus on a practical rather than a theoretical approach, the college continued to produce good, competent, practicing attorneys. As a matter of special pride for the college, seven of its students had taken the state bar examination in fall 1948 and all had passed. The College proudly claimed that this was the first time that all the candidates from a single law school passed the Texas state bar.⁸⁰ By the 1950s, South Texas had accumulated a large alumni base, and Assistant Dean Ray Magnuson wrote in 1958: "we are making a substantial contribution to the Bench and Bar in Texas, not only by the quantity, but by the quality of graduates of our school."⁸¹

The increases in enrollment allowed South Texas to expand the number and diversity of its course offerings. In the fall of 1948, for example, the college was "making a very liberal offering of 14 courses."⁸² These included specialized courses such as Veterans Benefits, which covered the rights of veterans under federal law.⁸³ During this time, the college also began sponsoring bar review courses on statutes and court rules. By 1953, the curriculum had expanded to include courses on administrative law, damages, labor law, legal ethics, oil and gas law, workers' compensation, abstracts, appellate procedure, federal taxation, insurance, legal office procedure, land titles, and trial practice.⁸⁴ From 1953 to 1966, the curriculum again expanded to include courses on creditors' rights, Texas procedure II and III, interna-

⁷⁹"South Texas College: Houston's Only Junior College and Only Law College."

⁸⁰*Houston Bar Bulletin* (February 1949): 3-4.

⁸¹Raymond Magnuson to William H. Randolph, June 20, 1958.

⁸²Gavin Ulmer to E. E. Townes, reprinted in Heaton, "A Personal History," 87.

⁸³Muellerweiss, "Fiftieth Anniversary," 7.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*; *South Texas Schools of Law and Commerce Announcements, 1945*, 6; *South Texas Colleges, 1949-1950* (catalog), 8; *South Texas Colleges, 1950-1951* (catalog), 18; *Supplement to the 1950-1951 Catalog of the South Texas Colleges* (effective September 2, 1951), 4-5.

tional law, legal medicine, government contracts, and trade regulation. Federal taxation split into two courses, one on federal income tax and the other on estate and gift taxes, while criminal procedure became a separate course from criminal law.⁸⁵ A course in patent law, important to the petrochemical industry with its constant development of new technologies, was offered at South Texas beginning in 1958. The course was taught by Tom Arnold, chairman of the American Bar Association Section of Patent Law.⁸⁶ Houston's rapidly growing economy brought an increasing demand for the legal services necessary to do business in an increasingly complex and regulated society. The curriculum continued to evolve to meet the challenges of a changing society.

During the 1950s, the law library enjoyed a period of substantial growth as well. At the end of World War II, the library had consisted of only one room. Its collection was largely limited to the "fundamental essentials," supporting only basic legal research. Most law students still performed more extensive research at the Harris County Law Library or at the new University of Houston Law Library.⁸⁷ Both the Student Bar Association and the Ex-Students' Association had library committees which worked to secure donations of law books and would sponsor "donation drives" for necessary materials.

As the number of users and of library materials expanded, the library regularly needed to increase its physical space. In the fall of 1948, the library was enlarged and an additional reading room was installed. Throughout the 1950s, the "library's study facilities were daily being improved, in order to facilitate the production of legal minds as well as just plain lawyers."⁸⁸ The problem of space was aggravated by the effort to meet the ABA's accreditation standards. For example, in 1954, the ABA informed the college that certain required legal materials must be added to the library. The ABA also required that the library have the capacity to seat between one quarter to one third of the student body. The library would not be able to provide the required seating space after the required texts were added.⁸⁹ By early 1956, the library had chair and table space for 20 percent of the student body, with additional

⁸⁵South Texas College of Law Bulletin for the School Year 1965-1966 and Summer Session 1966, 14-18.

⁸⁶South Texas Reporter, March 18, 1958.

⁸⁷Miron Love, Class of 1951, interview by author, April 11, 1994.

⁸⁸"Law School News," *South Texas Law Journal* 1 (July 1954): 178.

⁸⁹John Hervey, ABA adviser, to William H. Randolph, December 13, 1954; William H. Randolph, Report for the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 24, 1955 (March 9, 1955).

space available for periods of increased use such as examination time and pre-bar examination periods. Later that year, the law library moved to the first floor in a space previously used by the Boys Department and gained badly needed space.⁹⁰ By the following year, the law library's reading room accommodated 85 students. It was "well lighted, air conditioned, and was open 8:00 AM to midnight daily throughout the year."⁹¹

Further valuable support for the academic program came with the formation of the *South Texas Law Journal* in the fall semester of 1953.⁹² Law reviews are important because they provide students with an opportunity to improve their analytical, writing, and research skills. The *South Texas Law Journal* was the first student-edited law review in Houston and the only standard law review in the United States that was edited entirely by students of an evening law school. The prime mover in launching the law journal was Clair Getty, Jr., a reporter for the *Houston Chronicle* and a student at South Texas. Getty served as editor-in-chief, soliciting lead articles, assigning responsibility for comments and notes to his fellow students, and using his knowledge of publishing to shepherd the new journal through the stages of publication. Professor Herman Mead, an assistant city attorney, was the first faculty sponsor of the law review.⁹³

The *South Texas Law Journal* was at first published three times a year, but soon became a quarterly publication. It was established with endowments from many leading Houston firms, including Baker & Botts, Vinson & Elkins, and Andrews & Sheppard; from the Alumni Association; and from individuals such as Elliott A. Johnson and E. E. Townes. It was difficult to make ends meet, but the journal staff was proud of what they were able to do despite economic limitations. Law firms bought subscriptions to ensure the journal's success, and Houston lawyers were generous in agreeing to write articles for the journal. Within the college, \$1.50 of each student's tuition for a regular semester and \$1.00 for the summer semester paid for a subscription to the journal. The *South Texas Law Journal* also benefitted from inclusion in the state bar association's subscription program along with the *Baylor Law Review*, the *Southwestern Law Journal*, and the *Texas Law Review*, and by being indexed

⁹⁰William H. Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 30, 1956; Randolph, Report for the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the fall semester which began September 17, 1956.

⁹¹South Texas College of Law Catalog for the 1957-1958 Academic Year and the 1958 Summer Session, 5.

⁹²The charter for incorporation of the journal was filed with the office of the Texas Secretary of State on November 5, 1953. The directors of the corporation included Judge William P. Hamblen, Jr., and Judge Spurgeon Bell. Incorporation exempted the law review from the institutional requirements of the YMCA and allowed for its economic growth.

⁹³Hutchens interview.

in the *Index of Legal Periodicals*. The review is still published, having changed its name in 1985 to the *South Texas Law Review*.

Many of South Texas's faculty members realized that expanding the curriculum and supporting programs during the 1950s would be crucial to the college's future. During the postwar period, the demand for daytime legal education had greatly increased and well-financed, university-affiliated law schools formed in response to this need. In 1947, two new law schools were established locally at the University of Houston and the Texas State University for Negroes (now known as Texas Southern University). Although South Texas still offered the only evening law school program in downtown Houston, the continued success of the college depended upon its ability to adapt to the challenges of a changing educational environment. In particular, the survival of the college depended upon its gaining accreditation from the ABA.

The ABA had a long tradition of favoring day law schools, and required that any approved law school employ at least three full-time instructors in order to ensure stability. South Texas could not afford to employ full-time professors.⁹⁴ Its expenses were paid by tuition, which had to be maintained at a level that working people with families could afford. Furthermore, the quality of the lawyers who taught as adjunct professors at South Texas had long been a point of pride for the school. Judge E. E. Townes wrote:

By using part-time lawyers who teach largely as a public service to help the students and school, we have the advantages of some of the best legal talent at the Houston Bar. No law school in Texas could pay a full-time employment salary that would tempt lawyers like those who teach our students, to abandon their own practice. If we had the money to employ full-time men, we would thereby lower materially the quality of the School's instruction.

Other prominent Houston jurists concurred. County Judge Bob Casey believed that, because of "their direct contact and experience with problems which arise in the active practice of law," the adjuncts were "superior and of more benefit to the student than the full time instructors." Judge Hamblen argued that "Seldom...does the full-time instructor compare favorably with the instructors who are daily engaged in the practice of the very skills that they teach."⁹⁵

⁹⁴South Texas employed its first full-time professor, John Hume, in 1947. Other instructors held full-time status over the next nine years, but never three at the same time.

⁹⁵E. E. Townes, in "Written Argument on Behalf of South Texas College of Law in Opposition to the Proposed Amendment to Rule V Section 1 of the Present Rules Governing Eligibility to Take the Bar Examination," October 14, 1953, 11; Bob Casey, *ibid.*, 13; W. P. Hamblen, *ibid.*, 2.

The ABA claimed that a law school needed "a core of teachers about whom to fashion a program, and experience has shown that this can be done best with full-time teachers. No truly great law school has ever been built with part-time teachers only on the staff."⁹⁶ The experience of South Texas, however, cast some doubt on this cherished ABA belief. Certain professors at the college constituted the backbone of the faculty. They dependably taught a heavy course load every semester for years despite the demands of their professional careers. During the 1940s, this core group had consisted of Dick H. Gregg, Conrad Landram, Elliott Rubin, and William J. Williamson. Through much of the 1950s, the core included Gregg and Williamson, along with Judge Spurgeon Bell and Harry L. Reed. Bell, Reed, and Williamson would eventually become full-time instructors.⁹⁷

South Texas was successfully producing qualified attorneys without absolute adherence to ABA requirements. However, in 1954, the Supreme Court of Texas adopted a rule stating that law students must graduate from an ABA-accredited law school in order to take the bar exam. All law schools were required to have ABA approval by January 1, 1956. Dean Townes led supporters of South Texas in protesting the rule change, and a committee was established to contest it. The committee consisted of Dean Townes, Judge Bob Casey, Judge William P. Hamblen, Jr., Judge Spurgeon Bell, State Senator Searcy Bracewell, Conway Wallace, Herman Mead, and Gavin Ulmer. The college ultimately received legislative relief in the form of a statute, which essentially stated that the authority delegated to the Supreme Court of Texas by the legislature could not be re-delegated. The Supreme Court thus could not delegate to the ABA its power to control admission to the Texas Bar. On February 1, 1954, the Supreme Court rescinded its order requiring ABA accreditation. The court subsequently issued a new set of rules governing law school accreditation, substantially the same as those of the ABA but enforced through the court's own inspectors. Judge Townes persuaded Chief Justice

⁹⁶Hervey to Randolph, December 13, 1954.

⁹⁷Gregg began teaching at South Texas in 1939. By 1948, he had become internationally famous for his treatises on oil law, and the book he wrote for his courses, *A Short Summary of the Law of Oil and Gas*, was widely used in the U.S., Mexico, South America, Pakistan, and Australia. "Y Opens Junior College," *Houston* (August 1948): 20; Gavin Ulmer in Heaton, "A Personal History," 87. Landram, a graduate of Harvard Law School, had taught at South Texas beginning in 1924. Elliott Rubin, a 1937 graduate of South Texas, began teaching there in 1938. Williamson later became president and dean of the college. Bell later served as chairman of the college's board of trustees. When he retired as chief justice of the First Court of Civil Appeals in 1973, he resigned from the board of trustees in order to become a full-time faculty member. He retired from teaching in 1991. Reed served as an adjunct professor from 1952-1957 and 1959-1978. He taught full-time from 1985 to the present, as well as serving as counsel and executive vice-president of the college.

Deans of South Texas College of Law

1923-1931	Joseph C. Hutcheson, Jr.
1931-1934	Sam Streetman
1934-1960	Edgar E. Townes, Sr.
1960-1968	John C. Jackson
1968-1984	Garland Walker
1984-1989	William J. Williamson
1989-1995	William L. Wilks
1995-	Frank T. Read

John E. Hickman of the Texas Supreme Court to grant an extension for the college to meet the new standards that had been implemented by the court.⁹⁸

In the wake of the ABA accreditation controversy, the college administrators prudently decided that South Texas must eventually obtain ABA approval. The trend toward requiring ABA accreditation was simply too strong to be avoided indefinitely. The college hired three full-time instructors by 1955 in order to satisfy the new Texas Supreme Court standards, although the bulk of the teaching was still conducted by adjunct professors.⁹⁹ Closet-sized offices for the full-time faculty were created by closing up the arches on the interior patio of the YMCA.¹⁰⁰ Gavin Ulmer, chairman of the board of regents of the college, believed that the presence of the full-time faculty brought the school into full compliance with the requirements of the ABA as well as those of the Supreme Court. Dean Townes and the directors thereupon instructed the director of the college branch, William H. Randolph, to begin the formal process leading to ABA approval.¹⁰¹ John Hervey, adviser to the Section of

⁹⁸Written Argument on Behalf of South Texas College of Law in Opposition"; William H. Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 24, 1955 (March 9, 1955); Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the summer session which began June 6, 1955 (June 28, 1955); Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the fall semester which began September 12, 1955 (October 7, 1955).

⁹⁹By the spring of 1957, the college had four full-time instructors. Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the fall semester which began September 17, 1956; William H. Randolph to Gavin Ulmer, August 9, 1957; Williamson interview; "Law School Here Adds Instructor," *Houston Chronicle*, September 9, 1956; "The South Texas College of Law," *Houston Bar Bulletin* (May 1956): 3-6.

¹⁰⁰Heaton, "A Personal History," 7.

¹⁰¹"Law School Here Adds Instructor," *The Houston Chronicle*, September 9, 1956.

Legal Education of the American Bar Association, visited South Texas College of Law in 1956. Hervey became the college's adviser from the initial application, through its provisional accreditation in 1959, to its permanent accreditation in 1969.¹⁰²

The question of full-time faculty was not the only barrier to South Texas's accreditation. The law school facilities needed significant improvement. As enrollment continued to increase, attempts to comply with the rules chronically fell short. Student to faculty ratios exceeded acceptable norms, library acquisitions were inadequate, and the school was not "adequately supported and housed so as to make possible efficient work on the part of both students and faculty."¹⁰³ Administrative changes were also necessary to maintain the college's academic standards. Assistant Dean Ray Magnuson enforced rules on attendance, discouraged grade inflation, and even dismissed adjunct professors who were too lenient in grading.¹⁰⁴ Despite the persistent problems with the school's physical facilities, the ABA House of Delegates unanimously granted provisional accreditation to South Texas on February 25, 1959, at its semiannual meeting in Chicago. The approval was subject to annual inspection at the expense of the college. Full accreditation would be granted only when the ABA was satisfied that standards would be maintained.¹⁰⁵

Accrediting agency requirements seriously strained the relationship between the YMCA and the college. Both the ABA and the American Association of Law Schools (AALS) tended to disapprove of YMCA-controlled law schools. Operating as a division of the Houston YMCA did pose several problems for South Texas. First, there was a conflict of mission. The YMCA's objectives restricted the law school's efforts to develop and improve as an academic institution. Second, priorities within the organization favored the YMCA's other programs over the relatively small college branch. Third, the college's finances were subservient to the YMCA budget. The Metropolitan Board decided budgets as a single entity for the whole association. The

¹⁰²William H. Randolph, Report for the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 30, 1956; *Annotations*, December 11, 1957; Reed interview.

¹⁰³Report on Compliance with Standards of Approval Set Forth by the Supreme Court of Texas, ca. 1959; William H. Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began September 12, 1955 (October 7, 1955); Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began January 30, 1956; Randolph, Report of the South Texas College of the Houston YMCA for the spring semester which began February 4, 1957; Memorandum, John R. Rodell to Robert J. Maloney, July 9, 1957.

¹⁰⁴Harry L. Reed, quoted in Heaton, "A Personal History," 71.

¹⁰⁵John G. Hervey to Raymond A. Magnuson, February 25, 1959; "College Gets Provisional Accreditation," *Houston Chronicle*, February 25, 1959.

YMCA's budget was inadequate, due to its rapid expansion and insufficient donations. Income from the colleges, limited as it was, went to the support of other YMCA programs, a situation of which the ABA disapproved. William I. Dykes, Director of the South Texas Colleges, believed that final accreditation of the college depended upon compliance

with all the regulations of the accrediting agencies. This means that when YMCA policy and practice conflict with accrediting agency standards, the YMCA must change its policy and practice. This is altogether proper, for the standards of our accrediting agencies are applicable to institutions engaged in formal higher education...the A.B.A. will not knowingly approve a law school when any of its income is used for non-law school purposes....[T]o satisfy accrediting agency requirements, all of the income from both colleges¹⁰⁶ must be used for college purposes. This has not been done at South Texas College by the YMCA for a number of years. Our accreditation in both colleges is in jeopardy because of this practice and if it is continued they will be dropped from the list of accredited institutions.

Dykes added that Hervey "is well aware of the fact that a number of YMCAs have operated law schools for financial profits to themselves....I am confident that he will not approve of the present management of the income of South Texas College of Law."¹⁰⁷

The YMCA had been a pioneer in adult education, founding and operating colleges throughout the United States. In the 1950s, however, the organization began to release many of its colleges to operate independently. The college formed a Committee on Incorporation to consider the possibility of becoming a separate entity. William H. Randolph reported to the committee that a survey among YMCA colleges, some of which had incorporated, indicated that incorporation would be advantageous to the school and that the prime motive for incorporation was to secure approval from accrediting agencies. The change would allow the college to receive grants, which was "impossible under the YMCA owned and operated plan."¹⁰⁸ Elliott Johnson, a prominent Houston attorney and board member, believed that the college should retain ties with the YMCA, but that it should be made a separate institution so that it could become eligible to receive financial assistance such as tax-exempt gifts and grants. Furthermore, incorporation would make it

¹⁰⁶Dykes is referring to the law college and the junior college. The YMCA had closed the South Texas College of Commerce in 1955, as a consequence of declining enrollments for the school.

¹⁰⁷William I. Dykes to Judge Spurgeon E. Bell, January 20, 1966.

¹⁰⁸Minutes of the South Texas Committee on Incorporation, June 3, 1958.

easier for the college to move to a building of its own, thus solving the chronic problem of inadequate facilities.¹⁰⁹

For these reasons, the Committee on Incorporation voted on June 3, 1958, to recommend incorporation to the South Texas College Board of Regents. In December 1958, the two South Texas Colleges became incorporated, but remained under the control of the YMCA. The articles of incorporation provided that at least one-third of the board of directors of the colleges must be members of the Metropolitan Board of the YMCA.¹¹⁰ The question of incorporation as an independent entity remained an issue. In 1960, the board of regents formally proposed that the South Texas Colleges be separately incorporated from the YMCA. The issue then moved to the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Board. From 1961 to 1962, the question of separate incorporation for the colleges remained under consideration. While the executive committee formally approved separate incorporation, the issue was never presented to the full Metropolitan Board for final decision. The board of regents again forwarded the proposal to the Metropolitan Board in 1963, and again no action was taken.¹¹¹

South Texas still needed to solve its financial and physical facilities problems in order to change its accreditation status from provisional to permanent. William Dykes recommended three financial management changes: 1) that college income be deposited in a separate account with only college expenses charged to that account; 2) that the Metropolitan Board establish an official policy of using college income for college purposes only; and 3) that the college administration and the board of regents make internal adjustments of expenditures (in particular, the levels of per-student expenditure and faculty salaries) as required to meet the financial standards of the accrediting agencies.¹¹²

The school also needed a means to acquire substantial and permanent assets. Following the model of the YMCA, which had established a separately incorporated Y Foundation for fundraising in 1958, the South Texas College of Law Foundation was created in 1961. The foundation was a nonprofit corporation formed to receive and administer funds donated to the law

¹⁰⁹Minutes of the South Texas Committee on Incorporation, June 3, 1958.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*; Resolution, Board of Regents, December 1958. There had long been a substantial overlap between the board of the college and the board of its parent organization. At the time of the 1939 building campaign, for example, Gavin Ulmer was president and E. E. Townes vice-president of the Houston YMCA. The "effectiveness" of the 1958 incorporation was uncertain, however, because the Metropolitan Board never officially approved it.

¹¹¹Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, October 13, 1960; Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, May 21, 1963.

¹¹²Dykes to Bell, January 20, 1966.

school. Trustees on the original board included E. E. Townes, Spurgeon Bell, Elliott A. Johnson, and Leroy Jeffers. In 1961, the name of the foundation was changed to South Texas Law Foundation. The foundation made it possible for the law school to receive grants and tax-exempt gifts. Under Dean John C. Jackson's administration (1960 to 1968), the foundation raised funds for scholarships, endowing faculty chairs, and developing the library. One of its most important objectives, however, was to raise the funds necessary for the college to own its own facilities and to make the facilities adequate to meet the needs and demands placed upon the school. Dean Jackson, along with Judge Bell and Ed Pressler, utilized their influence with prominent community leaders and organizations to raise the necessary funds for the college.

The problem of inadequate facilities could not be solved while the law school remained in the downtown YMCA building. In 1958, the board of regents passed a resolution squarely addressing the issue of quality and quantity of space for the colleges, stating that "physical facilities for the colleges at the YMCA Central Building are inadequate and it is desirable for the said schools to obtain more adequate housing facilities."¹¹³ The college branch made a serious effort late in 1958 to purchase an attractive site in a relatively suburban area, the Schlumberger Foundation property at 2700 Leeland Street. A committee was appointed, negotiations carried out, and the transaction was actually concluded in December 1958, subject to approval from the Metropolitan Board. However, at the last minute the board refused its approval. The YMCA had accumulated \$900,000 in mortgages on its Central and East End buildings, and had little hope of liquidating the debt. Though the board of regents had filed for corporate status for the South Texas Colleges so that they could incur their own indebtedness, the Metropolitan Board did not believe that the college branch could absorb such a substantial expense, contending that the proposed plan to repay the purchase costs with "tuition and other revenues" glossed over "some rather obvious items of expense."¹¹⁴

By the early 1960s, applications rapidly were reaching a point where the college would be forced to limit enrollment until larger quarters could be found, despite the acquisition of additional space at the YMCA. Dykes pointed out that the YMCA has "had more pressing obligations and problems than the college branch has had. We need to face up to the fact that at this time the YMCA can not help us. We also need to realize that we can and should help ourselves."¹¹⁵ Associate Dean Garland Walker and Dean Jackson continued

¹¹³Resolution, Board of Regents, December 1958.

¹¹⁴L. L. Walker to Lee Ducoff, February 3, 1959.

¹¹⁵Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, February 16, 1962.

discussions with the board of regents on the possibility of finding a building with enough space for future expansion. These discussions finally bore fruit when the three-story J. Robert Neal building at 1220 Polk Avenue became available. This structure, built in 1926, formerly housed an automobile dealership, but was extensively remodelled into a state-of-the-art office building by Travelers Insurance Companies in 1951.¹¹⁶ In November 1963, the board of regents proposed to the Metropolitan Board that the regents be authorized to negotiate a lease of the first floor of the Neal building, which contained 12,500 square feet.¹¹⁷

The law school moved to its new location in February 1964. It was the realization of the "long fought for dream [of] modern and adequate classroom, library, office and other facilities offering all that a modern college of law would want."¹¹⁸ The ABA agreed. John Hervey reported that the new physical plant facilities were "splendid and highly functional," and that "if you were building a new structure from the ground up, I know of no change that would need to be made. There will be no doubt left on the adequacy of the plant." However, Hervey explained, because "the lease on the new quarters [i.e., the Neal Building] was executed by the Metropolitan YMCA board and not by the board of the [law] college, members of the [American Bar Association] Council may question whether the college has sufficient autonomy."¹¹⁹ The question of autonomy remained an obstacle to permanent ABA accreditation.

The move to new quarters brought an immediate increase in student morale. Enrollment increased sharply in fall 1965, and soon the influx of students threatened to cause space problems again. After Garland Walker became dean in 1968, he realized that one floor of the building would be inadequate for the school's long-term space needs. He arranged, with the cooperation of the College Board of Trustees, to lease the second floor for faculty offices and classroom space. Subsequently, the college leased the third floor as well.

The increased enrollment occurred despite tougher entrance requirements, which had become more rigorous throughout the postwar period. In 1963, the Law School Aptitude Test (LSAT) became a prerequisite for admission. In December 1964, the board of regents adopted a resolution that

¹¹⁶"Insurance Firm Has New Quarters Here," *Houston* (November 1951): 68.

¹¹⁷Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, November 19, 1963.

¹¹⁸"South Texas College: Houston's Only Junior College and Only Law College." William I. Dykes to Robert J. Maloney, General Secretary, Houston-Harris County YMCA, March 14, 1966.

¹¹⁹John C. Hervey to Dean John Jackson, May 12, 1964.

South Texas would henceforth confer the J.D. (juris doctor) degree instead of the LL.B. (bachelor of laws) degree. In consequence, starting in the fall of 1965, students were required to have completed their baccalaureate degree before being admitted to South Texas. The change reflected the growing national trend to make law a graduate rather than an undergraduate program, and it qualified South Texas students for higher pay scales in government agencies. South Texas became the first law school in the state to grant the J.D. degree.¹²⁰

South Texas's transition to a graduate school heightened the growing incompatibility between the missions of the school and the YMCA. The focus of the YMCA's educational efforts has traditionally been on programs which were vocational and technical in nature. South Texas, by the early 1960s, was becoming a more academically-oriented institution due to its efforts to become a better law school. It became impossible, however, to operate an accredited law school within the YMCA's organizational structure, while conforming to the standards required by the accrediting authorities. By the 1950s, ABA accreditation was necessary to the college's continued viability and the YMCA was finding the costs of maintaining ABA standards to be prohibitive considering its other commitments.

Once outside the downtown YMCA building, the law school became increasingly separated institutionally as well as physically from its parent organization. The relationship between the YMCA Metropolitan Board of Directors and the law school community became increasingly strained. "After much soul searching," it became evident that the best solution would be the law college's dissociation from the YMCA.¹²¹

In September 1966, the YMCA's Metropolitan Board unanimously approved the termination of South Texas College of Law's affiliation with the YMCA, effective January 1967. On December 12, 1966, the college filed articles of incorporation with the secretary of state's office. On January 1, 1967, South Texas officially ended its association with the YMCA.¹²² It became (and remains today) a private, nonprofit educational corporation, not affiliated with any other educational institution. The ultimate governing authority of the college became vested in the board of trustees, which essentially was

¹²⁰Edgar E. Townes, Jr., "South Texas College of Law—Commencement Address," May 14, 1978, 10; Minutes, South Texas College Board of Regents, December 8, 1964; proposal for South Texas building expansion, ca. 1972, 2; Heaton, "A Personal History," 36.

¹²¹Townes, Jr., "South Texas College of Law—Commencement Address," 14.

¹²²Recommendations prepared by a committee of the Metropolitan Board, Joe T. Dickerson, Chairman, and approved by the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Board, and presented to and unanimously passed by the YMCA's Metropolitan Board of Directors on September 28, 1966; South Texas College Board of Regents, December 15, 1966.

composed of the same people who served on the college's board of regents. The Houston YMCA ended its sponsorship of all higher education in the following year, when it severed its ties to the South Texas Junior College. The junior college subsequently became part of the University of Houston's Downtown campus.

As an independent institution, South Texas College of Law now had complete control of its own policies, programs, and facilities. With autonomy came the authority necessary to ensure the long-term stability of the school. The ABA recognized the new situation when it finally voted full accreditation to South Texas on January 28, 1969.¹²³ South Texas achieved ownership of its facilities for the first time by purchasing the Neal building in December 1969. The college subsequently purchased two properties adjoining its building (the Clay Hotel and 1314 Caroline), without debt, in order to expand its physical facilities.¹²⁴ The college now had a solid foundation on which to expand its vision and offer a broader legal education.

Although South Texas was no longer affiliated with the YMCA, it retained the original mission of its founders—to serve students who might not otherwise have the chance to attend law school. It continued to cater to working students who saw night law school as a way to advance their careers. South Texas offered only evening courses until the 1970s, when it gradually began to offer day courses as well. Most American law schools are now tied to large public or private universities. South Texas remains unaffiliated. As one of the few private, independent, ABA-accredited law schools, South Texas has been able to chart its own course, unencumbered by large bureaucracies and budget battles.

Today the college continues to open opportunities for students. Its flexible scheduling allows students to choose from both day and evening classes, as needed, and opt for either a full-time or part-time program. Sixty-five percent of the students are enrolled on a full-time basis. The college thus accommodates both recent college graduates who wish to continue their education full-time and second-career students who must continue to work. The result is a vibrant and diverse student body, currently numbering around 1,300. Over 40 percent of the students are women, and 20 percent are members of minority groups. South Texas continues to fulfill the visions of its founders by making a quality legal education widely accessible to qualified students.

¹²³"Report No. 1 of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar," in *Annual Report of the American Bar Association* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1969), 294-295.

¹²⁴Heaton, "A Personal History," 71-72.

South Texas has grown in several ways over the years. Its campus has expanded repeatedly since the initial purchase of the Neal Building. In 1973, the board of trustees announced a \$1.75 million development campaign to add a new, three-story building immediately adjacent to the Neal Building, doubling the size of the facilities. In 1976, the new Jesse H. Jones Law Building opened, as did the renovated Neal Building, renamed the Roy and Lillie Cullen Building. In 1981, under an innovative arrangement between the college, the Harris County Commissioners Court, and the First and Fourteenth Texas Courts of Appeals, the commissioners agreed to pay for three extra floors of a new building at South Texas in exchange for a 99-year lease. The new 11-story tower opened in 1984 and is the permanent home of the First and Fourteenth Courts. South Texas remains today the only law school in the country to permanently house two appellate courts, where many South Texas students have the opportunity to clerk. With this building, the South Texas campus (then dedicated as the Jesse H. Jones Legal Center) occupied the entire city block.

Faculty, programs, and reputation have grown with the campus. The faculty is the core of the law school's strength. The college now has a diverse and talented faculty consisting of 59 full-time professors and 30 adjunct professors. The faculty maintains a good balance of practitioners and theorists. The excellence of the faculty received national attention when the *Princeton Review* rated South Texas as having one of the top ten best teaching faculties.¹²⁵ South Texas's curriculum and programs have retained their practical emphasis, and the school has a strong reputation for its teaching of trial and appellate advocacy. During the past 15 years, students have won more than 46 national titles and 26 regional titles for their advocacy, including winning the ABA's national moot court competition for six of the last 12 years. South Texas graduates have long been highly regarded as trial attorneys. However, South Texas has increasingly balanced practical skills training with a theoretical approach. Courses and seminars educate students in timely and crucial topics such as international business law, computer law, sports law, intellectual property rights, and environmental law. South Texas's new Center for Legal Responsibility is recognized as a leading program in alternative dispute resolution. This innovative program assists parties to resolve their differences without having to resort to litigation. Student interns provide low-cost legal assistance through the four South Texas legal clinics: Disability Clinic, Texas Capital Punishment Clinic, Mediation Clinic,

¹²⁵Ian Van Tuyl, *The Princeton Review: Student Access Guide to the Best Law Schools* (New York: Villard Books, 1994).

and HIV and the Law Clinic.¹²⁶ South Texas is home to the following legal publications: the *South Texas Law Review*; the *Corporate Counsel Review*, issued on behalf of the Corporate Counsel Section of the State Bar of Texas; and *Currents*, a journal of international trade law. With its solid base of resources, South Texas College of Law has effectively combined academic excellence with its longstanding orientation toward practical training.

While the college has greatly expanded in size and vision, it remains strongly linked to the community it serves. South Texas has made a profound impact on the practice of law in the Houston area. From 1923 to 1993, over 10,000 students received all or part of their legal education at South Texas. By the early 1990s, one-third of all Harris County lawyers were South Texas alumni. In the Houston area, 95 percent of recently retired judges in 1991, from the municipal to state appellate level, were South Texas alumni. Throughout its history, South Texas has played a dynamic role in the legal life of the Southwest. Today, as in the past, the South Texas College of Law remains faithful to the principle upon which it was founded: to provide quality legal education to the community. Despite the diverse challenges posed by different eras, South Texas has continued to meet the needs of students, the legal profession, and society, in its commitment to the teaching of law. The college's excellent faculty, location, facilities, and program will ensure that South Texas will continue to excel as Houston's gateway to opportunity in law.

¹²⁶The need for clinical programs was underscored by a recent ABA study, which found that each year about half of the nation's low and moderate-income households face a legal issue, but do not turn to a lawyer or to the civil justice system. Randall Saborn, "ABA Study: Legal Needs Not Met," *National Law Journal* (February 1994):1.